

Weekly golf outings give seniors a welcome routine

For a group of guys with basically no regular routine to follow, they sure do make it a point to follow this routine regularly.

With no clock to punch, like clockwork, they start arriving at the Mooresville Municipal Golf Course around 7:30 a.m. Wednesdays. Within an hour of that time, if they're not there, they won't play.

Most make it a point to arrive early. Golf is the drawing card for those who regularly arrive to engage in the Mooresville Senior Play Days each week. The field is open to any and all players interested ages 55 and older.

On this particular Wednesday, one blessed with unusually comfortable morning temperatures, a field of 40 players will comprise the field. Most of the time, the group features between 20-30 players, say those who are in charge of orchestrating the play.

That play itself takes the form of different shapes, depending on the number of participants. That's why it's imperative -- and required -- that all who desire to play are present and accounted for, with entry fees paid in full, a full 30 minutes prior to the scheduled mini-tournament a.m. starting time.

The friendly competition is held under a modified points scoring system, with players either on their own or grouped in teams of two, three and sometimes four players.

In addition to the points competition that is determined by players' scores on each hole, separate on-course events in the form of two closest-to-the-pin contests -- one each on a front nine and back side par-three hole -- are staged.

Players in the group run the gamut from those just fitting the age-limit minimum of

55 years to those still playing golf well into their mid to late 70's. There have been times in the past, as well, when players older than that have been among the regular participants.

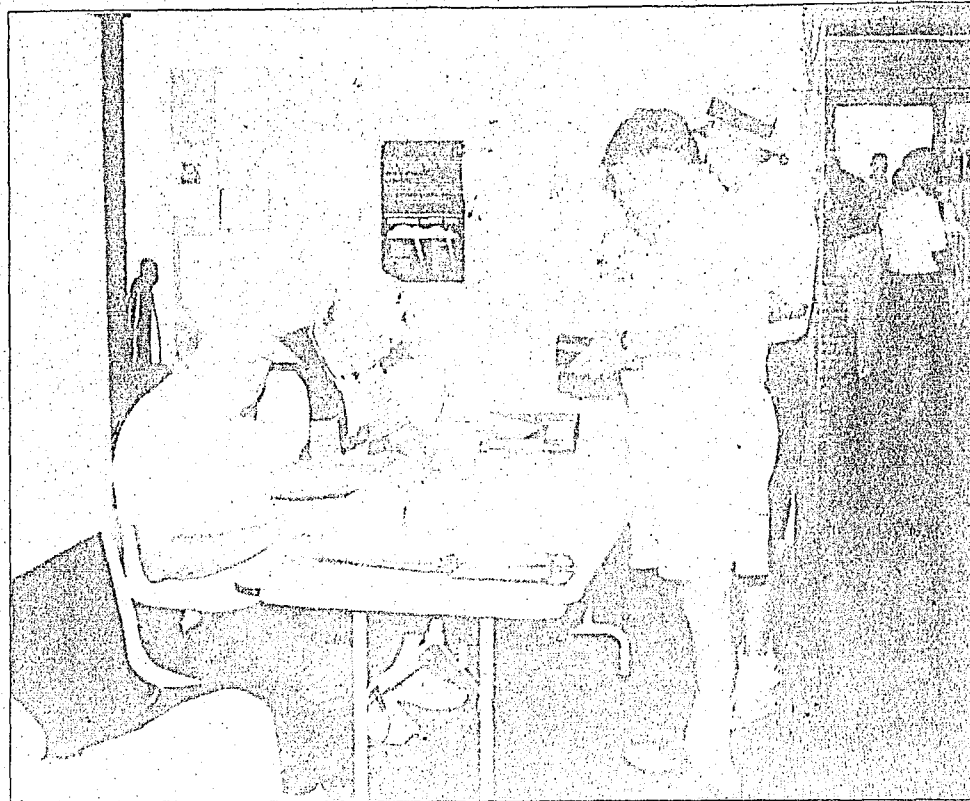
To accommodate for the various differences in ages among those in the group, some of the holes are played from different colored tee boxes for those who desire to do so. All in the field ages 70 and older have the option of playing all holes from the pushed-up gold-colored tee boxes while still reaping the same rewards as those in the younger set playing from tees slightly farther back.

