



Editor's Note: Below is the first installment of a five-part series chronicling several aspects of Dale Earnhardt Jr., the six-time Talladega Superspeedway winner, who will make his final start at the track he calls a “second home” in the **ALABAMA 500** on Sunday, Oct. 15. Releases focused on the Earnhardt Jr. legacy will be sent out weekly through Tuesday, Oct. 10.

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

September 12, 2017 (17-83)

Spark Plugs, Go Karts, Brake Cleaner... and Dale Earnhardt Jr.?



Photo Cutline: Long before he won six races at Talladega Superspeedway, a young Dale Earnhardt Jr., shown here with his father Dale Earnhardt Sr., made the most of his trips to NASCAR's Most Competitive track.

TALLADEGA, AL – What do spark plugs, brake cleaner and go karts have in common when it comes to Dale Earnhardt Jr. and Talladega Superspeedway? They're what occupied the majority of his time when he visited the enormous 2.66-mile track as a kid, years prior to winning six races, including a record four straight

Earnhardt Jr., who will be vying for his seventh TSS win in the **Alabama 500** Monster Energy NASCAR Cup Series (MENCS) race on Sunday, Oct. 15, has always had passion for Talladega and its extraordinary style of “Super” Superspeedway racing, but it was actually ignited as a youngster in the late 1980s and early 1990s.

While his father, Dale Earnhardt Sr., was racking up wins at Talladega, an eager Dale Jr. tagged along. Whether it was racing go karts in the nearby city of Oxford, AL or scavenging for 'treasure' in the TSS garage, Earnhardt Jr. always seemed to have something to do while his father was intimidating the competition on NASCAR's Most Competitive track.

“The little go kart track (Moore’s Fun Center) was not far from the hotel we stayed at,” Dale Jr. recalls. “We used to burn through a \$100 bill every night with my buddies Mike Whitcomb (former car owner Bob Whitcomb’s son), Scottie Williams (son of former NASCAR crew chief Doug Williams) and Brad Means (son of low-budget, veteran NASCAR independent driver Jimmy Means).”

When he wasn’t tearing up the go kart track, Dale Jr. and his pals were on the hunt in Talladega’s massive garage area – scavenging for whatever they could find from more than 40 NASCAR teams.

“I was in awe about how many brand-new spark plugs the teams would leave laying around the garage,” Dale Jr. said. “Brand new bottles of brake cleaner and glass cleaner were just discarded. Back then, during the race, the teams took everything they needed to the pits. What they would leave behind would be new spark plugs and brand-new cans of this, that and the other....all kinds of stuff just laying around. Me and my buddies would box it up or carry it over to Jimmy Means’ truck so they could take it home. I don’t even know if Jimmy cared, but we thought we were doing something cool. We did that (at the track), and even begged people to let us wax their race cars and whatever we could get ourselves into.”

Dale Jr. has come a long way from being the ambitious kid in the garage. In 1998, he made his first Talladega start in the NASCAR XFINITY Series, then two years later in 2000, debuted in the MENCs. Now, NASCAR’s 14-time Most Popular Driver hopes to wind up in Talladega’s Gatorade Victory Lane in the upcoming **Alabama 500**. It’s his final start at the track he calls "a second home" because of so many great memories he made on and off the track. A victory would place him second on the track’s all-time MENCs win list – trailing only his father – who has 10 triumphs.

Talladega’s fall event weekend kicks off Friday, Oct. 13 with a full slate of on-track activity, including practice sessions for the **Alabama 500** and **fred’s 250 Powered by Coca-Cola** NASCAR Camping World Truck Series (NCWTS) event, both of which will play major roles in NASCAR’s Playoffs. Saturday’s **fred’s 250 Powered by Coca-Cola**, where the field of eligible championship contenders will be trimmed from eight to six at the checkered flag, is set for a 12 Noon (CDT) start, while Sunday’s **Alabama 500**, the “Wildcard” second race in the Round of 12 of the Cup Series playoffs, will get underway at 1 p.m. (CDT).

To secure your tickets to Talladega’s memorable race weekend and see Dale Jr.’s final start log on to www.talladegasuperspeedway.com or call the Talladega Ticket office at 855-518-RACE (7223).

