

NASCAR

Kyle Busch wins Atlanta pole, but Wallace still in spotlight

By CHARLES ODUM Associated Press

HAMPTON, Ga. — Darrell "Bubba" Wallace Jr. was the hot topic even as Kyle Busch won the pole Friday at Atlanta Motor Speedway.

Busch will start in front Sunday in the second race of the NASCAR Monster Energy Cup season after edging Ryan Newman in a close battle.

Busch overcame handling problems in the first two rounds of qualifying to win the pole with a lap of 184.652 mph in the third round. Busch won his 28th career pole, and his first at Atlanta.

Busch beat Newman's 184.419 mph.

Wallace will start 19th, in the middle of the 36-car field. Much of the talk Friday remained on his second-place finish last week at Daytona.

Wallace was the first black driver in the Daytona 500 field since 1969. The second-place finish was the highest for a black driver and any rookie.

"It was just crazy, awesome," Wallace said

Friday. On Sunday, he'll be the first black Cup racer in an Atlanta race since Bill Lester finished 38th in 2006.

Ryan Blaney, who will start 26th, revealed Friday that last week Dale Earnhardt Jr. was so worried about Wallace that he arranged for Blaney to provide counsel for the rookie.

"He was like 'Hey, I need you to go call Bubba and calm him down because I think he was getting overwhelmed with all the media and the pressure that was kind of being thrown upon him and we haven't even gotten started yet,'" Blaney said.

Blaney, who is friends with both Earnhardt and Wallace, said he encouraged Wallace to enjoy the "well-deserved opportunity."

Blaney said the second-place finish proved Wallace "dealt with it really well."

Kevin Harvick qualified third, followed by Daniel Suarez. Defending champion Brad Keselowski qualified fifth. Austin Dillon, coming off the win at Daytona, will



AP Photo/John Bazemore

NASCAR driver Darrell Wallace Jr. prepares to make a practice run for Sunday's NASCAR auto race Friday at Atlanta Motor Speedway in Hampton, Ga.

start 25th. Defending NASCAR Cup champion Martin Truex will start 35th after his car did not

pass inspection. As a penalty, car chief Blake Harris was suspended for the weekend and a 30-minute practice hold will be enforced on Saturday.

Wallace finished sixth in Atlanta's Xfinity race last year.

"This will be my first time in Atlanta in a Cup car," he said. "I know how this place is in an Xfinity car and it's not any fun, well it's a lot of fun, don't get me wrong, but hanging onto that thing is a challenge. I'm looking forward to it."

Wallace's boss, team owner Richard Petty, said the rookie is adjusting just fine.

"No, he don't feel like he's a rookie," Petty said. "... I think he fell in really good with the guys who have been there for a long time because so far he hasn't done anything really stupid. As long as we keep him straight, he'll be OK."

The strong showing at Daytona solidified the status of Wallace, 24, as a rising star in NASCAR.

Atlanta Motor Speedway

president Ed Clark said calls to his ticket office this week were dominated by fans expressing interest in Wallace.

"He's going to be great," Clark said.

Blaney and Wallace have been friends since the two 10-year-old boys raced Bandolero cars together.

Blaney said he believes Wallace "can have a huge impact" on the 43 Chevrolet and "grow it to places it hasn't been in recent years."

The only distraction for Wallace is a feud with Denny Hamlin. Wallace said Friday he has been excluded from Hamlin's informal golf league, which includes a few other NASCAR drivers. Wallace added "I removed myself" from Hamlin's basketball league.

The problems between the two began last week when Wallace objected to what Hamlin said was intended to be a joke when he claimed 70 percent of NASCAR drivers take the prescription drug Adderall to help with concentration.

NCAA: Investigation names former Pac-12 players Markelle Fultz, Kyle Kuzma

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said Sexton, who was held out of the season opener for violating NCAA rules, will play Saturday against Arkansas.

According to the report, players over the past several years and family members allegedly received cash, entertainment and travel expenses from former NBA agent Andy Miller and his agency ASM Sports. Line items in four pages of documents released by Yahoo showed a wide range, including some five-figure payments and two dinners for less than \$40 each.

Don Jackson, an Alabama-based attorney who has worked on numerous college eligibility cases, said the root of the problem is that the NCAA's

model of amateurism doesn't work.

"This problem can be solved if players are compensated," Jackson said. "The NCAA is not capable of adequately policing tens of thousands of athletes around the country."

A balance sheet from December 2015 lists several payments under "Loan to Players," including \$43,500 to Dallas Mavericks guard Dennis Smith, who played one season at North Carolina State in 2016-17. Another document says Smith received \$73,500 in loans.

N.C. State athletic director Debbie Yow said the school disassociated itself from Miller in 2012.

Documents also said Brooklyn Nets guard Isaiah Whitehead received \$26,136 while a freshman at Seton

Hall, and Tim Quarterman, now playing for the Agua Caliente Clippers of the NBA G League, received at least \$16,000 while a junior at LSU.

The story said the mother of Bridges received \$400 in a cash advance. Current Kentucky player Kevin Knox, Carter and Sexton are listed among players or families meeting or having meals with former ASM Sports associate Christian Dawkins.

