

Benson And Bowyer, The Other NASCAR Champions



Pictured above are team owner Bill Davis and 2008 NASCAR Craftsman Truck Series champion Johnny Benson.

By Gerald Hodges
THE RACING REPORTER

Johnny Benson and Clint Bowyer have had great seasons. Benson won the Craftsman Truck Series title, and Bowyer held off Carl Edwards to win the Nationwide Series.

Benson was honored as NASCAR's 2008 Craftsman Truck Series champion this past week at the Annual Awards Banquet in Miami.

At 45, it seemed that Benson might have reached the end of his racing career.

It had been 13 years since he won the Busch Series champion (now the Nationwide), so it was only natural for Benson to believe he might have reached the finish line.

But Bill Davis had other plans. He hired Benson on a full-time basis in 2005 to drive his No. 23 Toyota, beginning at Michigan. He finished third in the standings a year ago and was the runner-up to Todd Bodine in 2006. He has 14 race victories during the past three seasons.

"I have to really thank Bill and Gail Davis," Benson said. "They've given me a great opportunity, along with Toyota, to come and do this. It was just awesome. I'm glad that we could get that for them. It means more to me to get that for them. They've done so much for me."

"When we started this deal, the goal was to try to get a championship, and it's been amazing to get 14 wins and now a championship in the last three years. Bill has been in the sport for many, many years. He's put a lot of blood, sweat, tears in this, a lot of money, and he deserves it. He deserves more than one, and hopefully he'll get more than one before this is all done with."

"Words can't describe this. I was kind of crying down the backstretch, but hopefully I'm over it. Just when Craftsman Truck Series director Wayne Auton came over the radio to say congratulations, that's way cool."

"My wife kept telling me that I only had to win by one. She kept saying, 'God already has a plan, it's all set, and it's going to be what it's going to be.' That was my approach going into the race."

Benson announced earlier this month that he was leaving BDR at the end of the season, so the championship provides a perfect final chapter to the past four and a half years.

"You know, it is bittersweet to talk about that, but in the same token, I really want to talk about the championship and what it's meant for us because that's what this is about," Benson continued. "Next year doesn't have anything to do with right now. Right now it's about the championship."

Final top-10 Craftsman Truck Series drivers: 1. Benson-3725, 2. Hornaday-3718, 3. Bodine-3621, 4. Darnell-3412, 5. Crafton-3392, 6. Skinner-3363, 7. Crawford-3315, 8. Setzer-3197, 9. Sprague-3125, 10. Cook-3072

Bowyer wins Nationwide series by 21 points

No one was hotter down the stretch than Carl Edwards, whose Roush Fenway Racing team won three of the last four races - and finished second in the fourth.

Still, Clint Bowyer was steady and did what he had to do to hang on to the points lead. In the Ford 300 at Homestead, Bowyer's No. 2 Richard Childress Racing crew copied Edwards' two-tire strategy midway through the race, keeping Edwards in sight the rest of the race, and taking the championship by 21 points.

"Carl, he's been a long time friend from our early racing days, and I think it's a true testament to the steppingstones of NASCAR," Bowyer said. "We both came from the Weekly Racing Series, went through the regional touring series and he went to the Truck series."

"We've raced each other for a long time. He's from the Midwest (Columbia, Mo.). He's last year's champion, and it feels great to be able to beat him."

Edwards, who won seven Nationwide Series races, was the 2007 Nationwide champion.

"If I've got to get beat by somebody, I want it to be a dirt racer from Emporia, Kansas (Bowyer's hometown). Clint is one of the best," said Edwards.

"But we'll be back next year, and I hope Clint will, too. There's no shame in giving 100 percent and finishing second. That's all we could do."

Final top-10 Nationwide drivers: 1. Bowyer-5132, 2. Edwards-5111, 3. Keselowski-4794, 4. Ragan-4525, 5. Bliss-4518, 6. Kyle Busch-4461, 7. Reutimann-4388, 8. M. Wallace-4128, 9. Leffler-4086, 10. Ambrose-3991

Stewart moves to his own team

For awhile Sunday, it looked like Tony Stewart might go out as a winner after he passed Matt Kenseth for the lead with just 22 laps remaining. But it wasn't to be. Eleven laps later, he pitted for fuel and wound up finishing ninth.

It was Stewart's last race for Joe Gibbs Racing after 10 years. He now moves to his own team, Stewart-Haas.

"I wish I could say I'm happy for this but I'm not," said Stewart. "It's something I decided, but as you can see, we're all emotional. It's hard knowing that after 10 years being with these guys, it'll be something different next year."

"I'm excited about what I'm doing, but I'm not excited about leaving these guys."

Greg Zipadelli is the only crew chief Stewart has worked under. Zipadelli will remain at JGR as crew chief for youngster Joey Logano, who will take over Stewart's seat in the No. 20 Home Depot Chevrolet.