About Talladega Superspeedway

Talladega Superspeedway is NASCAR’s Most Competitive (record of 88 lead changes in 188 laps), highest banked (33 degrees), and longest track (2.66-miles), as well as the most fun and fan-friendly. Talladega offers something for everyone, including hundreds of acres of free camping, amazing kids ticket and college student prices, along with special offers for military members and first responders. The historic venue, [built in 1969](#), is deemed NASCAR’s “Party Capital” thanks to the track’s infamous infield, which features the traditional Saturday Night Concert (featuring [Colt Ford Powered by American Ethanol](#)) and the world-renowned Talladega Blvd, home of the Friday night “Big One on the Blvd” party. It’s the site of the most comfortable seats in motorsports, large ISM Vision HD video viewing boards that line the frontstretch and [endless pre-race activities](#) for fans on race day, including special kid’s VIP opportunities. [Talladega Superspeedway’s next NASCAR weekend](#) is set for October 13-15, featuring the fred’s 250 Powered by Coca-Cola NASCAR Camping World Truck Series (NCWTS) race Sat. Oct. 14 – the final race in the Round of 8 in the NCWTS Playoffs where the field of eligible title contenders will be trimmed from eight to six. The weekend’s anchor is on Sun. Oct. 15 with the Alabama 500 Monster Energy NASCAR Cup Series (MENCs) event, the second race in the Round of 12 during the MENCs Playoffs. For more details and ticket information simply log on to www.talladegasuperspeedway.com or call the Talladega Ticket Office at 855-518-RACE (7223).

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

September 19, 2017 (17-87)

Simple Instructions and the Trip of a Lifetime – Dale Earnhardt Jr.’s First Laps at Talladega Superspeedway



Photo Cutline: Dale Jr. took his first laps around Talladega Superspeedway in the mid-1990s before making his official debut at the 2.66-mile venue as a NASCAR XFINITY Series competitor in 1998.

TALLADEGA, AL – “Grab your helmet and your firesuit and be at the airport the next morning.” Those were the instructions that Dale Earnhardt Jr. received one day in the mid-1990s when he answered the phone while changing the oil on a car at his father’s Chevrolet dealership. The voice on the other end of the line? None other than his dad - the legend himself - Dale Earnhardt Sr. Where was Dale Jr.’s destination the following morning? None other than Talladega Superspeedway, where boys become men.

“Dad and Dave Marcis (former veteran driver and 1976 Talladega winner) were in Talladega, I think testing the V-8 engine (for the NASCAR XFINITY Series (NXS), which was moving away from the V-6,” said Dale Jr., who will make his final Monster Energy NASCAR Cup Series (MENCs) start in Talladega Superspeedway’s Sunday, Oct. 15 **Alabama 500**. “Dad called me at the dealership and I was changing oil in a car. He told me to get my helmet and my suit and be at the airport the next morning, and not to ask any questions or tell anybody where I was going. I mean, I knew I was going to Talladega, but I didn’t know why.”

This was the first step of the grooming process for Dale Jr. to make the jump into the NXS. He, along with his brother Kerry and sister Kelley, had raced for years in Late Model Divisions on short tracks in the Carolinas, but when it was time to consider transitioning to the higher tiers of NASCAR, Dale Sr. had one track in mind for Dale Jr. to make those initial practice laps. After all, Dale Sr. was the master of the biggest and baddest track on the planet, winning a record 10 times in the MENCs. The next day Earnhardt Jr. arrived at the 2.66-mile venue, and for the first time in his life, experienced a big-time track from behind the wheel of a NASCAR stock car.

“We got to the track and he (Dale Sr.) told me to get my uniform on and get in the car and go out and run....and hold it wide-open, that it would stick (in the corners),” recalled Junior. “I remember going down the back straightaway in that car and wondering if it was really going to stick when I got in that corner because it just didn’t seem like it was possible.”

From that moment emerged Dale Jr.'s love affair with NASCAR's Most Competitive track. A few years later, in 1998, he was no longer just a kid testing his skill on Talladega's 33-degree high banks. In his first competitive event at Talladega in the NXS, things didn't go as planned as the 23 year-old finished 32nd after being caught up in a multi-car accident. He returned one year later with a much more impressive sixth place run. After winning two NXS championships in 1998 and '99, it was on to the MENCS at Talladega in 2000, where he would rewrite the track's history book in a short period of time. And, like his Dad, would too become a 'Dega legend.