Coaches and athletic officials at several schools, including Clemson, North Carolina State, South Carolina, Southern California, Utah and Wichita State said they did not know of the alleged payments until Yahoo's report was released, but pledged to cooperate in any investigation. Several

coaches distanced themselves from Miller.

"Personally, I welcome the scrutiny on the sport of men's basketball because the behavior of some agents, along with reports of other illegal recruiting activities, is hurting the sport," Utah athletic director Chris Hill said.

Tennessee coach Rick Barnes said he isn't surprised by anything that happens in college hoops.

"We can sit here and talk about it for days on end if we wanted to, all the things that have gone on in college basketball," Barnes said. "I'm not surprised by any of it."

Lawyers for two of the 10 defendants arrested in the federal cases said it was inappropriate for Yahoo to have the documents.

"An effort was clearly made to embarrass some defendants and cast aspersions on some current student athletes whose only 'crime' may be that their relatives didn't reimburse an agent for a single steak dinner," said Jeffrey Lichtman, who represents former Southern California assistant basketball coach Tony Bland, who was fired last month after his arrest. Bland is accused of receiving a \$13,000 bribe for steering the team's players to Dawkins and a financial adviser when they became professionals. Bland pleaded not guilty in November to charges related to bribery and wire fraud.

Dawkins attorney Steven Haney Sr. said the report doesn't mean Dawkins broke the law.

"In the most simple of

legal terms; prove it," Haney said in an email.

Jackson said the NCAA or the schools would need to conduct their own investigations as opposed to making any rulings based on the documents from the FBI probe.

"They can't just automatically accept the credibility of this document," the Alabama-based attorney said.

Emmert said the NCAA Board of Governors and recently formed independent Commission on College Basketball are committed to "making transformational changes" and will cooperate with the federal prosecutors to "identify and punish the unscrupulous parties seeking to exploit the system through criminal acts."

SCOREBOARD

Local slate

PREP BOYS BASKETBALL
Saturday
No. 16 Stanfield at No. 1 Western Menno-nite (2A First Round), 2:30 p.m.
No. 12 Umatilla at No. 5 Horizon Christian (3A First Round), 4 p.m.
No. 12 Days Creek at No. 5 Nixyaawii (1A Second Round), 4:30 p.m.
No. 10 Kennedy at No. 7 Pilot Rock, 4:30 p.m. (2A First Round), 4:30 p.m.
No. 9 Catlin Gabel at No. 8 Irrigon (3A First Round), 6 p.m.

PREP GIRLS BASKETBALL
Saturday
No. 9 Central Linn at No. 8 Heppner (2A First Round), 1 p.m.
No. 2 Nixyaawii vs. No. 15 Camas Valley (1A First Round, at Sunridge MS), 3 p.m.

Prep Scores

OSAA Girls Playoffs
Class 3A
No. 1 Salem Academy 49, No. 16 Santiam Christian 22
No. 2 Dayton 68, No. 15 De La Salle North Catholic 47
No. 3 Rainier 60, No. 14 Jefferson 46
No. 11 Creswell 54, No. 6 Lakeview 46
No. 7 Coquille 69, No. 10 Warrenton 48
No. 8 Nyssa 45, No. 9 Armitz 36
Class 2A
No. 1 Kennedy 53, No. 16 Vernonia 17
No. 2 Monroe 80, No. 15 City Christian 43
No. 3 Oakland 34, No. 14 Enterprise 23
No. 4 Grant Union 71, No. 13 Weston-McEwen 42
No. 5 Faith Bible 51, No. 12 Toledo 29
No. 6 St. Paul 66, No. 11 Bonanza 28
Class 1A
No. 1 Country Christian 70, No. 16 Lowell 41
No. 3 Powder Valley 52, No. 14 SW Christian 25
No. 4 Days Creek 48, No. 13 Alsea 39
No. 9 Joseph 44, No. 8 Crane 30
No. 10 Damascus Christian 23, No. 7 Perrydale 21
No. 11 Hosanna Christian 37, No. 6 South Wasco 24
No. 12 Jordan Valley 56, No. 5 Triad 42
OSAA Boys Playoffs
No. 3 Knappa 81, No. 14 Reedsport 35

Basketball

Table with columns for Eastern Conference, Western Conference, and Pac-12 Schedule. Includes team names, wins, losses, and percentages.

Table with columns for Saturday's Games, Sunday's Games, and Friday's Games. Includes team names, scores, and times.

Table with columns for Top 25 Schedule, Friday, Saturday, and Sunday. Includes team names, scores, and times.

Table with columns for Pac-12 Schedule, Friday, Saturday, and Sunday. Includes team names, scores, and times.

Table with columns for NBA Eastern Conference, NBA Western Conference, and NBA Pacific Division. Includes team names, wins, losses, and percentages.

Table with columns for Hockey Eastern Conference Atlantic Division and Metropolitan Division. Includes team names, GP, W, L, OT, Pts, GF, GA.

Table with columns for Hockey Western Conference Central Division and Pacific Division. Includes team names, GP, W, L, OT, Pts, GF, GA.

Table with columns for Friday's Games and Saturday's Games. Includes team names, scores, and times.

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Table with columns for Olympics Pyeongchang Winter Olympics NBC Saturday TV Schedule and NBCSN. Includes event names, times, and channels.

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