Final top-12 Sprint Cup Standings: 1. Johnson-6684, 2. Edwards-6615, 3. Biffle-6467, 4. Harvick-6408, 5. Bowyer-6381, 6. Burton-6335, 7. J. Gordon-6316, 8. Hamlin-6214, 9. Stewart-6202, 10. Kyle Busch-6186, 11. Kenseth-6184, 12. Earnhardt-6127

The remaining top-35 Cup drivers: 13. David Ragan - 4,99, 14. Kasey Kahne - 4,085, 15. Martin Truex Jr. - 3,839, 16. Jamie McMurray - 3,809, 17. Ryan Newman - 3,735, 18. Kurt Busch - 3,635, 19. Brian Vickers - 3,580, 20. Casey Mears - 3,527, 21. Bobby Labonte - 3,448, 22. David Reutimann - 3,397, 23. Travis Kvapil - 3,384, 24. Elliott Sadler - 3,364, 25. J.P. Montoya - 3,329, 26. Paul Menard - 3,151, 27. David Gilliland - 3,064, 28. Mark Martin - 3,022, 29. Michael Waltrip - 2,889, 30. Dave Blaney - 2,851, 31. Scott Riggs - 2,797, 32. Reed Sorenson - 2,795, 33. Robby Gordon - 2,770, 34. Regan Smith - 2,672, 35. Sam Hornish Jr. - 2,523

Robby Gordon gears up for Baja 1000

Proving once again that he never tires of racing, Robby Gordon left this weekend's NASCAR Sprint Cup Series finale in Homestead, Fla., and headed straight for Ensenada, Mexico, to compete in the 41st annual Tecate SCORE Baja 1000, one of the most grueling off-road races in the world. Gordon, a three-time overall winner, hopes to pilot his No. 77 Monster Energy/Toyo Tires Chevy CK 1500 to his fourth victory.

The Baja 1000 is the world's longest nonstop and most famous desert race. This year's race will be a challenging 631.35-mile journey around the northern Baja California peninsula, beginning and ending in Ensenada. It will be trying even to the most skilled racers as they weave their way over rocky desert landscape and mountain terrain.

Next week: NASCAR's Early Heroes

Racing trivia question: Which Series will Sam Hornish race in 2009?

Last week's question: Who do you think was the "Most Improved Driver of 2008"? Answer: According to fan response we received, it was David Ragan.

You may contact the Racing Reporter at: hodge@earthlink.net.

Racing Roundup

By Brad Vores

Lincoln Speedway honored its top drivers at its banquet this past weekend at the Holiday Inn in York.

Brian Montieth and the Jerry Parrish-owned team were honored as first-time 410 Sprint car champions at the track, while Jeff Rohrbaugh and the Roy Vincent-owned team won the 358 Sprint title. Other track champions were Sam Gallagher in the Thundercars, and Gene Knaub was honored as the 358 Late Model champion.

Despite not winning a feature all season, Montieth thrilled the fans with 10 top-five finishes and 22 top-10 finishes in 22 starts for his first-ever championship. Team crew chief Scott Zellers was named the Mechanic of the Year, while Adam Lawrence won Rookie of the Year, Cris Eash won the Sportsmanship Award and Cody Darrah was Most Improved Driver.

Rohrbaugh's first-ever 358 title at Lincoln also won the title without a feature win but had seven top-five finishes in 13 starts. Ricky Stonebraker won Rookie of the Year, while Chad Criswell won both the Most Improved and Sportsmanship awards.

Gallagher's Thundercar title was also his first-ever Lincoln title, while Mikey Guise won Rookie of the Year, Mike Slaybaugh won Sportsmanship and Gino Comi won Most Improved.

Lincoln Speedway opens the 2009 racing season with 410 Sprints only on Saturday, February 28, 2009.

Last weekend Selingsgrove Speedway honored its champions at its banquet where Pat Cannon was honored as a first-time 358 Sprint car champ at the track.

Cannon won six times and finished in the top 10 in all 20 starts at the track. Fifteen of those finishes were either first or second.

Special awards in the 358 Sprints went to Steve Cannon (Most Improved), Mark Freeland (Sportsmanship), Chuck Paige (Rookie) and Pat Cannon (Hard Charger).

Jeff Rine was honored as a four-time Late Model champion at Selingsgrove on the heels of five feature wins. Other awards went to Kyle Rhoads (Most Improved), Gary Beward (Sportsmanship), Bryan BernHeisel (Rookie) and Rine (Hard Charger).

Selingsgrove will open the 2009 season with a two-day show for the Race of Champions Dirt Modifieds on Friday March 20 and Saturday March 21.

That's a wrap on this as we wish everyone a very happy Thanksgiving while we are counting the days until Penn State's possible trip to the Rose Bowl, unless a trip to the BCS Championship comes their way in the next two weeks. What a great season and another Big 10 Championship! Until next time, have a good one.

Allegany College Awards Open House Scholarships

Scholarships were awarded to five prospective students who attended the recent 12th annual open house at Bedford County Campus of Allegany College of Maryland.

The scholarships, totalling \$1,500 and presented by random drawing, are for use at ACM-Bedford County and were available thanks to support by the Bedford County Regional Education foundation for ACM.

The individual from the area receiving a \$500 scholarship was Shirley Everts of Crystal Spring.

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Home Care staff members open their office to the public at 213 South Second Street in McConnellsburg for free blood pressure screenings the first Tuesday of every month.

