

Towns County Sports

Towns County's Leader In Sports

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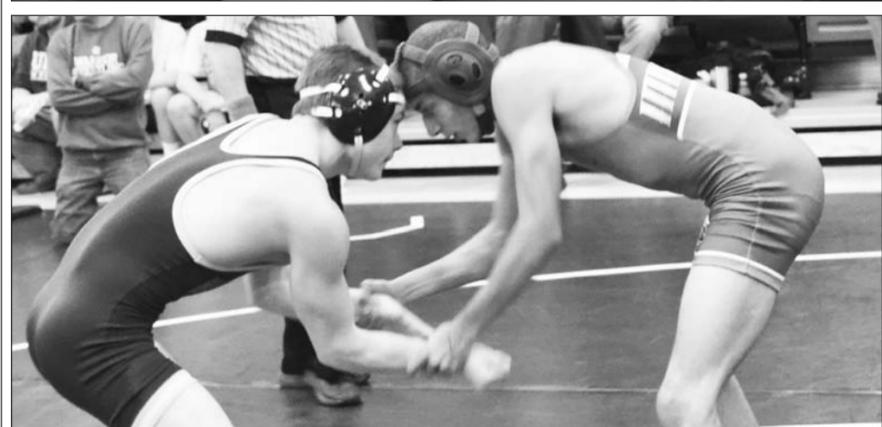
Ledford honored by Atlanta Track Club



Towns County Cross Country Coach Jeannie Ledford was awarded the Paul Koshewa Award for Outstanding Dedication and Girls Cross Country Coach of the Year on Wednesday Dec. 2, at the Atlanta Track Club annual banquet. Ledford has had four consecutive girls State Championships and two boys runner up teams. The community would like to let Coach Ledford know how very proud they are of her. The *Towns County Herald* would like to thank Coach Ledford for her success not only developing champions on race day, but outstanding young men and women that the community that we will be proud of for many years to come. Thank you, Coach Ledford for all you do for the youth in our community.

Photos from last weekend's King of the Mountain Wrestling Tournament

Photos by Lowell Nicholson



NASCAR 2015

By Gerald Hodges/the Racing Reporter

Harvick Is Top Money Winner

The 2015 NASCAR Sprint Cup season is over. Kyle Busch was honored as the champion last Friday night at the season ending banquet in Las Vegas, but Kevin Harvick, the 2014 champion, was the big money winner.

In addition to many manufacturer and sponsor contingency awards, Harvick's track winnings totaled \$9,012,821.

Any way you look at it that's a pretty good paycheck. Harvick will not collect all of that. Depending on his contract, his percentage will be somewhere between 50-60 per cent. The remainder goes to the Stewart-Haas Racing team, owner of his No. 4 Chevrolet.

"It's just exciting," said Harvick. "I think when you race your whole life and you accomplish what you've raced for your whole life, it's exciting. I've been fortunate to experience that last year and know that feeling and know how gratifying that is. You know, it's fun to see that excitement."

"It's been a great couple years, and I know we're disappointed about finishing second, but it's kind of the theme of the year, finishing second."

"Unfortunately it's just one short, but all in all, it's been a great couple years, and I couldn't be prouder of our bunch of guys. At least we know what we have to shoot for next year."

The remaining top-10 money winners: 2. Joey Logano - \$8,400,213, 3. Jimmie Johnson - 7,238,747, 4. Denny Hamlin - 6,537,373, 5. Brad Keselowski - 6,497,691, 6. Dale Earnhardt Jr. - 6,095,610, 7. Jeff Gordon - 6,026,506, 8. Matt Kenseth - 5,973,076, 9. Martin Truex Jr. - 5,391,296, 10. Clint Bowyer - 5,223,413.

Note: Kyle Busch missed 11 races due to injuries, and that is why his winnings (4,892,617) are not equal to the other top drivers.

An emotional Jeff Gordon received a standing ovation by everyone at the banquet after being introduced by Tom Cruise.

The pair chatted and kidded each before Gordon began to speak, struggling several times as he tried to hold back the tears.

"Now I've had a lot of people this year ask me, why not just one more year?" said Gordon. "Make it an even 24. It made me think, yeah, for a second about it, but then I really quickly responded, hey, this goes all the way back to April of 1977 for me. When I first was introduced to a quarter midget, so to me it's more like 38 years. It's been a long time. It's been an amazing ride. To all those who know my stepfather, John Bickford, they know that by maybe August or September of 1977, I was racing professionally. That's just the way it worked in my family, and I couldn't be

more thankful. So will there be another year? No, there won't be. I am so ready. I am so content because I'm just so proud of all that I've done. I will say it's been absolutely amazing, and I couldn't have ever imagined how my life would turn out.

