

Is It NASCAR Sprint Cup Racing, WWE Or A Soap Opera?



It is hard to tell these days.

It seems that ever since NASCAR brass pretty much told the boys and girls of NASCAR to go at it, they seem to have been going at it.

The idea was to get more personality back in the sport but letting the racers spout off and perhaps challenge someone that had done them dirty.....at least in their minds.

In an effort to bring more fans into the grandstands and up the TV ratings, NASCAR has gone to double file restarts. No big deal if you have been around the sport for a while. Double file restarts have been in place at local short tracks for years. The NASCAR TV broadcasters keep calling the double file restarts "shootouts." An effort to make viewers and fans feel they are seeing something more than they really are.

NASCAR replaced the wing on the back of the Cup cars with spoilers. They made a big deal about it. A lot of the drivers seem to like it. Jimmie Johnson, four time Cup champion who was at one time a huge favorite to win a fifth title, hasn't seemed to get the knack of the spoiler. Quite frankly it doesn't seem to have helped make the racing any better either.

For some reason there seems to be more green, white and checkered finishes during this first half of the season. Now that does make a difference. Some races can be real snoozers but in the closing laps, such as the recent 500-miler at Pocono Raceway, fans can get enough excitement to make them feel they made a good investment when they bought the tickets.

Actually I think NASCAR officials may have hit the caution button before it was needed at Pocono and in doing so created a green, white and checkered finish the really should not happened.

NASCAR brass has also told racers they will not crack down on them as quickly if there are some "arguments" and they will let the racers work out their differences within reason.

At Pocono Kevin Harvick, he still reminds me of Dennis the Menace, and young Joey Logano tangled on the track. Logano blamed Harvick, This writer felt it was more Logano's fault. The result was a verbal exchange in the pits after the race.

There was shouting and pushing. Logano's dad, Tom, seemed to be adding to the situation and, perhaps, pushing his son to go after Harvick. Tom has been in trouble with NASCAR before and this time was told to tone it down.

Joey spoke to the media and part of that included, "It's probably not his (Harvick's) fault. His wife wears the fire suit in the family and tells him what to do." That comment was out of line and probably could be attributed to Loganos lack of experience in such situations.

However the Harvicks have turned it into a charity effort by creating t-shirts for women with the words on the front, "I wear the Firesuit in this Family." Even Michigan Speedway was offering fans the opportunity to buy tickets for their Sunday race and get one of the t-shirts.

Surprising is the fact that NASCAR took no action against either racer despite Logano putting teams and media in danger as a result of his driving his car to Harvick's in the pits. No one could have been expecting him to do that.

That dispute continues with both Harvick and Logano making disparaging remarks about each this past weekend at Michigan.

It was just a couple of weeks back that child star Kyle Busch was threatening to "kill" another driver. He felt that Denny Hamlin had cost him a sure victory in the Sprint All Star race at Charlotte Motor Speedway.

Mild mannered Jeff "The Mayor" Burton went after Kyle Busch after Burton blamed Busch for cutting his tire in the late laps of the race and costing him a top five finish. Busch went on to finish third. The smirk on Busch's face probably didn't help to control the situation.

So could we be headed back to the old days? It was a few years back that Jimmy Spencer, now a SPEED TV personality, punched Kurt Busch in the nose after an on track altercation. Spencer was punished.

The fight that is remembered by many and is given credit for bringing attention to the sport took



MOOOVING RIGHT ALONG Phil Scott's Thunder Cow is popular with adults and kids in the Vermont area. Driver Phil Scott is a candidate for Lieutenant Governor. (Photo by Leif Tillotson)

place at Daytona International Speedway during the 1979 Daytona 500. That was altercation between Donnie Allison and Cale Yarborough, later joined by Bobby Allison, that was seen by a large TV audience.

That fight certainly did shine the spotlight on NASCAR Cup racing so perhaps NASCAR feels some more fights, altercations, heated discussions, will help increase the ticket sales and TV ratings.

Some of the drivers might like it just to help create more sales for their sportswear or even a special t-shirt.

"TO HIS DOG, every man is Napoleon; hence the constant popularity of dogs."

