

The Winston, Concord, N.C.

Oh, what a night!

NASCAR's first all-star race under the lights proves 'spin and win' still works

By Al Pearce

It was a full-moon Saturday night and Humpy Wheeler was in charge. Need we say more?

Honestly, were any of you remotely surprised at how NASCAR's annual Winston all-star race turned out at the Charlotte Motor Speedway?

Humpy ordered up that full Carolina moon, of course, to supplement Charlotte's new lighting system. He knows that strange things—no, *strange*

isn't strong enough; he knows that *bizarre* things happen when racers go full-moon racing. Witness: His public relations staff did a mailing quoting EMS personnel saying they dread full-moon Saturday nights.

So it seemed fitting that Davey Allison would win The Winston by dodging a spinning Dale Earnhardt in Turn 3 on the last lap, nipping Kyle Petty by half-a-length at the line. And it seemed altogether appropriate that Allison crashed seconds later and was airlifted to a medical center while fans saluted the copter's departure.

The \$823,000 event featured 30-, 30- and 10-lap segments, the first two for R&D, the third for \$200,000. A fan "vote" (yeah, right, Humpy) inverted the results of Segment 1 to get the Segment 2 grid. The 10-lap dash featured a heads-up start based on the finishing order of Segment 2.

Pole-winner Allison led all 30 laps of Segment 1. It was predictable, since Robert Yates' Havoline Ford was, after all, the class of the field. Segment 1 saw the departure of Hut Stricklin (Winston Open runner-up), Dale Jarrett and Morgan Shepherd; the former in accidents, the latter with a broken axle.

Behind Allison were Bill Elliott, Rusty Wallace, Kyle Petty, Ken Schrader, Alan Kulwicki, Ernie Irvan, Earnhardt, Ricky Rudd, Darrell Waltrip, Mark Martin, Kyle Petty, Harry Gant, Terry Labonte, Richard Petty, Dave Mader and Geoff Bodine. Lapped cars of Winston Open winner Michael Waltrip and Jarrett got the last row.



After Michael Waltrip (right and far right) chalked up his first victory in the Winston Open qualifier, Kyle Petty and Dale Earnhardt (above) scrapped for The Winston all-star race lead until Davey Allison (top) surprised them all and spun his way into victory lane



Kyle Petty won a ho-hum Segment 2 over Irvan, Earnhardt, Schrader, Elliott, Allison, Kulwicki, Darrell Waltrip, Rudd, Richard Petty, Wallace, Gant, Bodine, Labonte and Mader. With a faster car, Allison was frustrated when Richard Petty and Kulwicki ran 13 laps side-by-side, effectively blocking

faster cars trying to improve their starting spot for the 10-lap shoot-out.

Kyle Petty built a huge lead, but a questionable caution flag brought him back to the field. When Darrell Waltrip fishtailed in the tri-oval grass and spun in Turn 1, NASCAR could have withheld the caution. After all,

DOON GRASSMANN PHOTOS

TAKING STOCK

BY DAVEY ALLISON

It's a 'million' to one

But I like our chances for big-buck payoff

Editor's Note: The majority of this column was prepared the day before Davey's crash in The Winston.

I've heard my dad say he'd race for nothing and I'm sure he has. I didn't follow in his tire tracks because of money. I've been fortunate to earn almost \$5 million in 163 races, in a relatively short Winston Cup career, but my prime motivation is winning, to be the best I can be. Championships and money come with that.

By now I think everyone knows our Robert Yates Racing/Texaco Havoline Star Ford team can collect the Winston Million (dollars) if we win the Coca-Cola 600 at Charlotte Motor Speedway.

I'd like to put it out of my mind. But I can't. Everybody wants to talk about it, and that's precisely the reason R.J. Reynolds puts up the million bucks. It's a whale of a promotion, especially when a team is within one race of winning the mind-boggling bonus that goes to the first team to win three of the four crown jewel races in the same season.

We're approaching the 600—the Daytona 500 and Winston 500 are the two legs we have won—as just another race. Our goal is the same, to lead the most laps and win. It just so happens now there's an additional million bucks at stake.

