

Herb Emory's Pit Row Report: August is where it's at

I guess August has become my favorite part of the NASCAR season. It used to be November, way back when the NASCAR season finale was held here in Atlanta, but there's been a world of change at Atlanta Motor Speedway and in NASCAR since then.

We had two races in Atlanta back in those days. One early on in March and then for me what used to be the highlight of the year and the season-ending event for NASCAR in November.

The rain and cold experiences in that November NAPA 500 race over the years led to plenty of complaints from drivers, team owners and even fans. The weather concerns prompted NASCAR to move the race first to October and then later on to the present position on the yearly schedule on Labor Day weekend.

August begins the countdown to the AMS action, although this year there's a little less on the racing menu. The Camping World Truck Series race that had traditionally been held following Sprint Cup Time Trials on Friday is gone. I'm guessing Tony Stewart got his dirt track truck event that used to be ours here in Atlanta.

This year race weekend at Atlanta Motor Speedway will only include Nationwide and Sprint Cup NASCAR events. The Friday night substitute for the Truck race will be a race called the Sprint Car Shootout. Not Sprint Cup, but smaller United Sprint Car Series winged-racers will be on the quarter-mile "Thunder Ring," in the debut of sprint car racing at AMS.

There's several events leading up to race weekend in Atlanta where fans get a chance to see drivers. Those driver appearances we know of so far are in the Upcoming Events listing below.

Another big reason August gets the five-star rating is Bristol. I have to consider Bristol as my home track now. Bristol, Asheville-Weaverville Speedway, New Asheville

Speedway and Greenville-Pickens Speedway were the tracks I grew up watching NASCAR stars. The half-mile jewel in Tennessee is the only speedway left out of that group where NASCAR's top divisions run now.

The Weaverville track's last race was in 1969. There's a high school on the land now and The New Asheville Speedway was turned into a city park for walkers and bike riders. Greenville-Pickens is still open, but no Sprint Cup, Nationwide or Camping World action there now.

Bristol now becomes my sentimental favorite. The only track left where my Dad and I went to races together to watch what was then the Grand National drivers run.

We'll pack up again this year and head to the Grove Park Inn in Asheville to use as headquarters to prepare for our Newstalk WSB Radio broadcast from the track. It's a scenic drive past my Granddaddy's old farm in Mars Hill, N.C. headed over the mountain to Thunder Valley. We'll be on the air live from the speedway, with Georgia driver David Ragan, from 3:00 p.m. until 5:00 p.m., before the Saturday night race.

Normally, before all the dust can settle from the Saturday night bumping at Bristol, the drivers are pulling into Atlanta Motor Speedway for another high-speed dance under the lights Labor Day weekend.

The weekend schedule for Atlanta and other events leading up to the Advocare 500 in the area are listed below.
ATLANTA MOTOR SPEEDWAY WKEND SCHED
Friday, August 30, 2013

6:40pm -- NASCAR Sprint Cup Series Time Trials 9:00pm
-- United Sprint Car Series Race Saturday, August 31, 2013
3:00 p.m. to 3:55 p.m. NASCAR Sprint Cup Series practice
4:05 p.m. NASCAR Nationwide Series qualifying
6:00 p.m. to 6:50 p.m. NASCAR Sprint Cup Series final practice 7:00pm -- NASCAR Nationwide Series Race Sunday, September 1, 2013

11:00 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. Speedway Children's Charities Track Walk

2:30 p.m. All grandstand gates open

4:30 p.m. to 6:45 p.m. Pre-race party

7:30 p.m. AdvoCare 500

LEADING UP TO ATLANTA RACE WEEKEND:

AUGUST 30: Racin' & Shootin': The NRA David Ragan Shoot Out will help raise money for the Speedway Children's Charities too. The event is Friday, Aug. 30, at the Cherokee Rose Sporting Resort, located in Griffin, Georgia. The fully automated course is set among towering pines and beautiful old hardwoods that offer a constant changing scenery throughout the year. The course offers exciting targets for all shooters, from the beginner to the experienced competitor.

AUGUST 29: Racin' & Golfin': Peachtree City's Reed Sorenson will host his annual fundraiser for Speedway Children's Charities on Thursday, Aug. 29, at Crystal Lake Golf Club in Hampton. It's a day filled with golf and fun with drivers and racing celebrities! Registration begins at 8 a.m., and play begins with a 10 a.m. For more information on the golf event and Governor's Breakfast call (770) 946-3980 or e-mail gingerm@atlantamotorspeedway.com.

AUGUST 30: AMS Race Weekend: Sprint Cup qualifying at Atlanta Motor Speedway is set for Friday, Aug. 30. Time trials begin at 6:40 p.m., followed by a winged-United Sprint Car Series race on the small Thunder Ring track. The Nationwide Series race is scheduled for 7:00 p.m. Saturday, Aug. 31. The main event for the Sprint Cup drivers will be Sunday, Sept. 1, at 7:30 p.m. More information is available at 770-946-4211 or at www.atlantamotorspeedway.com.

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