

Eye on Sports

Starting the Chase: Daytona 500

Special to the Lion's Eye

On February 15, 2009, the 51st running of the Daytona 500 in Daytona Beach, Florida left both drivers and fans with mixed emotions. The racing was intense all day and was leading up to yet another exciting and close finish as in years past. Gavin DeGraw sang the national anthem, and then Charlie Crist, the governor of Florida delivered the famous command, "GENTLEMEN START YOUR ENGINES". The cars rolled off of pit road and onto the 2.5 mile racetrack, and at 3:42 PM, the green flag waved and the race was underway.

There were twelve lead changes and five cautions in the first 123 laps. In those 123 laps, Kyle Busch had the dominating car. This was his race to lose, as it seemed that no other driver had the horsepower to get around the #18 M&M's Toyota. Kyle Busch's day would end up in heartbreak on lap 124, when he became victim of the sixth caution. Dale Earnhardt, Jr. (Junior) and Brian Vickers were both a lap down. They were battling to be the first car one lap down. Under NASCAR rules, if a caution were to come out, whomever, the leader is of multiple drivers a lap down, that driver would get a free pass around the track and be back on the lead lap. Junior caught up to Vickers and went to the outside to pass Vickers. Vickers saw Junior and slid down to block him. This caused both drivers to go beneath the yellow line, which is a penalty

at restrictor plate races. As Junior was coming back up to the track, he misjudged where Vickers' car was and spun Vickers into oncoming traffic. Junior and Vickers were running up at the front when the wreck occurred. Therefore, the wreck took out ten cars, including last year's reigning champion Jimmie Johnson and the man to beat Kyle Busch. This caution changed the race entirely. Now that Kyle Busch was out of the race, anyone on the track that was on the lead lap had a chance to win the race.

On lap 146, racing resumed with Elliott Sadler as the leader, Matt Kenseth in second, and Kevin Harvick third. Coming out of turn 4, Sadler drifted too high, and with assistance from Harvick, Kenseth was able to pass by Sadler. No one imagined, not even Kenseth that this would be the races winning move. Right after Kenseth made the pass on Sadler, Aric Almirola and Kasey Kahne clashed and brought out the eighth and final caution. Rain was in the forecast all day but never showed itself until three laps later, on lap 149.

Around dinnertime, the race was red flagged due to rain. Any stock car racing fan could tell that the race was going to be interesting from the point that Kenseth took the lead until the checkered flag flew. It just had that "Great American Race" feel to it. At this point, Kenseth fans wanted the rain to continue falling, and non-Kenseth fans wanted to see the rain stop and the race to resume.



2009 Daytona 500. (photo courtesy <http://blog.placesaroundflorida.com/images/2009/01/2009-Daytona-500.jpg>)

At 6:49 PM, the race was declared official by NASCAR, therefore, giving the win to Kenseth. The reason was that with the humidity in the air and the amount of rain that was falling it would take late into the night for racing to resume, which seemed too long of a wait by NASCAR for both the drivers and the fans. Kenseth climbed out of his car in joyful tears and astonishment that he had won his first ever Daytona 500. He is the eighth different driver in the last eight Daytona 500 races to win the "Great American Race". Even though many feel that the Daytona 500 should not have ended under caution, it is what it is, and the drivers must move on to California for race #2 in the chase for the Nextel Cup championship in November.

Sixers Fall After All-Star Break

By Thomas A. McGlinchey

Lion's Eye Sports Editor - tam5160@psu.edu

The Philadelphia 76ers had a 7 game homestand before the All-Star Break in mid-February. The homestand was a great way for the 76ers to gain a higher position in the Conference standings for the playoffs. The homestand consisted of 7 games against teams that seemed beatable. The team went 5-2 on the homestand. The only two losses for the team were two heartbreakers against the NJ Pike rivals the Nets from New Jersey, and the defending champs, the Boston Celtics.

The Nets game was well in hand going into the fourth and final quarter, but the team let the game slip away and lost by only 2 points, 85-83. The Celtics game was a heartbreaker if there ever was one, at home for the 76ers. The game was on the line with only a minute to go. The Celtics had the ball and were able to get it into the hands of one player that teams do not want shooting at the end of the game, the elusive Ray Allen. Allen was able to get a free and a clear shot, put the ball up in the air and it fell through the net with a swish. The game ended on that gut-wrenching note for the 76ers.

Overall the team was able to pull 5 wins together before the much needed break. The wins came against the Washington Wizards, Indiana Pacers, Miami Heat, the dominant Phoenix Suns, and the Memphis Grizzlies.

After the six day layoff for the 76ers because of the All-Star festivities, the team was back at work, but they were unable to find a rhythm. It was as if the team did not need the break but it was given to them.