FCMC Home Care Services Offering Blood Pressure Screenings

Fulton County Medical Center Home Care Services will be offering free blood pressure screenings the first Tuesday of every month. Beginning December 2, 2008, Home Care invite you to come in and meet its team between the hours of 10 a.m. and 2 p.m. at their location at 213 South Second Street in McConnellsburg.

Fulton County Medical Center has been providing Home Care services since 1996. The mission of FCMC is to continuously improve the health of the community. Home Care accomplishes that by taking care of patients in their own environment. Patients cared for in their own homes feel more independent and in greater control of their lives. Home Care brings specialized health services into the homes of persons who need intensive, ongoing care as well as short-term follow-up care.

Home Care services include

skilled nursing care, home health aides, IV and chemotherapy, wound care, physical, speech, and occupational therapies, medical social services, and palliative care of terminally ill patients.

In addition to providing free screenings every Tuesday of the month at its office location, Home Care also provides free blood pressure screenings at the following locations:

McConnellsburg senior center - first Thursday of every month 11 a.m. - 12:30 p.m.

Hanns Apts - second Monday of every month 11 a.m. - 11:30 a.m.

Warfordsburg Senior Center - third Wednesday of every month 11 a.m. - 12:30 p.m.

Hustontown Senior Center - third Thursday of every month 11:15 a.m. - 11:45 a.m.

For more information, please contact the Home Care Department at 717-485-6118.

"Operation Safe Holiday" Kicks Off In Time For Holiday Travel

Department partners with state, local police to enforce safe driving

With millions of motorists planning to travel for Thanksgiving, PennDOT Secretary Allen D. Biehler, PE, announced recently that the department will launch Operation Safe Holiday to improve highway safety.

PennDOT will work with state and local police to increase traffic safety enforcement. While police will crack down on all traffic violations, increased focus will be placed on un buckled, impaired and aggressive drivers throughout the holiday season.

"I am calling on each and every motorist on our highways to drive safely this holiday season," Biehler said. "Although we can all be distracted by the hustle and bustle of the season, please remember these important driving tips: buckle up, slow down and never drive impaired."

As part of Operation Safe Holiday, police will use checkpoints and roving patrols in addition to regular traffic safety patrols. Departments may also introduce BOLT operations, which is when a safety checkpoint later turns into a sobriety checkpoint at the same location.

According to PennDOT, there were 4,925 crashes resulting in 46 fatalities during the Thanksgiving holiday period last year. The official driving period includes the weekends before and after the holiday.

To improve their safety on the highway, PennDOT encourages motorists to make sure they are well-rested and alert. During long trips, it is a good idea to rotate drives and take frequent breaks. Motorists should also give their full attention

to the road and avoid distractions, such as cellphones.

Along with practicing these safe driving behaviors, PennDOT reminds motorists that weather and road conditions can change rapidly this time of year and motorists need to be alert. As a precaution, motorists should check the forecast before traveling and make sure their vehicles are equipped with a winter emergency kit. Enhanced information on road conditions and links to weather forecasts can be found at www.dot.state.pa.us under "Travel Information."

Finally, PennDOT encourages motorists to use caution in work zones. While the department does not anticipate major delays due to construction, motorists may encounter minor delays for maintenance activities. The added traffic volumes may also cause delays along heavily-traveled routes.

Keystone Offers Free HIV Testing

According to the Health and Human Services Administration, in 2007 the estimated number of persons living with HIV worldwide was 33.2 million and there were 2.7 million people newly infected with the virus.

In 1988 the World Health Organization established December 1 as World AIDS Day. Every year, organizations and individuals around the world use December 1 as an opportunity to raise awareness about the global AIDS epidemic.

Keystone Healthcare Network in Chambersburg, a public not-for-profit organization that offers high quality healthcare to anyone and everyone, leads the fight against HIV/AIDS in Franklin County and surrounding areas by being in the forefront of HIV/AIDS prevention efforts as well as HIV/AIDS treatment in our community. Keystone provides comprehensive related services for families infected and affected by HIV/AIDS.

Every year on World AIDS Day Keystone refocuses and rededicates its message of hope, fighting not only the disease, but also the stigma and discrimination of this epidemic in the community.

To help stop the spread of HIV, Keystone encourages everyone to know their HIV status. Throughout the year Keystone offers free and confidential HIV testing that requires no blood draw.

Free, confidential HIV testing is available at Keystone Health, 820 Fifth Avenue, Chambersburg, PA 17201; 9:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m., Monday - Friday

For more information on HIV testing, call Vanessa at 717-217-4242.

For more information regarding Keystone, please visit the Web site at www.keystonehealth.org.

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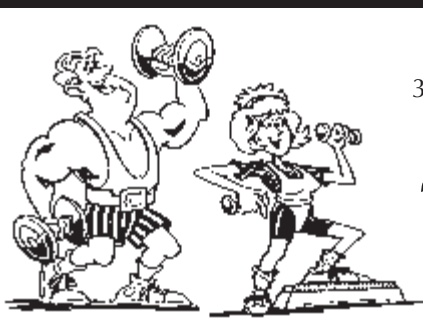
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