- English novelist Aldous Huxley

"NASCAR WIVES" HAS BEEN CANCELLED. After spending a hefty amount of money NASCAR Media Group has cancelled their plans to produce a series of at least eight half hour episodes of "NASCAR Wives." The project, offering what was somewhat like a soap opera on NASCAR wives, was dropped because the shows weren't controversial enough.

Apparently the producers were looking for a show that would be like the "Madhouse" of NASCAR wives.

One of the shows that would have certainly gotten my attention is the one that was scheduled to feature Shana Mayfield, wife of Jeremy Mayfield, the driver who failed a drug test and he later sued. The couple is facing a bleak future with Mayfield not racing and the creditors knocking on the door. Now that would have been an interesting show.

Shows that fans of NASCAR may want to watch for include eight one-hour episodes of "Changing Lanes" which will start on September 1st at 8 p.m. The show features the NASCAR "Drive for Diversity" drivers at Revolution Racing. That series will be seen on the BET Network.

And this fall the NASCAR Media Group will have the "Petty Blue" show ready to go. That is a 90-minute movie about the life of hall of famer Richard Petty that's expected out on DVD in October. The movie will be seen on the CMT Network and will be stretched out to two hours which means, I guess, there will be a lot of commercials. However that is something that I think will be well worth viewing.

THIS NIGHT HAS SPECIAL MEANING TO ME. Coming up on Saturday, June 26th at Grandview Speedway is another special night of racing, the Don Marks Memorial presented by BPG Racing/Chad Sinon Motorsports will feature the NASCAR 358 Modifieds and Late Models. The Modified feature winner will receive a \$1,000 gift certificate courtesy of Troyer Race Cars. Fans are being offered the opportunity to sponsor a lap for this night by paying \$25 and receiving two tickets for that night of racing.

Fans can send a \$25 check, payable to ESC, Inc., to ESC, Inc. at 1448 Hollywood Avenue, Langhorne, PA 19047 along with a self addressed stamped envelope. In return they will receive two adult tickets (normal price \$26) and have their name

listed as a lap sponsor in the official program book for that night. Purchases must be made by June 18th.

And to the fan or fans making the highest bid over \$100 they will be given the use of the sponsor booth for the night. That means they get to watch the race in air conditioned comfort. This offer does not include event tickets and the booth is limited to eight people. Bids can be sent to Esaxton144@aol.com or telephone Ernie Saxton at 215.752.7797. Bids must be in by June 18th.

Those wishing to sponsor a lap (\$10) or sponsor a qualifying heat (\$150) are invited to contact Saxton.

This will be the second year in a row for this memorial race. Don Marks was a great friend to me and to the sport. Not many realize how hard Don worked behind the scenes to help promote the sport.

LOOKING FOR SOME OLD TIMERS. - Atlanta Motor Speedway is seeking fans who attended the track's first race, the 1960 Dixie 300, to take part in their 50th Anniversary celebration and pre-race festivities before the track's Labor Day weekend NASCAR Sprint Cup Series night race.

Select fans from the Speedway's inaugural race in 1960 will be chosen to take part in the Labor Day weekend NASCAR Sprint Cup Series night race on Sunday, Sept. 5. These fans will be introduced during pre-race festivities and participate in NASCAR Sprint Cup Series driver introductions, including a photo with the starting field. In addition, these fans will have an opportunity to meet with media to share their stories from the 1960 race when they watched Fireball Roberts claim victory in the Speedway's first NASCAR race.

For more information on this promotion or to verify attendance at the 1960 Dixie 300, please contact the Atlanta Motor Speedway Events Department at 770-946-3923 or Events2@atlantamotorspeedway.com.

WE HAVE HAD QUITE A FEW E-MAILS REGARDING THE MAGAZINE SPEEDWAY ILLUSTRATED. Here is what we found on their website.

Speedway Illustrated temporarily suspended publishing after the April 2010 issue was mailed. We removed all links for subscribing electronically as soon as word was received that it was no longer being published, but a half dozen or so people found a link that was buried within another page on the site. We contacted the people who we could reach in an attempt to stop further orders from being entered and where possible, had PayPal reverse any charges.

