

Earnhardt No. 1 at Daytona

Wins first Nascar Winston Cup event of year

by Matthew Bowman

"Yes, Yes, Yes!"

That was all that the man known as "the intimidator" could say. After 20 years of trying and never quite making it, Dale Earnhardt defeated 42 other drivers and a haunting history to earn his first Daytona 500 victory.

A better script could not have been written. He had been in this situation before. As the end of the race approached, Earnhardt led and only had to fend off the late charges of his closest competitors. Twice, in past races he led at the white flag, but could not capitalize. In fact, over the twenty years he led every lap except the final one. Last Sunday, Feb. 15, however, he simply would not be denied.

This was "the most anticipated moment in NASCAR history," said one television announcer. "Dale Earnhardt enters victory lane at the Daytona 500." Never before was a reception of this magnitude given to a winner of the race.

As the No. 3 Chevrolet pulled down pit row,

every member of every crew team, including NASCAR officials, was there to congratulate Earnhardt on his accomplishment. It was a historical moment.

Richard Childress, team owner, called the moment, "unbelievable." Even the biggest and toughest of men could not hold back the tears.

As Earnhardt made his way down pit row, he pulled onto the grass infield to take a moment for several victory tire spins. Afterwards he said that he knew he would never race the car again so he wanted to enjoy it while he still had it.

After receiving his winning trophy, he said he always dreamed of getting his name engraved on the trophy with the other champions and wondered if it would ever happen. On February 15, 1998, Dale Earnhardt made that dream a reality.

Earnhardt proved that true champions, no matter how often they come close and fail, never give up and keep coming back for more.

Paterno keeps getting it done

from Penn State press releases

Entering his 33rd season as head coach and 49th year as a member of the coaching staff, Joe Paterno is the nation's leading active coach in victories. Paterno owns a 298-77-3 record, a winning percentage of 79.2; third-best among active coaches.

A 1950 graduate of Brown University, Paterno is fourth in all-time wins, has directed Penn State to five unbeaten seasons (1968, '69, '73, '86, '94), 17 10-win years and is the bowl wins leader with an 18-9-1 post-season record. He is second only to Chicago's Amos Alonzo Stagg (41) in years coached at one school.

Paterno is poised to become only the sixth man ever to reach the 300-victory pla-

teau, joining Eddie Robinson (408), John Gagliardi (342-active), as well as Bear Bryant (323), Pop Warner (319) and Amos Alonzo Stagg (314).

The Nittany Lions have made 28 post-season appearances under Joe Paterno, who trails only Paul "Bear" Bryant in bowl visits, at 29.

The all-time bowl wins leader with an 18-9-1 record, Paterno's bowl winning percentage of 66.1 is third-best. He trails only Florida State's Bobby Bowden (78.6) and former Georgia Tech coach Bobby Dodd (69.2).

Paterno has taken teams to 12 different bowls, more than any other coach, winning 11 locales.

And In This Corner...

Kyle Brady is more than just an athlete

by Matthew Bowman

The mentioning of the name Kyle Brady means different things to different people. There are some who see the tight end for the New York Jets. Others see one of the many former Penn State athletes who has gone on to a successful career in professional sports. And there are even people who, when asked, would say, "Kyle who?"

As true as all these views of Brady may be, they alone do not complete all of the many sides to this man. Kyle Brady is much more than a football player. He would probably be the first to tell you that.

I remember many of my trips to "happy valley" (and road games as well) to see the Lions play their football games. Over the years, I have had the privilege of seeing great athletes play the game every Saturday. Now I get the chance to see some of these same athletes perform on Sunday when they suit up in the National Football League. These players all have one important factor in common. I only see and here from them one day each week. Moreover, I here nothing during the off-season.

But this is what makes Kyle Brady a little different from the other average athletes. In a world of million dollar contracts and being in the spotlight, some athletes dare to be different. These people take the time to do something for others, and they believe that there is more to life than just making the big bucks.

I first met Kyle when he was playing football at Penn State. It was a Saturday morning, several hours before game time. On game days at State College, Joe Paterno would sometimes have a short walkthrough practice in the indoor football practice field to prepare for the game. As the players were leaving, Brady and Kerry Collins both passed me. I said hello and said to get a win today, or something along those lines. He acknowledged me with a wave and a smile.

My first reaction was one of surprise. An actual athlete took the time to notice and respond to me. I never forgot that. A year later in 1993, Penn State joined the Big 10. The first road game in the Conference was at the University of Iowa. My father and I along with a friend made the trip out to see the game. (If you remember, the Lions shut out the Hawkeyes and proved they belonged in the Big 10.) While sitting in the stadium before the game, we yelled down onto the field at Kyle who was warming up near our seats. Without hesitation, he stopped what he was doing and gave us a "thumbs up" in response. At that moment, I knew this guy was different.

Now I know what you are thinking already. So what is the big deal, right? Well, just stop for a second and think about the large number of famous people who do their best to avoid contact with the "little people." On the contrary, Kyle Brady has made it a priority in his life to reach out to those who are often less fortunate.

Take for instance the work he does with The Second Mile which is a charity founded by Jerry Sandusky, Penn State defensive coordinator, that is designed to help youth with a variety of problems. On February 8, Brady played in the Harrisburg Horizon game and donated the money he made to the charity. During the press conference when he announced his intent to play this game, he said that he learned through his work with these kids that "they have reason to believe in themselves." That is what he tries to convey to the children.

I went to the game that day to see him play, and the gym was packed. At halftime, Kyle came out of the locker room and proceeded to have a shooting contest with five children. This event was another attempt for Brady to raise more money for The Second Mile. He took the microphone and talked with the kids and the fans. As impressive as this was, what followed the game said even more.

During the game, the announcer said that Kyle Brady would remain available to sign autographs for those who would like one. As the final minutes ticked off the game clock, a line of anticipating fans began to form against the wall of the gym. By the time the game had ended, the line stretched half way around the gymnasium. Even so, each one received a signature and a chance to meet Kyle.

I too had the chance to sit down and talk with Kyle Brady two weeks ago. As I sat there and talked with him and asked him some questions, I realized that another thing that makes Kyle different from other stars is that he is not arrogant. What I mean is that his personality is one that can relate to others. Sometimes when we try to describe what someone is like, we say that he or she is just like you and me. Well, Kyle is this kind of person.

If you ever talk to him or listen to what he says about his life and fame, you are sure to hear him refer to Jesus Christ. His faith in God is a very important part of his life, and he is not afraid to share that with others. He even takes some time during the off-season to visit a church or two as a guest speaker.

He said the time he spent at Penn State was a "life changing experience." Not only because he aged five years, but it was during his time there that he also accepted Christ as his personal Savior. "That made a tremendous impact in my life," he said.

Former Penn State kicker, Craig Fayak was a big influence on Brady. "He was a tremendous athlete," said Brady, "but the neatest thing I saw was just him living out the Christian life. . . living it and walking the walk speaks tremendous volumes, even more than just words do."

That is what Kyle Brady aims to do. Walk the walk so that others may see a difference in his life. I know I have.

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