While winning is nice, it's definitely not the primary reason those who follow the regular routine of participating choose to participate in the first place.

"It's a very good group of guys who really like to just be together, have some fun and play a little golf," revealed John Lindsey, himself a group regular and perhaps the one most responsible for organizing the senior group. "When you get our age, there's not a lot of things that you feel like you have to do. For some of us, though, this is something that we make it a point to do."

And they do it well, according to golf course staff members who work together with the group to see to it that each weekly session runs smooth.

"You don't hear all the griping and complaining from them like you do in some other groups," noticed Tommy Wingate, usually the staff person on call when the seniors respond to tee time calls for starting hole assignments. "We make the times available. They do everything else. It makes our job a little easier. They're a nice group to work with."



In order to secure a playing spot, players arrive on time, register and pay entry fees

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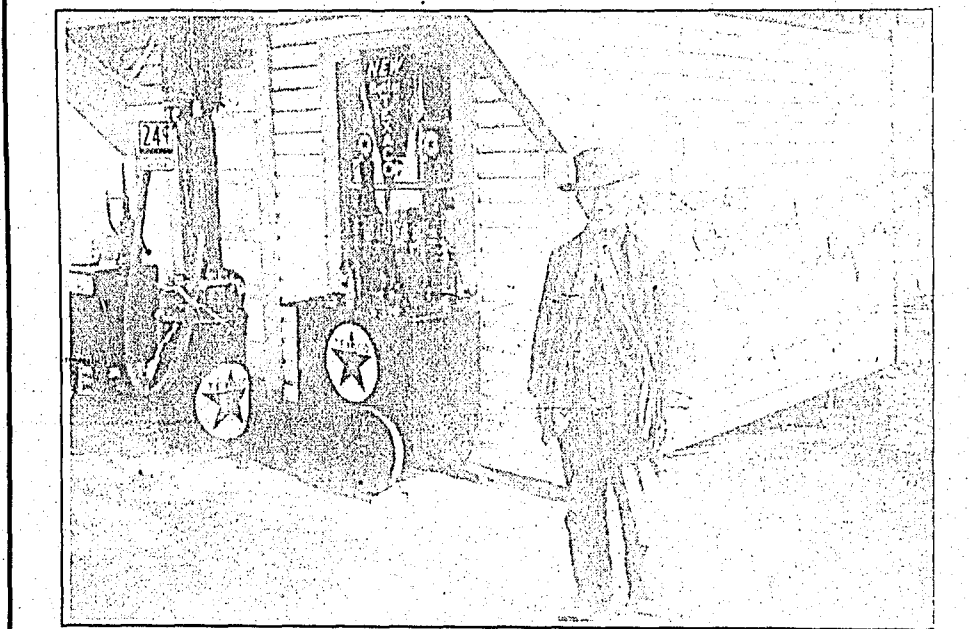
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MMS Lady Imps last to open

Members of Mooresville Middle School's girls tennis team hope to be saving the best for last early next week.

In so doing, when the Lady Imps make their first appearance of the season with a visit to Knox Middle Tuesday afternoon, they will become the school's fifth and final fall sports team to get its season underway.

All of the other school sports programs played their openers during the month of August.

Entering this season, the Impettes are riding high off last year's spotless, 8-0 record, the first undefeated ledger under head coach Brian Dunagan, who is back at the team's helm this fall.

A number of players,

including last year's number-one singles player, are eligible to return on this year's team. In addition to Courtney Boyd, an eighth-grader this season, two other singles players from last year also harbored perfect court records.

