

THE ART OF RACING

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LARSON



Let's race

The Monster Energy NASCAR Cup Series 2018 season finally gets underway this weekend in Atlanta. Daytona is nothing more than an exhibition for the fans except the race counts in the point standings.

NASCAR is the only major sport where the most prestigious race is held the first weekend. It used to draw so many teams that qualifying was exciting. This year, only 40 cars were entered, therefore, everyone gets into the race no matter where they qualify.

With so many veterans retiring in the past couple of years, the question is can the new blood compete. The answer after Daytona is a resounding yes!

Alex Bowman, the replacement for Dale Earnhardt Jr. in the No. 88 Chevy, won the Daytona Pole. Youngsters Ryan Blaney and Chase Elliott won the Daytona Duels.

Austin Dillon won the 2018 Daytona 500. Although he is starting his fifth full season as a Cup Driver, he is still considered a youngster. Racing for his grandfather Richard Childress, Dillon made news with the announcement of the return of the famed No. 3 (Dale Earnhardt Sr.) car. It was 20 years ago when Dale Earnhardt Sr. won the Daytona 500. Twitter went crazy when Dillon used the "bump-and-run" tactic on Aric Almirola to take the lead on the final lap and win the race. If either Earnhardt Sr. or Jr. did it, fans would have gone bonkers with glee, so what's the problem with Dillon using the tactic.

Bubba Wallace finished second in the No. 43. It was the best finish for an African-American driver in the history of the Great American Race. Only 11 drivers wound up on the lead lap after several wrecks whittled down the competition. Because many of the favorites crashed out early, the names making up the top 10 finishers included: Dillon, Wallace, Chris Buescher, Paul Menard, Ryan Blaney, Michael McDowell and AJ Allmendinger. Not really a who's who list.

Blaney dominated much of the 500, but a late wreck ruined his chances for a win. Blaney's 18 stage points was good enough to give him the overall points lead after Daytona. It will be interesting to watch the stage racing this year after everyone saw the huge advantage Martin Truex Jr. had last year.

Forty teams are eligible to race each week. Daytona had a full field, but only 36 are entered in Atlanta. The West Coast swing to Las Vegas, Phoenix and California is coming up and it does not look any better. NASCAR is going to have to make some major changes in its business model if it is to survive.

Getting ready for regionals

BY JEFFERY SIMMONS
Sports Editor for the Southern Standard
(McMinnville, Tennessee)

It's survival weekend for the Warren County basketball teams.

The Pioneers and Lady Pioneers will each take part in the Region 3AAA tournament and will need road wins to continue their seasons.

The Pioneers, coming off a 67-53 victory over Cookeville in the consolation game of the district tournament, will travel Saturday to take on the Walker Valley Mustangs. The Lady Pioneers will also be heading south, with a date with Bradley Central on the docket Friday.

In the boys matchup, Warren County (22-7) enters with a better record than the 17-15 Mustangs, but are the lower seed due to Walker Valley finishing higher in its district tournament. The Mustangs finished second in District 5AAA, falling 81-36 to state-ranked Cleveland in the finals.

Even after a 45-point loss,

coach Chris Sullens has warned his team not to overlook its next opponent.

"Walker Valley has gotten better throughout the year. Coach Bob Williams gets the most out of his groups," said Sullens. "They are peaking at the right time and have plenty of experience in these type of games."

The Mustangs lean heavily on their guard tandem of Kolton Gipson and Jordan Munck. Gipson scored 27 in Walker Valley's overtime upset of East Hamilton in the district tournament. Munck followed with 22 as the duo did the heavy lifting in a 62-60 victory.

Warren County is also coming in on a high note.

Getting junior Sloan Seymour back was a big boost in Saturday's blowout of Cookeville. Raven Lewandowski has also worked his way into the rotation with strong defensive play and a season-high eight points against the Cavaliers.

Continued on 4B



Caleb Newby and the Pioneers will need a road win over the Walker Valley Mustangs Saturday to extend their season.

Jeffery Simmons photo

WEEKEND SCHEDULE



GIRLS
FRIDAY, FEB. 23 6 P.M.
WARREN COUNTY
(12-19)
@
BRADLEY CENTRAL
(28-0)



BOYS
SATURDAY, FEB. 24 6 P.M.
WARREN COUNTY
(22-7)
@
WALKER VALLEY
(17-15)



Evan Wilson is this year's Bucky the Bronco. His antics aim to hype the Boyd crowd.

Jacob Dodd photo

Giddy up

BY JEFFERY SIMMONS
Sports Editor for the Southern Standard
(McMinnville, Tennessee)

It's a stealth mission. Even the slightest sound could spook the unsuspecting targets.

Just before whistles blow and horns sound at J.K. Stanley Gymnasium, Bucky the Bronco springs into action. His target: two "zebras," the referees tasked with officiating games at Boyd.

Bucky the Bronco has mastered the art of surprising referees this year, one of the many tactics the Boyd mascot – played by Evan Wilson – has used to rile up the home crowd.

"I try to get close to them and just mimic their actions," said Wilson. "The big thing though is to not get a technical."

Leading fans in YMCA, charging out to bugles playing over the loudspeakers and generally doing whatever it takes to entertain the crowd, Bucky has been a highlight at Boyd this season. At each timeout, all eyes turn to the Boyd mascot. And his eyes usually turn to the referees.

Unsuspecting referees have been easy prey for the mascot, many of whom find his antics humorous. None, however, have yet accepted his invitations for dance-offs at center court.

It's probably because they've seen Bucky's signature move firsthand.

"I love doing the worm. I think the crowd likes it the most," said Wilson.

His forays with referees don't always end with a laugh though. During one game this season, Bucky was firing up the crowd during play. In the midst of his passionate pleas on the narrow sideline, he collided with a referee and was sent sprawling to the court.

In Wilson's estimation, that comes with the territory.

"I was firing up the crowd and didn't



Referees always have to be on the lookout for a sneak attack from Bucky the Bronco.

Jeffery Simmons photo

realize action was moving up behind me," said Wilson. "You just have to roll with it."

It is the first year Wilson has been the man behind the mask. It wasn't a difficult selection for Boyd athletic director Ryan Mason, who knew firsthand that the Boyd sophomore could fill the shoes of the school mascot.

"Evan was the first student I asked. I knew his personality would fit well with being Bucky," said Mason.

The Boyd sophomore relishes the role, and would love to be a part of a team with other county mascots. He still has some time to make plans.

Evan plans on reprising his role until he graduates. He has more tricks up his sleeve, but he's keeping them under wraps before unleashing them on his passionate fanbase.

It's just part of the mascot world, one always filled with secrecy.

PLAY BALL!

Games begin the week of April 23

Walk In Registration at the Civic Center NOW until Feb. 25 Monday - Saturday 9am - 4pm

For more info., call Athletic Coordinator, Terry Beard at 931-473-1212

Late Sign Ups (Feb. 26 - Mar. 3) Additional \$10

- Co-Ed Tee Ball (4) \$40
- Boys & Girls Tee Ball (5-6) \$40
- Boys & Girls (6-14) \$50
- Premier Slow Pitch Softball (14-20) \$40

3rd Child Discount \$30