Talladega's fall event weekend kicks off Friday, Oct. 13 with a full slate of on-track activity, including practice sessions for the **Alabama 500** and **fred's 250 Powered by Coca-Cola** NASCAR Camping World Truck Series (NCWTS) event, both of which will play major roles in NASCAR's playoffs. Saturday's **fred's 250 Powered by Coca-Cola**, where the field of eligible championship contenders will be trimmed from eight to six at the checkered flag, is set for a 12 Noon (CDT) start. Sunday's **Alabama 500**, Dale Jr.'s final Talladega start, another stop on the #Appreci88ion tour and the "Wildcard" second race in the Round of 12 of the MENCS playoffs, will get underway at 1 p.m. (CDT).

To secure your tickets to Talladega's memorable race weekend and see Dale Jr.'s final start log on to www.talladegasuperspeedway.com or call the Talladega Ticket office at 855-518-RACE (7223). The track's ticket office is available daily during the week, and now on weekends from 9 a.m. – 1 p.m. (CDT).

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

September 26, 2017 (17-91)

Earnhardt Vs. Earnhardt: Father and Son Battle for Victory at 'Dega



Photo Cutline: *In just his second Monster Energy NASCAR Cup Series start at Talladega, Dale Earnhardt Jr. dueled his father for the victory in one of the most iconic finishes ever at the 2.66-mile venue.*

TALLADEGA, AL – Oh to wonder what he could have done differently. Those thoughts filled Dale Earnhardt Jr.'s mind on October 15, 2000, after his second Monster Energy NASCAR Cup Series (MENCS) race at Talladega Superspeedway. That fall afternoon, his father – Dale Earnhardt Sr. – drove from 18th place to 1st in the closing handful of laps to capture his 10th MENCS checkered flag at 'Dega and the 76th and final victory of his career. "Little E," on the other hand, was left to ponder whether a different move would have landed him in Gatorade Victory Lane instead.

"He (Dale Sr.) won the race. It worked out for him and that was good...a helluva comeback," said Dale Jr., who will make his final Talladega start in the Oct. 15 **Alabama 500** – 17 years to the day of that historic run by his dad. "I hate to think about how it went for me, because I wanted to win the race. I wish we could do again because I would do a lot of things differently."

But, just how did the comeback happen and how did rookie Dale Jr. fare?

With just five laps to go, Dale Jr. was leading the pack around Talladega's 33-degree high banks, while Dale Sr. was mired back in 18th. However, as is typical at the 2.66-mile venue, the running order would change quickly.

Slicing and dicing through traffic in his black No. 3 Chevrolet, Dale Sr. – 'the Intimidator' – made an incredible run through the field. With just two laps remaining, the driver who many said could "see the air" and was the "best driver ever at drafting," found himself in third, behind Dale Jr., who had been overtaken by Earnhardt Sr.'s Richard Childress Racing teammate, Mike Skinner.

“I was sitting behind Mike and we were in a single file line on the inside,” recalled Dale Jr. “Mike was protecting the bottom and I was going to sit there until the last lap and try to pass him. Dad's line formed on the outside and was coming. I could see him in the mirror knocking off a few guys each corner and getting closer toward the lead. I had to decide whether I was going to try to pass Mike immediately, and then maybe battle my dad for the lead, which was probably the best thing I could have done.”

Pushing Skinner past his father on the bottom line, however, simply wasn't an option. “I knew that pushing Mike past Daddy was not going to work well, since I was riding home (flying on Dale Sr.'s airplane) with him,” Jr. joked.

Dale Jr. chose to make his move down low on Skinner, while his father continued to lead the high line. Skinner made the block through the tri-oval on Dale Jr. who had to back off the gas pedal for a brief moment, and as a result, lost momentum and fell back to 14th at the checkered flag. On the other hand, Dale Sr., with the help of drafting partner Kenny Wallace, swept past his son and Skinner, completing the amazing comeback to celebrate in Gatorade Victory Lane.

“He sort of had a way of, you know, doing all kinds of stuff like that, making big comebacks, or big, great saves or just crazy passes,” remembered Dale Jr. “He would never get out and jump up and down and brag about it. But, you know, when it was all said and done and over with, everybody went home, and he would take pride in doing those things. I think that comeback was one he really, really enjoyed.”

Although he didn't win that day, Dale Jr. would use lessons learned from his father for future Talladega races. “Racing against him, I learned a lot,” said Dale Jr. “He was always teaching me lessons by leaving me behind out there. I think it's a lot easier to know what he was doing than it is to actually go out and do it.”

