

The Stats Page

Face the facts: NASCAR is moving north

by John Lange
Sports Editor

Driving back from Nashville on Sunday afternoon, I was just flipping through stations when I came upon the MRN (Motor Racing Network) broadcast of the Daytona 500. While I was listening to the starting grid, I came upon a realization and by the end of the race I had an idea for this my next column.

The race was won by Ryan Newman, who if you don't know, is from Indiana and holds a degree in engineering from Purdue University. That got my old brain to thinking, and I was curious where the contenders from last years "Chase for the Cup" came from. So thanks to the good people at Wikipedia, I confirmed what I had already suspected.

NASCAR IS NOT JUST A SOUTHERN SPORT ANYMORE!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

Looking at the top twelve from the previous season some startling (to some) things arise. As most people know, Jimmie Johnson and Jeff Gordon finished in the top two spots for the season and they are both California natives. Now with the attitude spouted by

many NASCAR fans you'd expect southern boys to take the next several positions in the standings. Well not quite.

(Columbia, Missouri), comes Kevin Harvick (Cali again) and Martin Truex Jr. (New Jersey (What's going on here????)) the Chase field was concluded

is headlined by Juan Pablo Montoya (Bogota, Columbia) and Dario Franchitti (Edinburgh, Scotland). Throw in a couple Canadians in Patrick Carpentier and Jacques Villeneuve and NASCAR is truly an international series.

Now I will be the first to admit that NASCAR still has strong roots in the south, which should be obvious because the headquarters and a majority of the race shops are somewhere around Charlotte. But times change, and people throughout the South will have to admit the truth. The days where you could be guaranteed that half of the top ten drivers would be native sons of this region have passed. NASCAR has become more popular around the world and, maybe in a few years it might even be accurate to say that the "best driver in the world" will be in NASCAR. While "King" Richard Petty and Dale Earnhardt Sr. were great drivers of their time, many of the drivers that are now in NASCAR are far superior, and the fun is just beginning. As always, "So long for just a little while" and remember that "I am your champion."



Clint Bowyer (Kansas), Matt Kenseth (Wisconsin), Kyle Busch (Nevada), Tony Stewart (Indiana) and Kurt Busch (Nevada- surprise he's the brother of Kyle) take positions 3-7. Finally coming in 8th is Jeff Burton of Virginia. Yes that's correct, if you don't count California as a southern state (which most people do not), there is not a "southerner" in the top 7 in what is supposed to be the sport of the South. After my buddy, Carl Edwards

by Denny Hamlin who is a native of Virginia. So out of 12 spots in the NASCAR version of the playoffs, only two "Southerners" were eligible.

And it's not just in the top 12 that y'all have to worry about!!! There are 3 full-time Cup racers that hail from the great state of Missouri: the aforementioned Edwards, Ken Schrader and Jamie McMurray. Besides the invasion of the Show-Me Boyz, there is also a strong group of foreign drivers, which

This Week's Betting Odds

Kelvin Sampson's wireless plan includes unlimited minutes	1:500	Dwight Howard performs his "Superman" throw/dunk in an actual game this season.	10:1
Andy Pettite Rehab Centers will soon be popping up in every major market.	20:1	Boxing and bowling slowly fade out as sports after people realize that both games are much more fun on Wii.	Push
The New England Patriots sign Zak Thomas, and the Pats' entire linebacking corps signs a lucrative endorsement deal with the AARP.	10:1	UNC-Asheville's 7-foot-7 center Kenny George stars in a re-make of the film classic <i>My Giant</i> .	One can only hope.