



AP Photo/John Raoux

Austin Dillon prepares his helmet before a NASCAR practice at Daytona International Speedway, Thursday in Daytona Beach, Fla.

NASCAR's 'Young Stars' tired of blame for sport's woes

By DAN GELSON
Associated Press

DAYTONA BEACH, Fla. — It was the finish NASCAR banked on as the genesis of its ballyhooed youth movement.

Austin Dillon and Darrell Wallace Jr. finished 1-2 in the Daytona 500, a promising pair of 20-somethings behind the wheel of iconic car numbers that could excite old-school fans, yet a pair with enough social media savvy that might attract millennials to a sport in dire need of a spark.

Wallace and good buddy Ryan Blaney, Chase Elliott, William Byron and Daniel Suarez were among the relative newcomers in NASCAR who had their images plastered on billboards and hailed as NASCAR's version of The Next Big Thing.

Yet, at NASCAR's half-way point, the series returns this weekend to Daytona International Speedway with the so-called Young Guns in danger of becoming The Next Big Bust.

They're not winning races — or even fans inside their sport.

International Speedway Corp. President John Saunders pinned some of NASCAR's woes on the failure of the new crop of drivers that have failed to replace retired stars Dale Earnhardt Jr., Tony Stewart, Jeff Gordon, Carl Edwards and even Danica Patrick in performance or popularity.

"We still have an issue with star power, and hopefully this stable of young drivers coming along will start to win and build their brands," Saunders said Thursday.

ISC owns tracks in California, Kansas, Virginia, Arizona and Alabama and reported a 10 percent dip in attendance this season for the six races held on its properties from March through May.

Weather and travel; ticket prices and event oversaturation, and long, boring races — all kinds of critical issues and mundane nuisances — have been blamed for NASCAR's tumble.

Now it's Saunders' turn to gripe about the dearth of stars, and the drivers have had enough of serving as NASCAR's whipping boys.

"Honestly, this whole 'young guys need to win now' thing is getting old," the 24-year-old Blaney said. "We're trying. We're trying our hardest. It's not like I go out there and I'm happy for fifth every single week."

Wallace threw the criticism back at Saunders, saying outdated tracks that fail to keep pace with modern-day amenities are just as much at fault for driving away fans.

"It kind of goes hand-in-hand from us behind the wheel to people that are hosting us," Wallace said.

Wallace is a social media darling with more than 176,000 Twitter followers, posting behind-the-scenes videos and starring in a documentary series that aired on Facebook Watch.

The 24-year-old Richard Petty Racing driver even takes on his critics and

serves as his own publicity machine for NASCAR fans.

But it's checkered flags and championships that will define drivers, not likes and retweets.

"I might not post stupid videos every week or stuff like that to try and gain fans," Kyle Larson said, taking a subtle shot at Wallace. "I try to gain fans on the race track."

Larson, 25, nearly broke his season-long winless streak last week when he lost a last-lap dual with Kyle Busch at Chicagoland. Busch won his fifth race of the season and rubbed his hand in his eye to mimic a crying child for all the fans whining that the 2015 Cup champion won another race.

NASCAR has a three-driver chase toward the championship through the first 18 races:

- Busch, 33, five wins.
- Kevin Harvick, 42, five wins.
- Martin Truex Jr., 38, three wins.

Dillon and 28-year-old Joey Logano, an 11-year veteran, are the only drivers in their 20s who have won this season. Just six drivers have won races, and NASCAR's 16-driver playoff field could have more contenders making it on points than victories.

"I think it would be healthy for the sport if we just see more variation in winners," Blaney said. "There have been six winners this year. Come on now. You can't just put that on the young guys for not winning. That's a lot of other people that aren't winning, too."

Seven-time champion Jimmie Johnson is winless. So is former Daytona 500 champion Denny Hamlin and 2012 series champ Brad Keselowski. But those greats all have resumes that can stamp them as future Hall of Famers.

Fair or not, NASCAR and its tracks threw their promotional weight this season behind up-and-comers instead of perennial contenders and have paid the price for the slight: FOX and FS1 averaged 2.54 million viewers for Cup Series races this season, down 23 percent from last year (3.31 million).

The youth movement needs to start, well, moving.