This year's agenda calls for a total of nine regular-season matches, only four of them at home. With Monday and Thursday afternoons normally reserved for regular weekly play days, the team will open on Tuesday following Monday's Labor Day holiday.

It accounts for a busy first week that will call for the Lady Imps to make three appearances within a six-day span, two of them on the

road. All of the matches feature 4 p.m. starting times, with home contests taking place on the courts adjacent to the MMS campus as well as on the nearby Edgemoor Park court complex.

Beginning with Tuesday's debut, the Mooresville Middle School girls tennis schedule, with home matches in all caps, follows:

Sept. 4KNOX MIDDLE
 Sept. 6NORTH ROWAN
 Sept. 10West Rowan
 Sept. 13CORRIHER-LIPE
 Sept. 17east Middle
 Sept. 20SOUTH DAVIE
 Sept. 24Kannapolis
 Sept. 27Erwin
 Oct. 1CHINA GROVE

Wildcats open season with win streak, national rank

Davidson College's football team will have added incentive to perform well this season.

The Wildcats, who enter the 2001 season with a 17-game winning streak, are ranked fourth in the Inaugural Sports Network I-AA Mid-Major Top 10 Poll. Also, Davidson has been picked to finish second in the Southern Division of its new conference.

The 'Cats, opening their first season in the Pioneer League, are coming off a perfect 10-0 season, the first unblemished record in 103 seasons of football at the college.

Davidson, which returns 11 starters from last year's team, received 203 points, including two first-place votes, in the preseason poll.

Robert Morris College, the other I-AA school with a 17-game win streak, earned the poll's top spot. The five-time defending Northeast Conference champions, who are coached by former NFL head man Joe Walton, were also 10-0 last season.

Duquesne takes the No. 2 spot in the preseason ranking after a 2000 season that resulted in a MAAC Football League title and a 10-1 season. The Dukes have never finished worse than third place in their six-season

affiliation with the MAAC.

Rounding out the top five are No. 3 Dayton, the Pioneer League co-champ, and No. 5 Sacred Heart, the 2000 NEC runner-up.

