

# Driving dilemma

*'Boys, have at it' attitude results in frightening accident, leaves NASCAR debating what to do*

By THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

CHARLOTTE, N.C. — The boys sure backed NASCAR into a corner on this one.

Determined to give drivers more leeway this season when it came to policing each other on the track, NASCAR opened the year with a relaxed "boys, have at it" attitude. It was interpreted to mean NASCAR would look the other way at a nudge here, a spin there, and all the retaliatory bumping and banging that goes on over a very long season.

No one could have predicted, though, that NASCAR's first true test would come a mere four races into the season after a frightening accident at Atlanta.

NASCAR on Monday found itself smack in the center of a dilemma over what to do with Carl Edwards, whose intentional wrecking of Brad Keselowski late in Sunday's race ignited a heated debate about just what's permitted under this new policy.

Emotions are high in almost every corner, and no decision NASCAR makes will satisfy everyone.

What first must be figured out, though, is what is everyone so upset about?

Is it that Edwards returned to the track down 153 laps, intent on retaliating against Keselowski, and after trying for at least one full lap, finally succeeded with a deliberate nudge?

Is it that the high-speed contact sent Keselowski airborne in a spectacular flip that could have caused serious harm to Keselowski or any number of fans in the grandstands?

Or, maybe, the issue is that NASCAR wasn't properly prepared to deal with the ramifications of allowing drivers free rein on the race track.

All three are valid arguments.

First up is Edwards, who is on a long list of drivers who have been on the losing end of Keselowski's aggressive charge into NASCAR's top level. Although Denny Hamlin had the most public feud with Keselowski, there is no shortage of top-name drivers who privately pledged they'd exact their revenge this season.

Edwards' most obvious run-in with Keselowski was on the final lap of last April's race at Talladega, where Keselowski's nudge sent Edwards flying into the fence in a wreck that some may argue was more frightening than Atlanta. But the two race against each other weekly in two series, and Edwards' hinted at a far deeper history with the unapologetic Keselowski.

So when early contact be-



**BRAD KESELOWSKI, CENTER, IS HELPED TO AN AMBULANCE** after being involved in a crash Sunday during the Kobalt Tools 500 at Atlanta Motor Speedway. Emotions are still high after Carl Edwards intentionally crashed Keselowski's No. 12 Dodge.

tween the two knocked Edwards out Sunday, at a track where he's won four times in two series, he was ready for revenge. He 100 percent deliberately wrecked Keselowski and has so far been rather unrepentant about his action.

Edwards, who was immediately parked for his actions, had little to say after a post-race meeting with NASCAR. But he minced no words in a Facebook posting late Sunday night.

"My options," he wrote, "Considering that Brad wrecks me with no regard for anyone's safety or hard work, should I: A-Keep letting him wreck me? B-Confront him after the race? C-Wait til bristol and collect other cars? or D-Take care of it now?"

"I want to be clear that I was surprised at his flight and very relieved when he walked away. Every person has to decide what code they want to live by and hopefully this explains mine."

Opinions were split, though, perhaps fueled by the severity of Keselowski's crash.

There was no similar outrage when Hamlin fulfilled his promise of payback on Keselowski in last year's Nationwide Series finale at Homestead. And it sure seemed that the cheers far outweighed the jeers when Juan Pablo Montoya and Tony Stewart played retaliatory bumper-cars a day later.

But because Keselowski went airborne, bounced hood-first off the retaining wall, and had to climb from a cockpit so crumpled it looked more like an accordion than a car, there's a been cry for NASCAR to issue serious sanctions against Edwards.

Fans want him suspended, and many analysts have agreed. Even Keselowski seemed to taunt NASCAR into cracking down on Edwards.

"It'll be interesting to see how NASCAR reacts to it," he said after the wreck. "They have the ball. If they're going to allow people to intentionally wreck each other at tracks this fast, we will hurt someone either in the cars or the grandstands. It's not cool to intentionally wreck someone at 195 mph."

It's left NASCAR to sift through the evidence. On one hand, this is no different than a traffic infraction: run a red light and nothing happens, you may get a ticket. Run a red light and kill someone, now you're looking at vehicular homicide.

So now NASCAR plays judge, jury and executioner; and its decision will reverberate through the rest of the season.

A severe punishment against Edwards is akin to a death sentence on the "have at it" attitude. If the first driver who actually "had at it" is hit with a stiff

penalty, then other drivers won't ever dare test the limits.