"I just want to know what we do about it, do you know what I mean," Dillon asked. "How do you move forward with that? Because the guys that are in the sport are talented enough to win."

They're talented and most have been handed the keys to cars for the premier organizations in NASCAR — Elliott has Jeff Gordon's old ride and 25-year-old Alex Bowman has Earnhardt's No. 88 at Hendrick Motorsports.

Wallace can't blame fans for tuning out.

"I am looking at myself from a fan's point of view," he said. "This guy is 22nd in the points, hasn't won anything, finished second in the Daytona 500 and is getting promoted the hell out of — and hasn't done anything."

He has plenty of company.

NCAA prepares minority coordinators for head coaching jobs

By STEPHEN WHYNO
Associated Press

OXON HILL, Md. — Camera lighting made beads of sweat emerge from Tony Elliott's forehead as he fielded questions ranging from football philosophy to something he could share about his private life.

The Clemson co-offensive coordinator paused, smiled and couldn't hide his joy about riding an all-terrain vehicle through the woods. The walls broke down as Elliott made a human connection with mock interviewer Jon Oliver in the best possible preparation he can get for a head coaching job.

Despite helping the Tigers win a national title, Elliott has never interviewed for a head-coaching job.

"Two phone calls," Elliott said.

College football as a public entity can't institute a Rooney Rule like the NFL, which compels teams to interview minority candidates for head coaching jobs. So instead of focusing all its efforts on the schools, the NCAA is putting some of its rising coaching candidates through its Champion Forum to better prepare them for the interview process.

It is an effort to increase the diversity in the Power Five conferences and across the country.

"You can't shame people into hiring people," said Oliver, a former University of Virginia athletics administrator who now works with the Champion Forum. "You can't tell (schools) what they need to be doing. But what we can do is make sure (the candidates) are ready."

Minorities make up only 19 percent of Division I head football coaches and less across the Power Five conferences: the ACC, SEC, Big Ten, Big 12 and Pac 12. In contrast, 61 percent of Division I players are



AP Photo/Ross D. Franklin, File

Penn State head coach James Franklin takes the field with his team prior to the Fiesta Bowl NCAA college football game against Washington, in Glendale, Ariz. College football as a public entity can't institute a Rooney Rule like the NFL to compel programs to interview minority candidates for head coaching jobs. Minorities make up only 19 percent of Division I head football coaches and less across the Power Five conferences: the ACC, SEC, Big Ten, Big 12 and Pac 12.

minorities.

The Champion Forum has helped Penn State's James Franklin, Vanderbilt's Derek Mason, Stanford's David Shaw, Arizona's Kevin Sumlin and others get head jobs with the aim of pushing along the next generation.

Elliott, Michigan assistant head coach Pep Hamilton, LSU defensive coordinator Dave Aranda, Florida State defensive coordinator Harlon Barnett, South Carolina offensive coordinator Bryan McClendon and Navy offensive coordinator

Ivory Jasper are all part of the latest class. Picked by their conferences and schools to go through the program, they're all in phase two that includes one-on-one mock interviews, conversations with search firms and information about contracts and what to expect from being a head coach.

"It's just the knowledge

of what goes into becoming a head coach, what (athletic directors) look for, what search firms look for," said Jasper, who has been a candidate for jobs at Georgia Southern, Yale and Rice during his time at Navy. "Having those tools in our toolbox now and know what people look for, now we can address those issues and work on getting better at it."

Jasper and Elliott had their mock interviews back-to-back with their wives seated a few feet away. Oliver played the role of the interviewer for a job at a fictional Atlantic University in Florida, firing questions at each coach about a head job and asking for their questions.

Afterward, Oliver critiqued them on everything from how fast they were talking to what they shouldn't have said. Oliver has seen coaches go from not being able to fin-

ish answers to having a better idea of what to expect the next time the phone rings about an opening.

"Had I not gone through this process, I wouldn't know what I was getting into," Elliott said. "I wouldn't have been encouraged to go prepare in the areas where I needed to prepare to ultimately be successful. Because at the end of the day, it's not just becoming a head coach. It's being a successful head coach and building a successful program."

The program includes two steps of interview training, video clips to show strengths and weaknesses and an in-person follow-up by former Washington Redskins general manager Charley Casserly and other officials. This year, the NCAA invited the coordinators' wives to sit in on the program and welcomed their input.