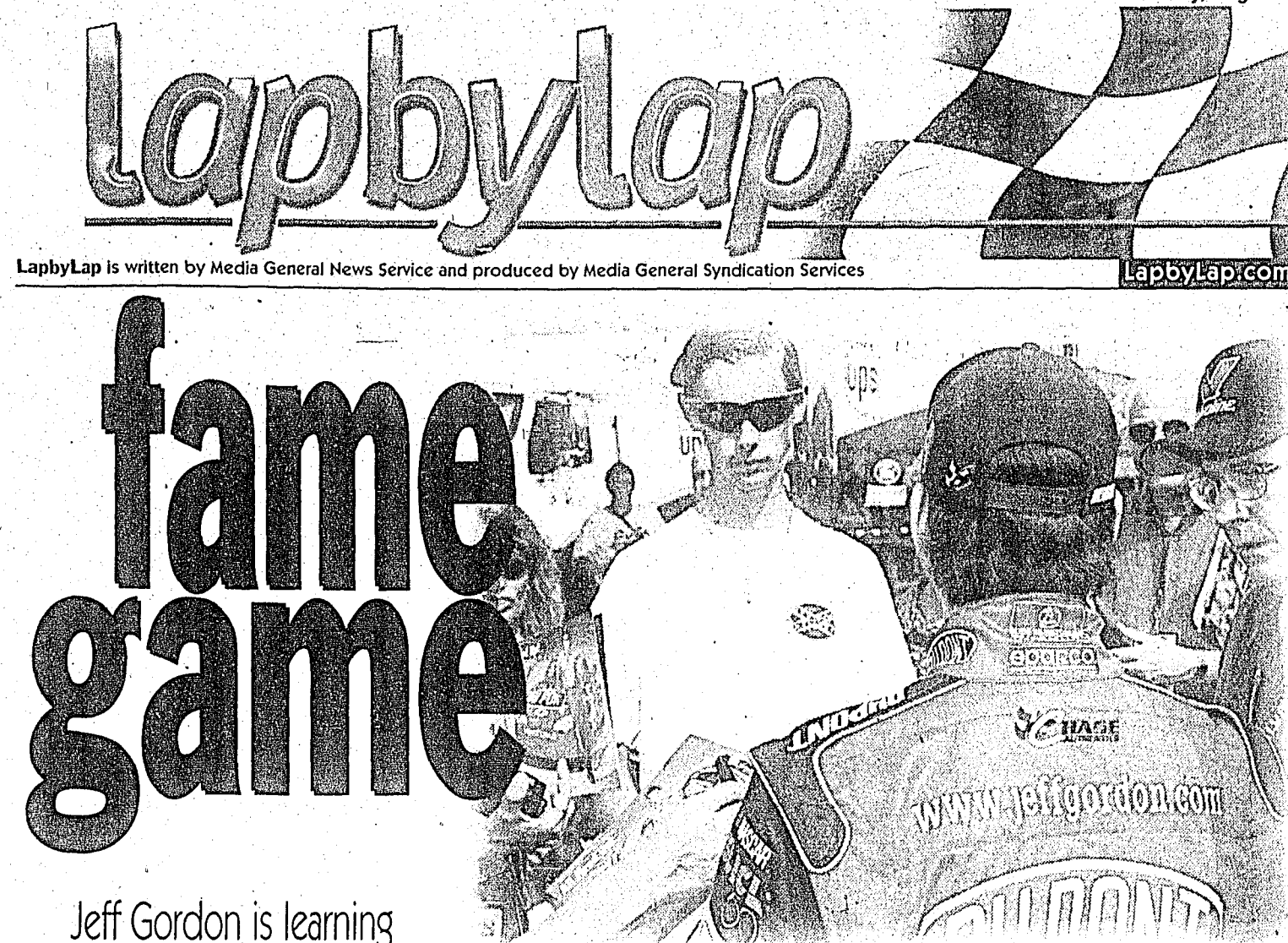
Finishing out the top 10 are No. 6 Drake, No. 7 Fairfield, No. 8 Valparaiso, No. 9 Morehead State, and No. 10 Wagner.

The Sports Network I-AA Mid-Major Top-10 Poll includes the 26 programs of the MAAC, NEC and Pioneer League, which play at a non-scholarship or limited scholarship level.

An updated poll, which is based on the votes of selected media members and I-AA mid-major Sports Information Directors, will be announced each Monday during the regular season.

The team voted first in the final I-AA mid-major poll will be the recipient of the first-ever Sports Network Cup, to be awarded Dec. 3 at New York City's famed Downtown Athletic Club.

The Wildcats open their season this weekend with a home game Saturday against Valparaiso. Game time is set for 1 p.m. in Richardson Stadium.