Formula Five Media, the owners of Speedway Illustrated, have met with counsel to determine how best to proceed in this regrettable situation and hope to soon have word and will post that information here as soon as it is available regarding the future of this great magazine. We apologize again for this situation and that we were slow in posting this information. We are deeply concerned about making sure you receive value for your subscription payments just as we are very concerned about the jobs of the great people who put Speedway together each month.

THE LIVING LEGENDS OF AUTO RACING will present a car show and autograph session at their museum which is located in the Sunshine Mall, 2400 S. Ridgewood, S. Daytona, Florida. It all runs from 11 a.m to 4 p.m. with many drivers and car owners from the past and present on hand. It is important to note that the show is indoors and it is air conditioned in the mall.

WINGLESS TQ? Did I see that Wall Stadium had wingless TQs in action this past Sunday? Why? I can remember when midgets and sprints ran wingless all the time. I remember see Tommy Hinner-shitz, Johnny Thomson, A.J. Foyt and so many others run wingless. Then someone came up with the idea of putting wings on them. It was said that it would make for better competition, make the racing look closer than it actually is and be safer.

Apparently safety is not a factor any longer. The hot deal these days is wingless racing. What will be next, taking the bodies off the cars so that you can see the driver and all the parts perform? Any volunteers for that?

Here is my forecast. After a few years of wingless someone will come up with another great idea, why not put wings on the cars?

FOLKS WHO READ THE TRENTONIAN daily newspaper, out of Trenton, NJ, are very fortunate. They get to read Tim Daly's excellent columns on motorsports and he does a great deal to promote local short track racing.

Unfortunately a lot of the daily newspapers do little or nothing on local short track racing and sports editor, usually a stick and baller, want the staff to only write about NASCAR Sprint Cup.

TWO RACERS PLAN A GO-KART FACILITY IN CHARLOTTE AREA. Racers Michael McDowell and Justin Marks have partnered together to develop a state-of-the-art, outdoor go-karting track near Charlotte, N.C. under the Mooresville Motorplex name that will host local, national, and international karting events starting in 2011.

The track, to be located in Mooresville, N.C.'s Mazeppa Park, will offer kart and part sales, open practice, entry-level training programs and schools, on-site garage rentals, and host corporate and group events. The track and facility is tentatively scheduled to open in 2011 and will be the first of its kind in the state of North Carolina. Mooresville, touted as Race City USA, is home to many race teams and racing-related businesses, especially within NASCAR.

Plans for the 32-acre site are currently in design and development with engineering and architecture firms. McDowell and Marks' DryLake Entertainment LLC were granted a Conditional Use Permit by the Town of Mooresville on June 7, clearing them to proceed with the development.

McDowell and Marks both live north of Charlotte in the Lake Norman area and continue to drive karts as enthusiasts. McDowell competes part-time in the NASCAR Sprint Cup Series and full-time in the NASCAR Nationwide Series in the No. 81 car for MacDonald Motorsports. Marks currently competes full time in ARCA for Win-Tron Racing, and has experience in NASCAR, Grand Am Rolex Car Series, and the American Le Mans Series.

A FEW PEOPLE ASKED ME WHAT I THOUGHT OF BRIDGEPORT, NJ SPEEDWAY putting their events on the Internet. You can go to their website, pay \$12, and watch the racing action in the convenience of your own home or wherever you may be.

I think it is good to see a track trying something new at draw attention. There are people that can not make the events due to work, family obligations, etc. This will give those people who want to be there but can't be there a chance to see the action. As it grows in popularity it will be something that racers can use as a selling point in an effort to secure sponsorship.

Some things that would concern me is the quality of the production. The best way to show short track racing on TV or on the Internet is with a condensed program. Show only the racing and not all the downtime. It will mean that the announcer or announcers will have to be loaded with time filling information. In fact the TV or Internet production should have an announcer or announcers that are devoted just to the on air production.

Like I said I commend the James family for their efforts in trying something new. It presents a challenge. If presented correctly it can be a huge plus, if it is not presented correctly it could be something that does more harm than good. Just my opinion.

"TO MAKE MISTAKES IS HUMAN; to stumble is commonplace; to be able to laugh at yourself is maturity." - William A. Ward