SCOREBOARD

Baseball

MLB		W	L	Pct	GB
East Division					
Boston	59	29	670	—	
New York	56	28	667	1	
Tampa Bay	43	43	500	15	
Toronto	40	46	465	18	
Baltimore	24	62	279	34	
Central Division					
Cleveland	48	37	565	—	
Minnesota	36	48	429	11½	
Detroit	38	51	427	12	
Chicago	30	57	345	19	
Kansas City	25	61	291	23½	
West Division					
Houston	58	31	652	—	
Seattle	56	32	636	1½	
Oakland	43	43	552	9	
Los Angeles	44	44	500	13½	
Texas	39	49	443	18½	
Thursday's Games					
Texas 7, Detroit 5					
Houston 4, Chicago White Sox 3					
Minnesota 5, Baltimore 2					
Seattle 4, L.A. Angels 1					
Friday's Games					
N.Y. Yankees (Gray 5-6) at Toronto (Gaviglio 2-2), 4:07 p.m.					
Oakland (Blackburn 2-2) at Cleveland (Carrasco 8-5), 4:10 p.m.					
Tampa Bay (Stank 1-2) at N.Y. Mets (deGrom 5-4), 4:10 p.m.					
Texas (Cotton 5-5) at Detroit (Zimmermann 3-0), 4:10 p.m.					
Baltimore (Bundy 6-7) at Minnesota (Lynn 5-7), 5:10 p.m.					
Chicago White Sox (Lopez 4-5) at Houston (McCullers 9-3), 5:10 p.m.					
Boston (Sale 8-4) at Kansas City (Hammel 2-10), 5:15 p.m.					
L.A. Dodgers (Maeda 5-5) at L.A. Angels (Pena 1-0), 7:07 p.m.					
Colorado (Marquez 6-8) at Seattle (Hernandez 8-6), 7:10 p.m.					

NATIONAL LEAGUE		W	L	Pct	GB
East Division					
Atlanta	49	37	570	—	
Philadelphia	47	37	560	1	
Washington	43	43	552	9	
New York	34	49	410	13½	
Miami	36	53	404	14½	
Central Division					
Milwaukee	52	35	598	—	
Chicago	49	35	583	1½	
St. Louis	45	41	523	6½	
Pittsburgh	40	46	465	11½	
Cincinnati	38	49	437	14	
West Division					
Los Angeles	47	39	547	—	
Arizona	48	40	545	—	
Colorado	44	43	506	3½	
San Francisco	45	44	506	3½	
San Diego	38	51	427	10½	
Thursday's Games					
Washington 14, Miami 12					
Milwaukee 7, Atlanta 2					
San Diego 6, Arizona 3					
St. Louis 11, San Francisco 2					
Friday's Games					
Cincinnati (Mahle 6-6) at Chicago Cubs (Montgomery 3-2), 11:20 a.m.					
Miami (Straily 3-4) at Washington (Gonzalez 6-5), 4:05 p.m.					
Philadelphia (Pivetta 5-7) at Pittsburgh (Williams 6-6), 4:05 p.m.					
Tampa Bay (Stank 1-2) at N.Y. Mets (deGrom 5-4), 4:10 p.m.					
Atlanta (Foltynewicz 6-4) at Milwaukee (Peralta 3-1), 5:10 p.m.					
San Diego (Lucchesi 4-3) at Arizona (Godley 9-6), 6:40 p.m.					
L.A. Dodgers (Maeda 5-5) at L.A. Angels (Pena 1-0), 7:07 p.m.					
Colorado (Marquez 6-8) at Seattle (Hernandez 8-6), 7:10 p.m.					
St. Louis (Gant 2-3) at San Francisco (Rodriguez 3-1), 7:15 p.m.					