A significant fine, points deduction or probation will likely back Edwards into a conservative mode that could alter the way he races the rest of the year.

And no action at all, aside from infuriating an enraged mass of fans, well, that could promote repeat behavior from Edwards or others.

Whatever NASCAR decides won't satisfy everyone, but there are some guarantees going forward.

Keselowski, for one, got the message loud and clear that some rival drivers have been trying to deliver for a while now, and he's likely going to think twice before bulldozing his way through a pack of traffic.

Edwards, after a night to sleep on it, probably wishes he'd done things a little differently and will likely give deeper thought to how he exacts his revenge in the future.

And NASCAR? Well, NASCAR knows for sure it needs a quick handbook on how to deal with these issues.

Nobody wants to see the Wild West re-enacted on the track every weekend, but "boys, have at it" was a well-intentioned idea that doesn't deserve to be scrapped because one incident took everyone — including Edwards — by surprise.

## GRAND VALLEY ALUMNI WATCH



FILE PHOTO

**CENTRAL GRADUATE SEAN WHITE**, right, qualified for the NCAA Division III national championships last weekend for Wartburg College. White is one of many former valley athletes succeeding in college.

## White wrestling well at Wartburg College

By ALLEN GEMAEHLICH  
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Sean White's wrestling career didn't end the way he hoped, but the 2006 Central High School graduate has no regrets.

White qualified for the NCAA Division III national championships last weekend in Cedar Rapids, Iowa, but finished one round shy of placing and earning All-American honors.

"It was a good experience overall," White said. "It didn't turn out the way I would've liked it to, but I was happy I got to experience being there."

"My goal was to win it. That's where my head was at."

The Wartburg (Iowa) College 133-pound senior (31-9) entered the national tournament with an Iowa Intercollegiate Athletic Conference title.

"After conference, I was pretty pumped up to go nationals," White said. "I felt like I was ready for nationals. I had a great two weeks of practices."

White, seeded fourth, won his first match at nationals, 8-4, to reach the quarterfinals. There, he lost 8-4.

"That second match, if one or two things go differently, it could've gone the other way," White said. "The same with the next match that put me out of the tournament. I was down 5-2 and made one mistake that put me out of reach of winning that match. One mistake in a big tournament like that can put you in a bad situation."

Although White's wrestling career is over, he is still focused on becoming a coach one day.

"The whole experience I don't think I could've gotten anywhere but at Wartburg," he said. "I've learned a lot about wrestling and life in general. I don't think it's quite hit me yet, but at the

same time, I know I've put in a lot and I'm ready to move forward with the next step.

"Right now, my focus is to finish school and graduate. With wrestling, I'm going to look to coach and still be a part of the wrestling community. Wrestling is always going to be a part of my life somehow."

Here's a look at how some college athletes with local ties fared recently:

### SWIMMING

**Angel Forsling (Grand Junction, 2006), Colorado School of Mines:** The junior will compete in the NCAA Division II Championships this weekend in Canton, Ohio, in three events: 100-yard breaststroke, 200 breaststroke and 200 individual medley. She is seeded 11th in the breaststroke (1:05.25), 29th in the 200 breaststroke (2:24.30) and 46th in the IM (2:10.52).

**Chelsea Tompkins (Fruita Monument, 2006), Air Force Academy:** The senior diver finished 10th on the platform with a season-best score of 214.05, took 16th on the 3-meter springboard after a career-best 250.60 in the preliminaries and was 21st overall in the 1-meter event with a score of 197.20 a couple of weeks ago at the Mountain West Conference Championships in Oklahoma City.

### TRACK & FIELD

**Rafael Cote (Grand Junction, 2009), University of New Mexico:** The freshman placed fourth in the 800-meter run (1:52.79) recently at the Mountain West Conference Indoor Championships in Albuquerque, N.M. The Lobos' men's team finished third.

**Steve Kasica (Fruita Monument, 2008), University of Colorado:** The sophomore placed ninth in the 800-meter run at the Big 12 Indoor Championships last weekend in February with a time of one minute, 50.80 seconds.

### WRESTLING

**Tucker Lane (Nucla, 2007), University of Nebraska:** The sophomore heavyweight took third place in the Big 12 Championships on Saturday in Norman, Okla., and qualified for the 2010 NCAA Championships on March 18-20 in Omaha.

