

The Racing Reporter

By: Gerald Hodges

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Awesome Bill is really awesome at Brickyard

INDIANAPOLIS, Ind.-Driver, Bill Elliott and car owner, Ray Evernham are the hottest duo since Batman and Robin. Elliott dominated the ninth running of the Brickyard 400, leading 87 of the 160 laps.

The 46-year-old veteran from Dawsonville, Ga., who late last season won a seven-year winning streak with a victory at Homestead-Miami Speedway, won Sunday's Brickyard 400 at Indianapolis Motor Speedway for his second straight Winston Cup victory.

His other win came last weekend at Pocono.

With the win, Elliott joins Jeff Gordon, Dale Jarrett, Dale Earnhardt, Ricky Rudd and Bobby Labonte, other winning Brickyard drivers.

"This is the greatest, man, this is the greatest," said Elliott in victory lane. "Man, Rusty was tough. His old piece went that straightaway. I thought if I could get in him I'd be okay. Finally, I got under him. This car was absolutely awesome. To come here and win at Indy, quite a tribute to this team."

Elliott gained the lead for the last time from Rusty Wallace at the exit of Turn 3 with 11 laps remaining, then built a several-car-length lead before the day's eighth and final caution flew for debris in Turn 2.

On the single file restart with four laps remaining, Elliott jumped out to a 10-car-length advantage to win by 1.45-seconds over Wallace.

Wallace, who appeared to have the stronger car on the straightaways, held the lead until Elliott passed him for the final time on lap 149. Wallace, who started 35th, has now finished third three times in Indy.

"That was a really great second place," Wallace said. "We went from 35th to 10th in nothing flat. I really thought we'd win it, but I got a little loose off of four and Elliott got it."

Matt Kenseth finished third, followed by Ryan Newman. Kevin Harvick rounded out the top-five, while three-time Brickyard winner Gordon finished sixth.

"I knew our car was good, but I didn't know it'd be that good," said Gordon, who started 21st Sunday. "We faded a little bit in the middle of the race, but made some adjustments and just drove to the front. Good day

for us."

Polesitter, Tony Stewart, who led during the early and middle stages of the race, came home 12th.

On lap 37, Kurt Busch got together with Jimmy Spencer heading into Turn 3. As the two cars entered Turn 3, Busch came down low, and appeared to slow. Spencer touched the rear of Busch's No. 97, sending Busch hard into the Turn 3 wall.

After getting out of his car, Busch gestured in a shrugging manner towards Spencer. As Spencer circled around again, Busch pointed at his backside, then up in the air.

Indianapolis Post-Race Notes: Chevrolet has won the most Winston Cup races here: four of the eight held; Ford has next with three, and Dodge now has one.

Chevrolets have collected three Winston Cup pole positions here, one less than Ford.

Jeff Gordon, driving the No. 24 DuPont Chevrolet Monte Carlo, has won the most Winston Cup races here, three.

Finishing order: 1. Bill Elliott, 2. Rusty Wallace, 3. Matt Kenseth, 4. Ryan Newman, 5. Kevin Harvick, 6. Jeff Gordon, 7. Steve Park, 8. Robby Gordon, 9. Jimmie Johnson, 10. Dale Jarrett, 11. Bobby Labonte, 12. Tony Stewart, 13. Terry Labonte, 14. Ken Schrader, 15. Dave Blaney, 16. Michael Waltrip, 17. Hut Stricklin, 18. Ricky Rudd, 19. Jeff Green, 20. Joe Nemechek, 21. Ted Musgrave, 22. Dale Earnhardt Jr., 23. Bobby Hamilton, 24. Jerry Nadeau, 25. Kyle Petty, 26. John Andretti, 27. Sterling Marlin, 28. Mark Martin, 29. Jeff Burton, 30. Ward Burton, 31. Jimmy Spencer, 32. Kenny Wallace, 33. Ricky Craven, 34. Todd Bodine, 35. Elliott Sadler, 36. Mike Skinner, 37. Johnny Benson, 38. Casey Atwood, 39. Jeremy Mayfield, 40. Geoffrey Bodine, 41. Kurt Busch, 42. Brett Bodine, 43. Mike Wallace.

Top 10 points leaders: 1. Marlin-2866, 2. Johnson-2773, 3. Martin-2757, 4. J. Gordon-2741, 5. R. Wallace-2695, 6. Elliott-2656, 7. Stewart-2655, 8. Rudd-2634, 9. Stewart-2600, 10. Busch-2580.