ALL-STAR FAN VOTE		As of July 3
AMERICAN LEAGUE		
CATCHER		
1. Wilson Ramos, Rays	1,556	195
2. Gary Sanchez, Yankees	1,116	568
3. Brian McCann, Astros	961	325
4. Salvador Perez, Royals	614	492

FIRST BASE	
1. Jose Abreu, White Sox	1,312,221
2. Yuli Gurriel, Astros	1,088,068
3. Mitch Moreland, Red Sox	907,955
4. Albert Pujols, Angels	688,594
5. Miguel Cabrera, Tigers	499,603
SECOND BASE	
1. Jose Altuve, Astros	3,405,815
2. Gleyber Torres, Yankees	997,274
3. Dee Gordon, Mariners, 528,270	
4. Jason Kipnis, Indians	372,885
5. Jed Lowrie, Athletics	255,092
THIRD BASE	
1. Jose Ramirez, Indians	1,811,902
2. Alex Bregman, Astros	1,050,370
3. Miguel Andujar, Yankees	963,641
4. Adrian Beltre, Rangers	590,263
5. Kyle Seager, Mariners, 447,940	
SHORTSTOP	
1. Manny Machado, Orioles	1,272,233
2. Carlos Correa, Astros	1,135,152
3. Francisco Lindor, Indians	898,977
4. Didi Gregorius, Yankees	824,710
5. Jean Segura, Mariners, 675,140	
DESIGNATED HITTER	
1. J.D. Martinez, Red Sox	2,236,945
2. Giancarlo Stanton, Yankees	977,274
3. Evan Gattis, Astros	953,460
4. Nelson Cruz, Mariners, 601,794	
5. Edwin Encarnacion, Indians	559,915

OUTFIELD	
1. Mookie Betts, Red Sox	3,119,106
2. Mike Trout, Angels	2,666,972
3. Aaron Judge, Yankees	2,021,348
4. George Springer, Astros	1,141,661
5. Michael Brantley, Indians	1,093,376
6. Andrew Benintendi, Red Sox	1,071,135
7. Marwin Gonzalez, Astros	768,281
8. Josh Reddick, Astros	706,145
9. Eddie Rosario, Twins	666,108
10. Mitch Haniger, Mariners, 652,563	
11. Brett Gardner, Yankees	636,087
12. Jackie Bradley Jr., Red Sox	606,993
13. Aaron Hicks, Yankees	483,574
14. Nicholas Castellanos, Tigers	469,578
15. Tyler Naquin, Indians	344,639

NATIONAL LEAGUE	
CATCHER	
1. Buster Posey, Giants	1,384,631
2. Wilson Contreras, Cubs	1,240,132
3. Kurt Suzuki, Braves	1,174,470
4. Yadier Molina, Cardinals	913,149
5. J.T. Realmuto, Marlins	818,925
FIRST BASE	
1. Freddie Freeman, Braves	2,905,301
2. Anthony Rizzo, Cubs	1,178,915
3. Brandon Belt, Giants	802,027
4. Cody Bellinger, Dodgers	661,485
5. Joey Votto, Reds	479,803
SECOND BASE	
1. Ozzie Albies, Braves	1,857,185
2. Scooter Gennett, Reds	1,689,393
3. Javier Baez, Cubs	1,586,888
4. Joe Panik, Giants	493,573
5. Logan Forsythe, Dodgers	379,325
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1. Nolan Arenado, Rockies	2,326,711
2. Kris Bryant, Cubs	1,370,631
3. Johan Camargo, Braves	868,860
4. Eugenio Suarez, Reds	601,219
5. Justin Turner, Dodgers	496,912
SHORTSTOP	
1. Brandon Crawford, Giants	2,303,516
2. Dansby Swanson, Braves	1,162,263
3. Addison Russell, Cubs	1,026,014
4. Trevor Story, Rockies	820,484
5. Chris Taylor, Dodgers	498,570
OUTFIELD	
1. Nick Markakis, Braves	2,457,648
2. Matt Kemp, Dodgers	2,046,534
3. Bryce Harper, Nationals	1,777,221
4. Charlie Blackmon, Rockies	1,310,107
5. Ronald Acuna Jr., Braves	1,101,511
6. Jason Heyward, Cubs	1,018,320
7. Ender Inciarte, Braves	861,219
8. Kyle Schwarber, Cubs	939,907
9. Ben Zobrist, Cubs	900,316
10. Christian Yelich, Brewers	708,250
11. Odbel Herrera, Phillies	664,335
12. Lorenzo Cain, Brewers	613,205
13. Andrew McCutchen, Giants	595,907
14. Corey Dickerson, Pirates	540,093
15. Yasiel Puig, Dodgers	509,936

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