**Joe LeBlanc (Meeker, 2007), University of Wyoming:** The 184-pound sophomore (35-4) won a regional title last weekend and was chosen the NCAA West Regional Outstanding Wrestler by the coaches. He qualified for the NCAA Championships on March 18-20 in Omaha. LeBlanc, who earned All-American status last season, is ranked eighth in the nation.

**Charlie Pipher (Hotchkiss, 2004), Western State College:** The 184-pound senior (22-3), who is ranked No. 1 in the nation in NCAA Division II, will wrestle for a national title this weekend in Omaha. He won an RMAC title and West Regional title with two pins in the tournament. He was sidelined by an injury for three weeks before the tournament.

If you know of local athletes who are playing in college, please contact us at sports@gsentinel.com or 256-4203.

## MACKEY: Mackey said he will never race in the Iditarod and Yukon Quest in same year again

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"There's been a lot of rumors, a lot of innuendo over the years and our organizational response to this was, 'Well, you know what? Let's implement a drug testing program and find out just what is happening or, or hopefully not happening,'" Hooley said.

Yukon Quest rules don't specifically address drug use among mushers.

Mackey has won that race four times in a row. In February, he came in second by about an hour. But he considers the winner, 51-year-old Canadian Hans Gatt, a lesser rival in the Iditarod. The one he's watching for is four-time Iditarod champion

Jeff King.

"He's always the team to beat, in my opinion," Mackey said.

Gatt, who came in 10th in the Iditarod last year, also considers King a strong contender, noting the Denali Park musher's outstanding team. There are other veterans to heed as well, he said, including perpetual front-runner John Baker of Kotzebue,

who was third last year.

However it turns out, this looks like the last time fans will see Mackey and King squaring off in the Iditarod. King, 54, said he is running his final Iditarod.

Mackey said he'll never run the Iditarod and Yukon Quest in the same year again. He skipped the 2009 Quest to men-

tor a musher and felt much better for the Iditarod. He ran both again this year even though he has been coaching a rookie from Jamaica, Newton Marshall.

"My body's just getting beat up," he said. "If I'm not having fun and my body's not holding up, then I don't see what the point is."

Mackey plans to skip both the Iditarod and the Quest altogether next year. Instead, he hopes to try out the lower 48 mushing circuit, including the 345-mile International Pedigree Stage Stop Sled Dog Race in Wyoming.

"Now, if I go and win the Iditarod this year, it'd be pretty hard not to go back," he said.

## BOWLING: Warriors sending two teams to state

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And it's a sport Zimmerman is great at playing. Central's White team is the equivalent of a varsity team, and Zimmerman is the team leader. He averages a 208 in the high school league.

"Tyler does two sports (tennis and bowling) and has a 4.1 GPA," Robbins said. "I let him run his team. He knows what guys are on and what guys are off."

Zimmerman is joined on the White team by Richie Staats, Jessica Knott, Derek Hampton and Richard Reed.

Zimmerman's role as captain is to help the other four bowlers on his team with strategy and figuring out oil patterns on the lanes. Zimmerman has already been to the state tournament twice, and said it's a hectic day.

"You bowl a game on a lane

with your team, then they move you to a different lane," Zimmerman said. "They have 50 lane alleys, and you'll bowl a lane, then move down 20 lanes."

At Saturday's state tournament, each team bowls six games, using the total pin fall with a handicap for scores.

After the six games are bowled, the top five teams advance to a stepladder final (the fifth-place team bowls the fourth-place team, with the winner moving on to bowl the third-place team). The Baker scoring system is used, where a bowler rolls the first and sixth frames, another team member bowls the second and seventh frames, and so on.

"I'd love to finish in the top 10, but the tough part is these guys have to bowl six games, and that can be a good six hours of bowling," Robbins said. "But it'll be

fun no matter what."

The competitive atmosphere might be most appealing to Ivan Beale, the captain of Central's Red team, which is going to state. Beale, a senior, has been bowling for five years, including the past two for Central. He's never been to the state tournament.

"Being on the team's been pretty cool," Beale said. "I've gotten a lot of help from the teammates, and being around bowling is something I love to do."

Beale is joined on the Red team by Stephen Brown, Cody Blair, Bridger Nelson, Nikki Zimmerman and Sarah Robbins. Being in the state tournament will be a good experience for Beale, who has high aspirations.

"I actually want try to become a pro at some point," Beale said. "I love being in the bowling alley, the sounds; it's just amazing."

## Tigers, Bulldogs, Wildcats...

and Warriors. Oh My!

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