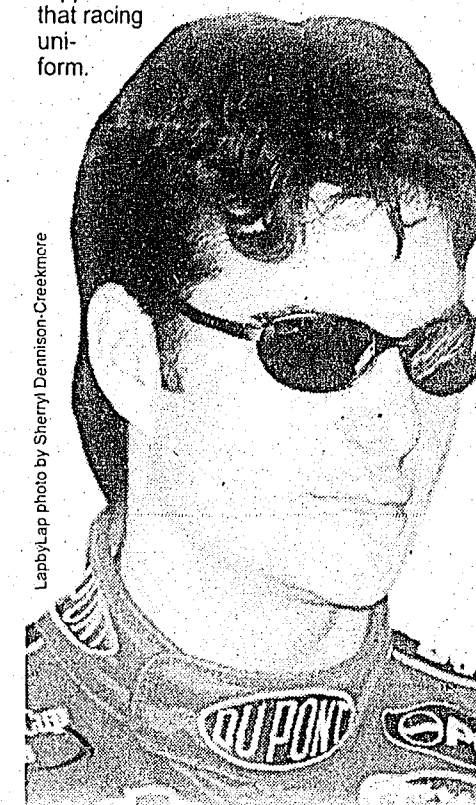
fame game

Jeff Gordon is learning to cope with the ups and downs of his superstar status

By Rea McLeroy
 LapbyLap

He still doesn't understand the thrill of an autograph, but he's learning. Jeff Gordon never planned on being a superstar. He didn't expect cheers to carry him through the early years, then boos to rain down on him in the latter ones. Who knew racing could vault someone into Hollywood-style celebrity?

Not Gordon. Sure, he dreamed of championships and victories. He imagined autograph-seekers hounding him from time to time. He had no idea that people would line up outside his transporter for hours on end, that he would forever walk through a sea of fans when he slipped into that racing uniform.



LapbyLap photo by Sherry Denison-Cremonese

Jeff Gordon signs autographs for fans at Daytona International Speedway.

Granted, Gordon was schooled to be successful. Once he started winning races, his fan base grew to mythic proportions. By the time he was in his mid-20s, Gordon appealed to people inside and outside the sport.

He became a hunted man. Gordon and his wife, Brooke, couldn't escape the fan rush. He can talk about those difficult times now. He chose to stay silent during those early adjustment years.

"At first I used to get mad about things," Gordon said. "I'd think that if I had a fork in my mouth, they shouldn't come over to me. Or if I was in the bathroom, somebody might come over and want to shake my hand."

He learned to curb his inner anger, to deal with the celebrity assigned a three-time Winston Cup champion.

"Now I just go with the flow," he said. "He's learned to say no. Stopping to sign one autograph for a youngster can turn into a 30-minute delay in the garage. Speaking to one fan can create a frenzy. If he's on his way somewhere, Gordon just keeps going. It's not easy, but it's the only way to survive and meet the demands of his hectic schedule."

"I try not to feel guilty if somebody comes up to me and tells me they drove 5,000 miles to get my autograph," he said of a statement drivers hear every weekend. "If I don't stop for that one person, I try not to feel guilty -- even though I usually do."

He does his best. Team owner Rick Hendrick says Gordon's maturity helped him deal with pressure, on and off the track, from the start.

"Here's this guy that [was] in his mid-20s handling all this publicity and never missing a beat," Hendrick said. "Watching him, you've got to think he's mature way beyond his years."

Media demands ran second to requests from fans. Gordon couldn't get a break from racing.

"The biggest adjustments are things like when you're just driving down the road and somebody looks

over and practically is swerving to get you to pull over so that they can get your autograph," said Gordon, shaking his head. "It still amazes me to this day that I can be driving along -- of course doing the speed limit -- and another car drives by me at a normal pace and then all the sudden I see brake lights. I know right then."

He's always superstar Jeff Gordon, even when he doesn't want to be. His wife, Brooke, helps him steal private time. The two are avid bowlers and spend free time away from the racing world. She makes traveling on the series seem like a fun road trip.

"That's one neat thing about her, she likes to get out," Gordon said. "She doesn't want to stay cooped up in the motor home. I'll come home and want to stay in. At first I'll say, 'I don't want to go out.' But she'll want to go, and then I'll be glad we did."

Gordon stays fresh by getting away from the track, away from the changes he wants to make for the next day and the all-too-familiar world of the motor-home park.

"We try to treat the motor home as much like a home as we can," Gordon said. "If we just stay in the motorhome every day of every weekend, you're going to be burned out on racing and tired of traveling."

He seems almost baffled by the attention. Gordon didn't understand the fan frenzy until he went to the Oscars with Brooke. They met a lot of movie stars, including "Days of Thunder" star Tom Cruise. Being on the other side helped Gordon. He still doesn't understand why his autograph is valuable to a fan, but at least he knows a little bit about how they feel.