Busch race goes to Biffle

The results of the Busch Series Kroger 200, run Saturday, August 3 at Clermont, Ind.: 1. Greg Biffle, 2. Jason Keller, 3. Scott Wimmer, 4. Johnny Sauter, 5. Kenny Wallace, 6. Jon Wood, 7. Ricky Hendrick, 8. Jamie McMurray, 9. Tony Raines, 10. Ron Hornaday, 11. Scott Riggs, 12.

Todd Bodine, 13. Randy LaJoie, 14. Mike Laughlin, 15. Kasey Kahne, 16. Stacy Compton, 17. Jack Sprague, 18. Mike Wallace, 19. Brian Vickers, 20. Shane Hall, 21. Lowell Bennett, 22. Larry Foyt, 23. Chad Chaffin, 24. Brad Teague, 25. Casey Mears, 26. Larry Genselman, 27. Jimmy Kitchens, 28. Ron Young, 29. Brian Weber, 30. Kevin Grubb, 31. Bobby Hamilton Jr., 32. Kevin LePage, 33. Tim Sauter, 34. Butch Miller, 35. Kerry Earnhardt, 36. Jay Sauter, 37. Ashton Lewis, 38. Hank Parker Jr., 39. Shane Hines, 40. Hermie Sadler, 41. Mark Harmon, 42. Jason Schuler, 43. Phil Bonfield.

Top 10 points leaders: 1. Biffle-3214, 2. Keller-3132, 3. Sprague-2927, 4. Riggs-2804, 5. Wimmer-2802, 6. McLaughlin-2733, 7. K. Wallace-2706, 8. McMurray-2684, 9. Hamilton Jr.-2681, 10. LaJoie-2677.

Bliss continues as truck leader

Top 10 Craftsman Truck Series points leaders: 1. Mike Bliss-2079, 2. Terry Cook-2074, 3. Jason Leffler-2024, 4. Ted Musgrave-2023, 5. Crawford Pressley-2021, 6. Rick Crawford-2012, 7. David Starr-1993, 8. Dennis Setzer-1971, 9. Travis Kvapil-1910, 10. Coy Gibbs-1838.

Harvick wins IROC title

Final True Value IROC (International Race of Champions) standings: 1. Kevin Harvick (NASCAR)-54, 2. Buddy Lazier (IRL)-49, 3. Dale Jarrett (NASCAR)-49, 4. Helio Castroneves (IRL)-43, 5. Bobby Labonte (NASCAR)-43, 6. Tony Stewart (NASCAR)-42, 7. Al Unser Jr. (IRL)-39, 8. Jack Sprague (NASCAR)-36, 9. Scott Sharp (IRL)-36, 10. Sterling Marlin (NASCAR)-35, 11. Sam Hornish (IRL)-35, 12. Danny Lasoski (IRL)-30.

Weekend Racing

The NASCAR Busch Series has the weekend off. The Craftsman Trucks are at Nashville, while the Winston Cup cars will be on the road course at Watkins Glen, N.Y.

Saturday, Aug. 10, Craftsman Truck Series Federated Auto Parts 200, Starting time: 9 p.m. (EST); TV: ESPN; Distance: 188 laps/200 miles; Defending champion: Scott Riggs, Dodge.

Sunday, Aug. 11, Winston Cup Sirius Satellite Radio At The Glen, Starting time: 12:30 p.m. (EST); TV: NBC; Distance: 90 laps/220.5 miles. Watkins Glen track information: Date of race: 1949; Size: 2.45 miles road course; Turns: 11; Banking: Ranges from 6 to 10 degrees.

Racing Trivia Question: What make car will the Joe Gibbs teams be running next season?

Answer To Last Week's Question: Two weeks ago NASCAR fined Dale Jarrett's team 25 points because of Jarrett's height of his No. 88 UPS Ford was too low.

"We asked fans if NASCAR should continue to deduct points, or should they levy dollar fines?"

Fan Comment: P. S. Parkersburg, Illinois: "Several years ago after Rusty Wallace won a Bristol race, NASCAR waited over a day before they decided his engine was legal. They said, 'it was within tolerances.' Why not have hard and fast rules, without these tolerances?"

J.M., Taylorsville, North Carolina: "Once when Dale Earnhardt Jr. car was low they only fined him. Is there two different standards in NASCAR?"

C.H.L., E. Lansing, Michigan: "Whatever it takes to stop teams from cheating."

J.T., Eaton, Ohio: "If a car passes inspection before the race, why would it be found illegal after the race?"

B.M., Elizabethtown, Tennessee: "Do whatever needs to be done to enforce the rules."