A year later, Dale Jr. began a seven-race streak that is unprecedented, winning a record four straight TSS races from the fall of 2001 to the spring of 2003. Then, after two runner-up finishes, he capped it off with a victory in the fall of 2004, earning him legendary Talladega status alongside his father.

To secure your tickets to see Dale Jr.'s final start during Talladega's memorable race weekend, log on to www.talladegasuperspeedway.com or call the Main Ticket office at 855-518-RACE (7223), which is available from 8 a.m. – 4 p.m. (CDT) during the week and now open on weekends from 9 a.m. – 1 p.m. (CDT).

Talladega's fall event weekend kicks off Friday, Oct. 13 with a full slate of on-track activity, including practice sessions for the **Alabama 500** and **fred's 250 Powered by Coca-Cola** NASCAR Camping World Truck Series (NCWTS) event, both of which will play major roles in NASCAR's playoffs. Saturday's **fred's 250 Powered by Coca-Cola**, where the field of eligible championship contenders will be trimmed from eight to six at the checkered flag, is set for a 12 Noon (CDT) start. Sunday's **Alabama 500**, another stop on the Dale Jr.'s #Appreci88ion Tour and the “Wildcard” second race in the Round of 12 of the MENCS playoffs, will get underway at 1 p.m. (CDT).

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

October 3, 2017 (17-94)

Dale Earnhardt Sr. and Jr. – The Legends of Talladega Superspeedway



Photo Cutline: Dale Earnhardt Jr. and Earnhardt Sr. have established a legacy at Talladega Superspeedway that is unmatched. Pictured here, the two share a happy moment prior to a 2000 Monster Energy NASCAR Cup Series Race.

TALLADEGA, AL – For nearly 40 years, when the Monster Energy NASCAR Cup Series (MENCS) has visited Talladega Superspeedway, either Dale Earnhardt Sr. or Earnhardt Jr. have been amongst the many different drivers on the starting grid. With almost 80 Talladega starts and 16 wins between them – the Earnhardt name has become synonymous with the 2.66-mile race track in Talladega, Alabama, helping the pair establish an incredible legacy at the historical venue.

“It’s always meant a lot to me to run well here,” said Dale Jr., who will make his final Talladega start in the **Alabama 500** on Oct. 15. “Watching my dad, who was one of the best, I learned a tremendous amount because I solely watched him whereas, someone else who grew up around the sport may not have focused as much on one particular driver. All those things maybe helped me develop into a better (restrictor) plate race car driver than the average guy. I guess our personalities matched.”

Dale Sr. made his first Talladega start on August 6, 1978. He finished 12th that day in an underfunded No. 96 Ford owned by Will Conkrite. Five years later, in NASCAR Hall of Famer Bud Moore’s No. 15 Ford, he captured the first of his 10 MENCS wins at TSS. After joining Richard Childress Racing, the elder Earnhardt would claim nine more triumphs at Talladega to become the track’s all-time winner. All the while, a young Dale Jr. was studying his father’s every move.

“When I was a little kid, I'd look back through all the books and magazines and it would show the winner of the year before,” Dale Jr. recalled. “I'd always look to see where dad had finished (at Talladega). Years later when I came to Talladega as a driver, I listened to every word he had to say.”

Using lessons learned from his father, Junior began to write his own Talladega story. After making his TSS debut in the MENCs as a rookie in 2000, the chips started falling in his direction in the fall of 2001. From that point until the spring of 2003, he reeled off an unheard of four straight triumphs at 'Dega - a track record that still stands. After two consecutive runner-up efforts, he won again in October 2004.

“When I was winning all those races, I raced as hard in practices as I did in the race. I wanted to set the tone early in the weekend with my competitors,” said Earnhardt Jr. of opening practices. “This is the car you've got. When they start talking about who might be strong before the event is even here, and you're one of those names on the list, you know they're thinking that you're a guy they're going to be looking for, and you're more likely going to get the drafting help when you need it.”

After a long dry spell, in the May 2015 GEICO 500, Dale Jr. won his sixth Talladega race to move into a tie for third on the track's all-time MENCs win list. It happened on the weekend that would have been his father's 64th birthday.

“That was really on my mind after the win,” an emotional Junior said of his Dad's birthday. “It just kind of hit me all at once. Dad won so many races here. The fans loved him. We were able to come in and win our share, and add to the Earnhardt name and the heritage at Talladega. That's something I truly enjoy - when we win races at places I know my dad had a lot of success at.”

