

Checkered Flag Falls on Season With No Big Surprises

Another NACAR season is gone with the wind and frankly, my dear, I don't give a damn. Sorry if that offends anyone and it just might, unless you had the chance to see the type racing that was started by our founding fathers down in Daytona in 1947.

After gazing into my 1962 Ford hubcap, I think I predicted correctly in last month's Motorsport America that Jimmie Johnson would be the Chase winner so no surprise or delight there. Please notice I label Johnson as a Chase winner, not a champion. Richard Petty and Dale Earnhardt won seven championships based on their performance in all of the point races run in the season. There were no magic point resets, no free passes and no working on cars during red flags. Johnson has won six Chases in one form or another. Petty and Earnhardt won seven Championships.

I guess you can easily tell the thrill is gone for me when it comes to Sprint Cup these days. When you have seen Tiny Lund and Ralph Earnhardt duel at Greenville-Pickens and Earnhardt, Wallace and Labonte battle in Bristol, what FOX calls exciting these days just doesn't cut the mustard for me. This year it was one of those seasons where the bad and the ugly won over the good.

The high points of the 2013 NASCAR season were precious and few. The number one thrill of the year came May 5th on the last lap in Talladega. Unadilla, Georgia's David Ragan wound up his little-independent Ford race team, and in true David vs. Goliath form, won the 400-mile event at the superspeedway. It was the one

and only victory by a team with less than 3 cars against the rich-giant teams during the year.

Watching Georgia drivers Kyle Fowler, Chris Cockrum, Chase Elliott, Ryan Sieg, Max Gresham and John Wes Townley in the Nationwide and Truck races provided the most excitement for me on race weekends.

Then there was the last minute thrill during race weekend at Atlanta Motor Speedway. Karen and I were driving away in the Mayberry Patrol car when I noticed at van blinking it's lights and blowing the horn closing in my rear view mirror like an Earnhardt in Talladega. When I stopped and the van pulled up it was Bobby Allison. Now nothing can take the sting out of a Kyle the Pile win at Atlanta Motor Speedway except one of NASCAR's best drivers ever chasing you down to say hello.

The only other entertainment was the joy I felt when Michael Waltrip was caught cheating AGAIN in the last race of the regular season. The only problem for me was that NASCAR didn't suspend all Waltrip's cars from participating in the Chase. There was another moment of joy I experienced when I received the news that NAPA Auto Parts was leaving Waltrip. (Although I hope the rumors aren't true that NAPA will end up part of Joe Gibbs Racing.)

There were so many major downers for me this year. We lost friend and Atlanta Motor Speedway Public Relations Queen Marcy Scott and Georgia Racing Hall of Famer Charlie Padgett.

We lost another race at AMS too. The NASCAR trucks skipped Atlanta on Labor Day

weekend and were replaced by winged-Sprint Cars.

Some of the other old traditions were brushed off like a fly on the banana pudding too. The rule that kept teams from working on race cars during red flags was quickly waived when one of Joe Gibbs' precious cars was damaged during the Coke World 600 by a malfunctioning television camera.

I threw up the white flag at that point. Not to signal the last lap, but to signal my surrender of ever hoping to return to the type competition displayed during the era of the Intimidator, the King, Fireball Roberts and the other statesmen of stock car racing.

Georgia Racing Statesmen: The latest members of the Georgia Racing Hall of Fame are officially inducted this month. Charles Barrett, Hank Blalock, Frank Christian, Freddy Fryar and Huston Platt are the 2013 inductees. Jim Minter was also honored as winner of the Jimmy Mosteller Excellence In Motorsports Journalism Award. Many of you are familiar with the racing coverage provided for over the past 20 years by Jim Minter's son, Rick. The Georgia Racing Hall of Fame is located in Dawsonville.

Giving Thanks: I have to say a big THANK YOU to everyone that came out to volunteer and to donate to our annual Newstalk WSB Toys for Tots Fest on December 7th. Karen, Fred Harris and I couldn't put on the toy drive for the Marines if it wasn't for the hard work and donations made by our friends and businesses in the community.

This year's event was a big success that will pay off in thousands of children's smiles and laughs Christmas morning. Folks brought more toys than they ever had before and over \$20,000 was collected for the Marines to go shopping for the children served by their program.

Special thanks goes to Doug and Diana Cole, of Cole Motorsports Inc. Not only did they provide many of the vehicles on display, but they put thousands of toys into the hands of the Marines to distribute. Superior Plumbing, Archer Restoration, 1st Choice Plumbing, Georgia Blue Knights 7 and Newstalk WSB Radio also helped with significant donations to the program.

NASCAR Nationwide Series driver Kyle Fowler deserves a 21 gun salute as well. The Smyrna driver and his family have been volunteering and donating for many years, back when Kyle was first beginning his racing career



in Legends cars. He was there with his race car again this year signing autographs, letting fans get photos with him and even helping load and unload toys as they came in.

Dave Knight and his partners at Vivid Marketing in Smyrna provided the Dale Jr. and Jeff Gordon race cars and simulators which are always big hits with the kids.

I also appreciate the GBI, Douglas County Sheriff's, Douglasville Police and Douglas County Fire Departments for their continued participation and support.

My radio and TV comrades, Neal Boortz, Mark Arum, Jason Durden, Rhurbarb Jones, Doug Turnbull, Smilin' Mark McKay and Sam Memmolo, were a treat to the visitors as well and kept the crowds entertained along with music from the Mars Hill Porch Pickers and Jayron Weaver.

The Dairy Queen restaurants on Dallas Highway in Cobb, in Hiram and in Carrollton also helped collect this year as well. We all cheered when the Sweetwater Shrine Club arrived with a trailer full of bikes!

And a tip of the helmet to our own Fred Hanyon at Motorsport America for spreading the word and capturing our special moments on film!

God Bless all of you that came and helped and The Bar-B-Que House and WSB wish you Merry Christmas and Happy New Year.

If you are reading this before Christmas and want to provide some last minute help for the Marines toys can be dropped off at Publix stores and their website has more information at www.atlantatoysfortots.org.



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