P.F., Edgemere, Maryland: "I think the money they are fined is just a slap on the wrist. What I don't understand is, if a car has gone through several inspections before the race, why is it suddenly illegal. What about all the other cars that aren't inspected after the race? How many are illegal?"

S.W., Irmo, S.C.: "What is a rule violation? Did Jarrett's team break a rule, or did they just bend it some? NASCAR isn't very clear on these kinds of things."

SOUND OFF: If you have an opinion about NASCAR or Sunday's Winston Cup racing and want to be heard, call within one hour after the end of the race at 1-800-726-7022. The call is free, and if we use your comments in our next column, we will send you a photo of your favorite driver.

Gerald Hodges/The Racing Reporter is a syndicated NASCAR columnist. If you have a racing question that you would like answered send it to The Racing Reporter, P.O. Box 160711, Mobile, AL 36616, or e-mail it to: 110335.405@compuserve.com

Smoko and the Early "Come-On-Backers"

The racing world needs another "Smoko."

Henry "Smoko" Yunkick went by "Smoko," was born and raised

on a small farm in Pennsylvania.

He was called away for World War II. During the war he was a pilot, flying mostly B-17 bombers in the Pacific, but he also flew over the Himalayas for the Flying Tigers in India.

He had other stints in oil drilling and gold mining in South America before getting involved in racing.

I thought it would be nice to write something about him because in 1960, he was part of Jim Rathman's team that won the Indianapolis 500. And since the Winston Cup teams have been racing at Indianapolis, I kind of thought it might be appropriate to talk about Smoko.

Most fans only remember Smoko because of his connections with NASCAR. But NASCAR was only a small part of his life in his early racing years.

After the war, he continued flying, including a helicopter charter out of the backyard of the garage. He started out in a small shop in Daytona Beach in 1947.

"Like I said, I had a small garage, and you had to have some kind of attitude to run the kind of garage I ran," he said. "We had a sign and slogan, and it's still up there today. Best Dan Garage In Town."

"And I believed it. I believed I could fix your car better than anyone else. Every driver that's out there on Sunday believes he's going to win. There's no good driver going to run for second, and that's the way I've always been."

He raced with NASCAR from 1946 to 1971 and won two Winston Cup Championships as chief mechanic and owner. He raced Indy from 1958 to 1975 and won in 1960 as co-chief mechanic on Rathman's team.

The list of people who have driven his race cars, included names like the Allensons, Mario Andretti, Tony Bettenhausen, Zora Duntov, A.J. Foyt, Junior Johnson, Gordon Johncock, Fireball Roberts, the Rathmans, Loyd Ruby, Johnnie Ruthford, Mickey Thompson, and Billy Volkovich, Jr.

The last time I talked with Smoko was at the NAPA 500 at Atlanta, in November 2000. He died the following May.

"I don't race any more," he said. "But there ain't a week that goes by that somebody doesn't want me to do something for them for nothing. Then I say, would you ask Dale Earnhardt to do that for nothing? Then they would say, 'no,' and then I would say,

I'm not going to do it either.

"By that time the person thinks you have a nasty attitude. But I don't give a damn what they think. I was the guy that lived 30-years eating cold hot dogs and drinking stale coffee. So I can think and say what ever I feel like."

Brash and upstart, but always full of ideas that worked, his cars won 57 races and two Grand National Championships.

But his ideas weren't restricted to racing. One of his earliest accomplishments was helping General Motors develop the original small block Chevrolet engine.

He went on to receive patents on everything from variable power steering systems to movable race-track barriers, and he had his problems with NASCAR.

"They were having problems with steel gas tanks after 'Fireball' (Roberts) was burned to death in his car," continued Smoko. "So in 1965, I vowed I would never run a steel tank in one of my cars."

"So I made a rubber one according to helicopter specifications with the help of Firestone. We went out to run the Daytona 500 in '65 and got disqualified. They said I couldn't run with that type tank."

"I started to go home, then France (Bill Sr.) came over and kept on shooting me the bull until finally I got po'd, and said, have you seen Fireball lately? Finally, he said, 'go ahead and race, but you've got to take it out before the next race.'"

"I said, France, I'll need snowplows in hell before I'll ever take that tank out of my car, or race again without a rubber tank."

"And then the next year, they invented rubber fuel cells."

Next, he gives his philosophy on racer drivers.

"If you was a racer 50 or 60 years ago, these people today are not. It's just that different. There's no way to compare races of 50 years ago with those of today. In the first place, a racer back then had the status of a 'Come-On-Backer.'"

"You know what a 'Come-On-Backer' is?"

"That's the fellow who is in the back of the garbage truck and says, 'come on back, come on back.' Continued next week."

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