We firmly believe that if we approached this race any differently, we would reduce our chances of winning. What's different, though, is that we've won eight points races and The Winston All-Star race and a leg of the IROC Series since we came to Charlotte Motor Speedway a year ago.

Going into Charlotte last May, we were zero-for-nine. We dominated The Winston and the 600 and, under the leadership of Larry (McReynolds) and Robert and—I think—my maturity as a driver, we took off from there. We won five times in the second two-thirds of last season and finished third in points. The momentum carried into this season and steamrolled with the Daytona 500 victory.

Our ability to rebound from adversity has been a strong suit. We have finished out of the top four only twice. We crashed on Wednesday before the Daytona 500,



then dominated the race. We wrecked at Bristol and Martinsville and won the next races, respectively at North Wilkesboro, where my ribs were so beat up there was doubt I could go the distance, and at Talladega.

So we're a lot more confident at Charlotte this year. We think we have a good shot. With the sweep at Charlotte last May, we've won three of

the past four races there and were second in the other one. Charlotte is my second-favorite track, next to Talladega.

I think we deserve to win the million, especially Larry, Robert and the crew who have worked tirelessly preparing our cars meticulously in the face of NASCAR's rigid crackdown on technical rules.

Three victories make a good season these days, much less trying to win the Daytona 500, the Winston 500 and/or the the Coca-Cola 600 and Southern 500 in one season. I had a rare day off before we reported to Charlotte. I wanted to go fishing, relax and forget the million, but Ty Norris of R.J. Reynolds wanted me to go to Indianapolis. Guess what everyone there wanted to talk about? The Million.

But the visit to the Speedway was enjoyable. I talked with Michael and Mario Andretti, and looking down on that track from the suites with the cars running was awesome. I sat in an Indycar but if anybody had started that thing, I would have bailed out and run. I have no intention of driving one of those things. My thinking is if you want to be good at something, you need to do it all the time. And I wouldn't want to do that all the time.

Somebody asked me to compare the Indy 500 and the Coca-Cola 600. That's not fair. Suffice to say our Indy 500 is the Daytona 500 and vice-versa. The 600 is the longest stock car race in miles and Charlotte Motor Speedway is the showplace of motorsports for a facility and entertainment. The 600 is more than a race, it's a happening. Most everything that has been done at CMS caters to those who count most—the people in the grandstands. We'll be striving to give them a million dollars' worth of excitement and entertainment next Sunday.

Waltrip didn't hit anything and quickly drove away. "Without that," Kyle said later, "I would have won. I know every racer says that, but it's true. I didn't see anything, so I don't know why they waved it. Definitely, we didn't need that caution."

The race resumed with Petty, Earnhardt and Allison poised to decide the \$200,000 issue. Earnhardt passed Petty on the restart and led until Kyle pulled even through Turns 1 and 2 on the last lap. Allison was lurking in third, hoping somebody would goof.

Whether anyone did is open to interpretation. This is what happened: Earnhardt squeezed Petty lower and lower as they raced down the backstretch. When neither lifted, the obvious happened.

"I knew we weren't going to make it when we got to Turn 3," Petty said. "When we got to the flat and tried to turn, it didn't work."

Earnhardt didn't seem upset at spinning out. "Kyle wanted what was his and I wanted what was mine," he said. "He just took more than I wanted to give. It was good, hard racing and I ain't mad about it."

When Earnhardt spun, Petty washed up a lane. Allison ducked to the inside through Turn 4, and he and Allison banged together twice on the front stretch before Allison won by a half-length. Moments later, he spun around and slammed the front-stretch wall, driver's-side first.

"It was hard racing from Point A to Point



B for \$200,000," said Petty. "I was using all the track I could. I hate that Davey wrecked down there, but that's racing. Really, I was hoping to force him into the grass."

Finishing behind them were Schrader, Rudd, Elliott, Wallace, Kulwicki, Irvan, Richard Petty, Labonte, Darrell Waltrip, Gant and Bodine. Earnhardt was a lap down, Michael Waltrip two, Dave Mader three and Mark Martin six behind.

Allison won \$300,000 and was hospitalized overnight, but was released 12 hours later and vowed to be ready for the Coca-Cola 600. ■