When Dale Jr. wins, he doesn't consider the victories his. Instead, he believes he's adding to his father's name and legacy. “I love just being able to add to his win total. I consider them all his wins to be honest with you, and I'm just kind of adding to it. He made this all possible for me.

"Dad did a lot of things in the sport that paved the road for me. When I was able to come in here and win some races, that just solidified my position and the Earnhardt family's legacy at this race track. Dad was a legend here. He was real easy to cheer for when you came here. No matter who you were a fan of, it was fun to watch him race. He always did a lot of great things, a lot of fun things for a fan as far as watching a race here goes. When I was able to come here and have some success, I think it sealed the deal for all the Earnhardt fans out there."

Can Dale Jr. “seal the deal” one final time at Talladega? Find out in the **Alabama 500** that sees the green flag drop at 1 p.m. (CDT) on Sunday, Oct. 15. There is still time to secure tickets to this iconic stop on Dale Jr.'s #Appreci88ion Tour, log on to www.talladegasuperspeedway.com or call 855-518-RACE (7223). The Main Ticket office is available from 8 a.m. – 4 p.m. (CDT) during the week and now on weekends from 9 a.m. – 1 p.m. (CDT).

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

October 3, 2017 (17-94)

'Dega Dale Fan Connection: Unlike Anywhere Else



Photo Cutline: Dale Earnhardt Jr. has always had a special relationship with his fans at Talladega Superspeedway. Last fall, prior to being named an Honorary Member of the famed Alabama Gang, Dale Jr. surprised a group of some of his biggest fans.

TALLADEGA, AL – Home is where the heart is. And for six-time Talladega winner Dale Earnhardt Jr., that place is Talladega Superspeedway – a track he considers a second home, with good reason. In addition to his six triumphs and record four consecutive victories (from 2001-2003) at the 2.66-mile facility, it's his relationship with his fans, in a place that he himself, calls "Earnhardt Country," that make his trips to NASCAR's Biggest and Baddest track even more special.

"There are a lot of them here (at Talladega), tons of them, more than any place we go," said Dale Jr., who will make his final Talladega start in this Sunday's **Alabama 500** Monster Energy NASCAR Cup Series (MENCS) race. "You know, you travel all over the United States, racing in all the different parts of the country and some places you feel almost like you're at home. This is one of them."

Dale Jr. felt even more at home at the historic Alabama race track last fall when he was named an Honorary Member of the famed "Alabama Gang" by the original trio of the state's racing legends – Bobby & Donnie Allison and Red Farmer. "What an incredible honor that was, not only for me, but all the Earnhardt fans out there," said Dale Jr. "Talladega Superspeedway has meant so much to me and my family."

The Earnhardt fandom at 'Dega started nearly four decades ago with his father – Dale Earnhardt Sr. – who gravitated early on with not only the track, but thousands of families in the grandstands. There was a connection

there that was evident, and the track's all-time winner (10-times) passed that baton on to his son, who always looks forward to the trek back to Sweet Home Alabama.

"It makes it fun to come here knowing you've got a lot of people excited to see you run," Junior said. "When you are on pit road before you even get in the car, the first thing you're thinking about is how fast you can get to the lead because you know a lot of people want to see you leading the race. And they come here to cheer that specific moment and hopefully see you go to Victory Lane."

JR Nation will be proud no matter the result of his final TSS start. The Hendrick Motorsports Chevrolet driver trails only his father on Talladega's all-time MENCs win list. But, he wants to wind up in Talladega's Gatorade Victory Lane one final time – not only for himself and his team, but for the countless fans in the stands on their feet, cheering and sporting No. 88 gear.

"You just want to produce for them," admitted Dale Jr. "Sometimes I swear I can hear the fans when we take the lead. It's a great feeling. Makes me feel proud to make them happy. When you come off Turn 4 you can see a big difference in arms in the air and people excited about what just happened when you take the lead. That really... you can't create that anywhere else."

Perhaps a storybook ending will take place with a seventh triumph Sunday. At least we know one thing – the droves of fans will be out in full force.

The **Alabama 500** is set for 1 p.m. (CDT). To secure your tickets for this stop on Dale Jr.'s #Appreci88ion Tour, log on to www.talladegasuperspeedway.com or call the track's main ticket office at 855-518-RACE (7223).

This weekend's NASCAR Playoff action kicks off Friday with practice sessions for the **Alabama 500** and **fred's 250 Powered by Coca-Cola** NASCAR Camping World Truck Series race, which takes the green flag on Saturday at 12 Noon CDT.