"Motorsports has provided me lifelong memories and stories that I get to reminisce and talk about for years and years to come. NASCAR in particular has changed my life in ways that I could never really even describe. It's still really just a blur to me. It seems like it was just, you know, not that long ago that I was traveling from Indiana to North Carolina to see what NASCAR was even all about, and now here I am 25 years later stepping away from one of the most prestigious series in all of motorsports and a fulfilling career.

"Thank you. Thank you." **EARNHARDT IS MOST POPULAR DRIVER**

Dale Earnhardt Jr. won his 13th consecutive Most Popular Driver Award, becoming the first driver to have won the award since 16-time winner Bill Elliott was named the recipient at the conclusion of the 2002 season.

Earnhardt was awarded the trophy and the National Motorsports Press Association will donate \$10,000 in Earnhardt's name to the charity of his choice. NASCAR fans cast 410,000 votes during the year's 11-week voting window that ended with the Sprint Cup Series finale race at Homestead.

CHASE ELLIOTT WINS SNOWBALL DERBY

PENSACOLA, Fla. — Kyle Busch developmental driver, Christopher Bell took the checkered flag in the 48th Snowball Derby, but was disqualified during a post race inspection for illegal weight placement, and runnerup, Chase Elliott was declared the winner.

Fans that remember the 2013 Derby, the driver who inherited the win was KBM's Erik Jones, after Elliott was DQ'ed. This year there was a role reversal as Bell was disqualified and Elliott took home the trophy.

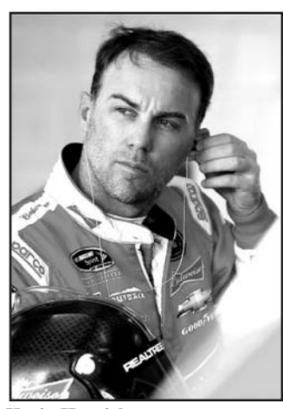
The win was Elliott's second, the other coming in 2011.

"We gave him (Bell) three chances to get the weight right this week," said Five Flags Pit Steward Ricky Brooks.

Remaining unofficial top-10: 2. Zane Smith, 3. Ty Majeski, 4. Dalton Sargeant, 5. Bubba Pollard, 6. Casey Smith, 7. Preston Peltier, 8. William Byron, 9. Derek Thorn, 10. Daniel Hemric.

Defending winner John Hunter Nemechek's car caught fire while he was leading the race with 25 laps to go in the 300-lap race. He finished 21st.

PATRICK AND STEWART NEW CREW CHIEFS
For the third time in four



Kevin Harvick

years. Danica Patrick has a new crew chief.

Billy Scott has been named crew chief for the No. 10 team of Danica Patrick. The 38-year-old from Land O' Lakes, Florida, comes to SHR from Michael Waltrip Racing where since 2014 he was the crew chief for the No. 55 team, which featured drivers David Ragan, Brian Vickers and Michael Waltrip

He also served as crew chief for MWR's No. 15 team and driver Clint Bowyer from June 2015 through the end of the season. Prior to that role, Scott was a race engineer working under crew chief Rodney Childers, who joined SHR in 2014 and led Harvick to the 2014 Sprint Cup championship.

Meanwhile, Michael Bugarewicz has been promoted from race engineer on the No. 4 team, driven by Kevin Harvick, to crew chief for the No. 14 team of Tony Stewart. The 33-year-old from Leighton, Pennsylvania, replaces Chad Johnston, who has left SHR to work as a crew chief on the No. 42 of Kyle Larson.

"We have great people at Stewart-Haas Racing and these changes prove that," Stewart, said in a press release. "We were able to promote from within while also adding new talent."

"Change isn't easy, and that's particularly true when it comes to my relationship with Chad Johnston. He served as my crew chief during two very difficult seasons. He was always supportive, and he's become like a brother to me. I think very highly of Chad."

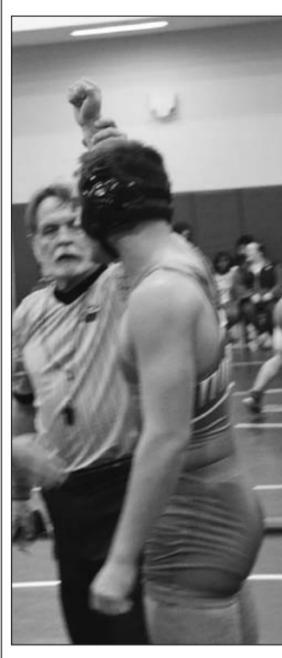
The SHR shake-up was expected following disappointing seasons for both drivers. Patrick finished 24th in the standings, while Stewart finished 28th.

Stewart announced in September that the 2016 season would be his last as a driver.

Racing Trivia Question: How many Cup championships did Richard Petty win?

Last Week's Question: Where is Martin Truex Jr.'s hometown? Answer: It is Mayetta, New Jersey.

You may contact the Racing Reporter by e-mail at: hodges@race500.com. NT(Dec9,217)CA



The Middle School King of the Mountain. Photo/Lowell Nicholson