

## THE ART OF RACING

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## Danica not HOF material

I thought there would be no more stories about Danica Patrick, but when the nominees for the NASCAR Hall of Fame were announced, some columnist stated Danica should be considered.

I've mentioned before that I thought too many members were inducted into the Hall of Fame each year and all you have to have done to get in was to have competed for several years. Why does someone think Danica deserves to be in this supposedly elite group? About the only thing she did in her five plus years in Cup racing was to get in the way.

Columnist Michael Massie states Danica will go down as the most overrated NASCAR driver of all time. Columnist Wesley Coburn says it all depends on how you define success. Looking at results and statistics, she has not performed at all, but in terms of marketing and inspiration she was a success. Does that qualify her for the Hall of Fame? I think not!

Danica Patrick raced for Stewart-Haas Racing and was given the best equipment in Cup racing. Tony Stewart, Kevin Harvick, Kurt Busch and Clint Bowyer have all been teammates with Danica, and they all were successful during her years of racing. Her teammates won races and qualified for the playoffs on a consistent basis, even winning the NASCAR Championship during her tenure.

Danica's stats are some of the worst over a five-year period, considering the equipment she was driving. Danica raced in 191 Cup races over seven years and her best finish in the season-ending point standings was 24<sup>th</sup>.

Her only pole was a Daytona restrictor plate race and she had only seven top 10 finishes.

Most fans relate to Danica as a female. All told, Danica finishes as the only woman ever to start the Daytona 500 on the pole (2013) and lead laps on two separate occasions (five in 2013, two in 2014). She also owns the highest ever finish in the 500 (eighth in 2013), a record number of Cup Series top 10s (seven) and a career-best effort of sixth (Atlanta, 2014). That sixth place stands as the second-best finish in NASCAR history for a woman and the best in the sport's modern era. But NASCAR is a sport for drivers, male or female, and results are based on drivers, not gender.

Aric Almirola is the proof we needed to show how poor Danica performed over her career. Almirola replaced Danica in Stewart-Haas Racing in 2018 and has performed on a par with his other teammates. After 16 races in his first season, Almirola has accumulated seven top-10 finishes. In 191 career starts in the Cup Series, Patrick recorded seven total top-10 finishes. Almirola has matched Patrick's total 175 races faster. That's pretty hard to believe considering the car has been borderline irrelevant over the last few seasons. Danica's problem the last few seasons has never been more obvious and her fans can thank Aric Almirola for exposing the issue.



Lacy Garrison photos

Over 200 runners turned out Wednesday morning downtown despite the sweltering heat to participate in the 37th annual Stars and Stripes Fun Run. Pictured is the 1-mile kids run.

## Off to a running start

### Downtown Fourth festivities begin with Stars and Stripes Fun Run

BY LACY GARRISON  
Reporter for the Southern Standard  
(McMinnville, Tennessee)

Runners enjoy local races, especially those that land on a holiday. That's what makes McMinnville's annual Stars and Stripes Fun Run so special. With so many friendly, familiar faces, runners and walkers alike continually show up whether it's a rainy or sweltering morning.

For many locals, this Fourth of July 5K has become a family affair and a traditional way for them to kick start their holiday. Emily and Chad Graves ran with their family and cheered as their nephew crossed the finish line.

"There are eight members of the Graves family who participated in either the 5K or 1-Mile Fun Run," said Emily with a proud smile. "And Rachael, my sister-in-law, is currently at the Farmers Market selling our Graves Family Honey."

With over 200 festive participants Wednesday, spectators watched as a sea of red, white and blue blurred by in patriotic costumes. Plenty of runners

also brought strollers and pets to accompany them during the race including longtime runner Tommy Kell, who pushed his 2-year-old grandson Grayson Martin.

"This was my first race with Grayson," said Tommy while dripping with sweat. "Pushing this stroller made those hills a lot more challenging, but he seemed to enjoy the ride."

For 6-year-old runner Aiden van Vuuren, his competitiveness took over and he ran off leaving his sister Ansley Mullican behind.

"Aiden was only supposed to run one mile, but he took off without me and ended up running the whole 5K," said Ansley. "I'm one proud sis."

The fastest finisher and overall winner was Ray Bishop, a 22-year-old, who decided to participate just the night before. He finished the 5K in 18 minutes, 35 seconds to win the gold trophy.

Anne Myers was the overall female finisher, completing the 5K in 21 minutes, 30 seconds while running in a sparkly blue skirt.

Full results will be published at a later time, if made available.



Overall male and female winners are, from left, Ray Bishop finishing the 5K in 18 minutes, 35 seconds and Anne Myers completing the race in 21 minutes, 30 seconds.

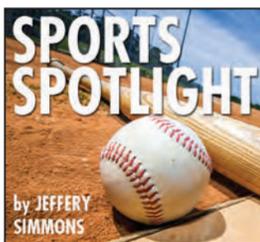
## Great fields not being utilized

Drawing inspiration from "Field of Dreams" seems to have backfired on McMinnville Civic Center officials. The Parks and Recreation Department has spent over \$200,000 to build the nicest ball fields in the Midstate, but teams are yet to come.

In 2015 and 2016, projects were set forth to get the seven fields at the Civic Center in tip-top shape. Included in the cost was field renovations totaling \$86,100 (approved in January 2015), along with adding netting to the Cat Walker and Edley Newman Fields (estimated at \$20,000 in June 2015) and adding lights on the Pete Holt Field (\$80,000 estimate in June 2015, completed during the 2016 season). Other expenditures requested, and since executed, were \$8,000 for bleachers and \$14,000 for foul poles.

All the renovations started with bringing in SAF mixtures for the fields. The change also removed the grass infield at the Edley Newman Field while shifting all fields to portable mounds.

One of the biggest reasons for the changes, particularly the changes to the mounds, was to enhance the ability to hold tournaments for travel teams.



by JEFFERY SIMMONS

"We are going to put portable mounds on all our fields. They will be more universal, so we can play girls fast pitch, as well as kid pitch, on these fields," said McMinnville Parks and Recreation assistant director Justin Scott to city officials in January 2015 when the \$86,100 renovation was approved. "It will open us up to tournaments and different things we would like to see at our complex."

Tournaments became a big talking point again when city officials decided to set prices for renting the fields in May 2015, when nearly \$130,000 had already been spent on much-needed improvements.

"Now that we've spend this money on the fields, we are wanting to bring baseball and softball tournaments to our complex," said Scott in May 2015 during a city meeting.

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Jeffery Simmons photo

One of the main reasons stated when the McMinnville Civic Center fields got a \$200,000 facelift was so tournaments could be held at the complex. The reception has been tepid, with directors citing difficulty in collecting gate fees as a reason not to hold tournaments locally.

# MOVIES IN THE PARK

# PADDINGTON 2

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July 7 at Dusk

Rocket Park

\* If weather is too cold or wet, movie will be shown inside the Civic Center

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