

Captain Herb Emory: Win or Lose-Just Making A NASCAR Race Is A Badge of Honor

The season couldn't have had a better start for my wife and me. Karen and I had the privilege to stand on Daytona International Speedway Pit Road as the command was given to start the engines in the Camping World Truck Series race.

It wasn't the first time we have been standing on a pit road for the command, but it was the first time we were standing on the Daytona pit road with a truck that had our name on it.

We were there to support and visit with Rockdale County driver Chris Cockrum and his family. Chris has done us the honor of making CaptainHerb.net, a sponsor on his truck in the races he has run over the past few years.

It was a weekend with a lot of smiles watching the whole family participate in getting prepared for the race. His Mom, Dad, Grandmother, brother and girlfriend were all there in the motorhome to lend their help and support.

There was food, drink and fellowship as we all told racing stories gathered under the awning of the motorhome waiting for the track dryers to do their business so the race could begin.

The pit road experience was much different than I had experienced before at Atlanta, Bristol, Talladega and Darling-

ton. This time I had a dog in the hunt and we were at one of the most important race tracks in the world about to compete.

Chris seemed much more relaxed than I would have been getting ready for the 200 mile-an-hour laps around Daytona. There were hugs from Grandma, Mom and his girl and last minute handshakes and encouragement from the rest of us gathered as he sat ready for action.

I have to admit sending a friend onto the Daytona battleground had its less than pleasant moments. We were pumped with excitement waiting for the truck to roll down pit road and onto the track, but I was saying a prayer as we watched him pull away. A prayer to keep our friend safe during the 100 laps that would follow.

We all lined up to watch the action from behind the pit stalls. The only part of the track we could see was the frontstretch. We relied on the giant TV screen to keep our eyes on the rest of the action around the track.

During the first pit stop there was a problem with the gas can. We couldn't see Chris from pit road, but we did see he wasn't in the pack of trucks that had just pitted. The time to fuel the truck put Chris a lap down early, but the next cau-

tion put Cockrum back on the lead lap and the truck had enough speed to run in the middle of the 36 machines.

All the good turned suddenly bad with around 25 laps to go. The "Big One," a term race fans use to describe the crashes at Daytona and Talladega, happened. The track was blocked and there was nowhere to go except into one of the trucks ahead of him.

Chris was taken to the infield care center and when he emerged he didn't want to ride with his brother in the golf cart to the garage. He wanted to walk and not talk.

When we made it the garage, there was Chris standing off to the side quietly glaring at the remains of his crashed machine without speaking a word to anyone. He was depressed, mad, angry and sad at himself.

It appeared he thought he had let his family and us down.

That wasn't the case at all. I finally worked up the courage to approach him, give a slap on the back and proceeded to let loose just what I thought about the situation at hand.

I had to remind him of the millions that were watching the race at home on television and that he was one of only 36



people in the world that had been blessed with the privilege of running the race that night. That there were many people, including myself, that imagined and had hopes that they could be the one behind the wheel of that truck when it took the green flag.

I continued my sermon by adding that there were plenty of folks that would love to be there standing in that driver's suit, standing in the garage and surveying the damage caused by a crash that just couldn't be avoided.

Karen and I were proud. We were proud of Chris and his family. They had beat the odds and were in Daytona running a race and they did it by working together as a family.

Yep, we all wish the crash hadn't happened and that Chris would have had a great finish, but the amount of pride I felt before and after the race for being invited to be part of that family will not be equaled anytime soon.



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