"It's still hard to think that somebody might think of me the way I thought of Tom Cruise, but at the same time it helps you understand and to be a little more humble about it," Gordon said. "I still don't understand what somebody's signature on a piece of paper does. Maybe it's a sport thing. I didn't get Tom Cruise's autograph, but I did get a picture. And it turned out great."

Rea McLeroy covers NASCAR for the Richmond Times-Dispatch.

Pit Stop

This driver, who made his 600th career start at Talladega last year, won his first pble at Darlington Raceway in 1981. Can you name him?

For the answer, see next week's page or go to lapbylap.com

Just the Stats

NASCAR POINTS LEADERS

Winston Cup

1. Jeff Gordon	3,228	1. Kevin Harvick	3,383
2. Bobby Bod	3,200	2. Jason Keller	3,383
3. Dale Jarrett	3,149	3. Greg Bille	3,353
4. Sterling Marlin	3,110	4. Jeff Green	3,309
5. Tony Stewart	3,050	5. Elton Sawyer	2,551
6. Dale Earnhardt Jr.	2,967	6. Tony Raines	2,955
7. Rusty Wallace	2,943	7. Mike McDougal	2,914
8. Bobby Labonte	2,947	8. Jimmie Johnson	2,912
9. Kevin Harvick	2,913	9. Chad Little	2,807
10. Steve Park	2,859	10. Kerry Wallace	2,747
11. Johnny Benson	2,843	11. Kevin Gault	2,621
12. Mark Martin	2,739	12. Randy Lajock	2,602
13. Jeff Burton	2,691	13. Scott Wimmer	2,582
14. Matt Kenseth	2,677	14. David Green	2,576
15. Bill Elliott	2,650	15. Jay Sauter	2,494
16. Jimmy Spencer	2,626	16. Jeff Purvis	2,475
17. Elliott Sadler	2,483	17. Jamie McMurray	2,459
18. Ward Burton	2,405	18. Bobby Hamilton Jr.	2,378
19. Ken Schaefer	2,362	19. Rich Bickle	2,301
20. Bobby Hamilton	2,360	20. Hank Parker Jr.	2,028

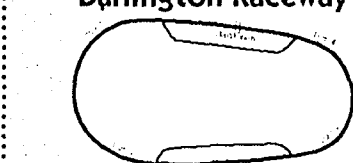
For complete points standings and additional statistics, go to www.lapbylap.com

RACING THIS WEEK

Mountain Dew Southern 500

- Where: Darlington Raceway (Darlington, S.C.)
- When: Sept. 2, 12:30 p.m.
- On the air: TNT
- Qualifying: Aug. 31, 3:05 p.m.
- Distance: 367 laps, 501.322 miles
- Track qualifying record: Ward Burton, 173.797 mph, March 22, 1996
- Track race record: Dale Earnhardt, 139.958 mph, March 28, 1993
- 2000 winner: Bobby Labonte

Darlington Raceway



- Track: 1.366-mile oval
- Banking: 25 degrees, turns 1 and 2
- 23 degrees, turns 3 and 4

Busch Grand Nat'l

- Race: South Carolina 200 (Darlington Raceway)
- When: Sept. 1, 1 p.m.
- On the air: TNT

Visit www.lapbylap.com for qualifying results and race-day coverage.

Who's Hot: Tony Stewart. He picked up 42 points on fourth-place Sterling Marlin with his third win of the season.

Who's Not: Stacy Compton. He failed for the second time this year to make a race, and his team has looking for a sponsor.

On the Record

"Here, you're just lucky when you make it through the whole night. ... There's no safe place at Bristol."

— Crew Chief Kevin Hamlin

Last week's Pit Stop answer: 1981 Darrell Waltrip

NASCAR NOTES

Michael Waltrip has asked NASCAR officials to refund his money from a recent test date at Richmond International Raceway. Waltrip tested his Grand National car a few days after the track was resealed. Waltrip says that the surface was too slick to run on.