The first game back from the break was away against the Indiana Pacers, and the team seemed to be a little jittery from the beginning. They couldn't make shots, nor could they keep up with the Pacers. The Pacers handed the 76ers a 9 point loss coming off the break, which could be a serious dent in their playoff hopes down the stretch.

On Wednesday, February 18, 2009, the 76ers were back on their home court for the first time since the 7 game homestand. The team was to face the gruesome Nugget team from Denver. The 76ers were able to start the game the way that they needed to, which was out and running the floor. The team took a commanding lead going into the half.

After the break for the half the 76ers seemed to have laid down like a lame dog. The team was without their huge offseason acquisition, Elton Brand, and they were about to lose another key player that has played a prominent role in the team's success. Star point guard, Andre Miller suffered a strained right calf during the middle of the previous quarter and was out for the entirety of the fourth quarter. Miller had an MRI done recently. The team

finished the game trying to catch up to a deficit that they could not overcome, and lost the game 101-89. The leading scorer for the 76ers was Miller with 17 points. Hopefully, Miller will be fine come playoff time and the city can celebrate another World Champion. GO SIXERS!



Sixer Game against the Memphis Grizzlies. Photo by Thomas A. McGlinchey

Nittany Lions Almost to NCAA Championship

By Christian Varalli

Lion's Eye Staff Writer - cpv5019@psu.edu

The Nittany Lions are possibly on their way to a NCAA (National Collegiate Athletic Association) tournament berth? Who would have thought? Penn State is off to its best season since contending in basketball in 2001, which was the last time that the Nittany Lions made the NCAA tournament. The NIT (National Invitation Tournament) was the last tournament which Penn State barely qualified for. Exciting? Yes, but do not get your hopes up yet. They still have to take care of some business with few games left they have to put a couple more W's in the win column if they want there shot at March Madness.

The Nittany Lions need at least 11 wins in BIG 10 play to even have a shot at the tournament. This record would also most likely give the Nittany Lions a bye in the Big Ten tournament and in the No. 4 vs. No. 5 match-up on the second day. A win in that game would lock up the Lions' NCAA berth. A loss might leave them to sweat it out. If they would end up with more than 11 wins they should have no problem getting into the big dance. The last time Penn State made the March Madness tournament, they reached the Sweet 16 by upsetting the number 2 seeded North Carolina in the second round. If this team can continue their good play and reach the tournament, they could be dangerous to advance a few rounds as well.

Penn State Basketball Schedule

Fri, Nov 14th, 2008 William & Mary W 65 - 51	65 - 61
Mon, Nov 17th, 2008 NJIT W 74 - 47	Tue, Jan 6th, 2009 Purdue W 67 - 64
Thu, Nov 20th, 2008 Hartford W 89 - 64	Sun, Jan 11th, 2009 at Minnesota L 79 - 59
Sun, Nov 23rd, 2008 New Hampshire W 70 - 50	Wed, Jan 14th, 2009 Michigan State L 78 - 73
Tue, Nov 25th, 2008 at Penn W 85 - 73	Sat, Jan 17th, 2009 at Indiana W 65 - 55
Fri, Nov 28th, 2008 Rhode Island L 77 - 72	Tue, Jan 20th, 2009 Michigan W 73 - 58
Sat, Nov 29th, 2008 at Towson W 78 - 54	Sat, Jan 24th, 2009 Iowa W 63 - 59
Wed, Dec 3rd, 2008 at Georgia Tech W 85 - 83	Sun, Feb 1st, 2009 at Michigan State W 72 - 68
Sat, Dec 6th, 2008 Temple L 65 - 59	Thu, Feb 5th, 2009 at Michigan L 71 - 51
Wed, Dec 10th, 2008 Army W 60 - 45	Sun, Feb 8th, 2009 Wisconsin L 54 - 44
Sat, Dec 13th, 2008 Mount St Marys W 61 - 56	Wed, Feb 11th, 2009 at Purdue L 61 - 47
Sun, Dec 21st, 2008 Lafayette W 83 - 55	Sat, Feb 14th, 2009 Minnesota W 68 - 63
Tue, Dec 23rd, 2008 Sacred Heart W 73 - 65	Wed, Feb 18th, 2009 at Illinois W 38-33
Wed, Dec 31st, 2008 Northwestern W 61 - 57	Tue, Feb 24th, 2009 at Ohio State 07:00 PM
Sat, Jan 3rd, 2009 at Wisconsin L	Sat, Feb 28th, 2009 Indiana 06:00PM
	Thu, Mar 5th, 2009 Illinois 09:00 PM
	Sat, Mar 7th, 2009 at Iowa 02:05 PM