Jimmy Spencer is seriously considering wearing a safety system. He tested with a HANS (head and neck support) system recently and also with a Hutchens device (restraint system). He didn't wear either for the race at Bristol, but does plan to take both with him to a two-day test at Talladega.

Mark Martin knows that time is a precious commodity for NASCAR drivers. "I can't remember the last time I had any time off. It was last summer when I took the family on a vacation. But this year I didn't get to do that. ... We've only had three weekends off, and I was so tired I just stayed at home."

WHAT NOW? Future of drivers' safety still up in the air

The Earnhardt Report is finally in. So where do we go from here?

That's the question now, Jeff Burton said as he sizes up NASCAR's report on Dale Earnhardt's death.

Many in the Winston Cup garage were expecting more out of the presentation than they got from NASCAR officials. What drivers have said they wanted was a plan about how to make cars safer, with better crush zones in the nose and in the driver's door. Maybe that is coming, maybe NASCAR wants to do this in stages, first clear the air on the Earnhardt affair, and then get into the business of structural changes to the cars.

To be fair, things have changed inside Winston Cup cockpits since February. But nothing mandatory. Safety, in NASCAR's eyes, is still primarily the responsibility of drivers and car owners.

There is still no clear word from NASCAR to "do this," "do that" and "don't do this," Burton said. So the question remains, is NASCAR working fast enough on safety? Burton said that Winston Cup veterans may have gone into the session expecting too much, that the issue at hand was quite specific, Earnhardt's death.

There were many positives announced by NASCAR. Its first major crash investigation is significant in several aspects: that it happened at all, that its findings were so publicly released, that a "super-computer" crash-testing model has been



MIKE MULHERN
 LapbyLap

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— Ward Burton

developed that will help in future accidents, and that the major safety investigation program that Earnhardt's death spawned will continue in at least two venues, medically under Dr. John Melvin and Dr. Jim Raddin, technically under NASCAR's hand through its new Hickory R&D shop, where ex-crew chief Joe Garone is setting things up.

Yes, NASCAR's seminar in Atlanta was encouraging in some aspects, quite scientifically detailed in many respects, but in other aspects it was disappointing.

Ward Burton and several of his fellow drivers are continuing to push NASCAR for more crushability in the front of stock cars. And one of last Tuesday's many surprises was NASCAR not presenting any of the crash data from testing done the past six months in that area. It is believed that at least six Winston Cup cars have been crash-tested this year, in various tests around the country, with no official word on what has been learned.

NASCAR and its experts dismissed crushability as a factor in Earnhardt's death. Still, the issue isn't going away.

"Some of the reasons we're having such serious injuries," Ward Burton said, "is because there is no crushability. I don't know how many times I've heard, after somebody got hurt, 'Hey, the car didn't look that bad.' That's the problem -- there was a helluva lot of energy that went through that race car into the driver."

"There is room between the door and the roll cage, and there can be made more room by structural changes to the car, to get some of that [energy-absorbing] foam in there. The side impacts really hurt a lot."

"To be honest, we can go do all we want in that seat area, with netting and the steering column and the body restraints ... but there is a certain amount of energy that your brain and your body simply can't take. The only way to stop some of that energy is to slow it down at the impact, and that's got to be the next step they take."

NASCAR's Mike Helton has drawn criticism since his insistence that NASCAR didn't need to make any changes in car construction.

But car owner Andy Petree said that perhaps the single most important safety improvement this year is increased awareness of the safety issues. It is difficult to believe that even Earnhardt would be able to thumb his nose today at some of the changes in in-car safety designs, in this climate of awareness.

And it cannot be over-emphasized that NASCAR is doing something. In fact NASCAR is doing more to improve safety than at any other time in the past 30 years.

Mike Mulhern has covered NASCAR for 27 years for the Winston-Salem Journal.