

**NASCAR—Year 10 A.D.—After Dale
January 23, 2011**

“Nascar has lost it’s greatest driver ever, and I personally have lost a great friend”, and that’s Bill France’s quote, and I think that pretty well sums it up for the NASACR community right now,” said a disbelieving Mike Helton after the devastating crash on February 18, 2001.

As we all know, this February marks the 10-year anniversary of the departure of Dale Earnhardt. All real race fans realized at the time—NASCAR would never be the same!

Dale Earnhardt—Ironhead—The Intimidator—and finally, The Man in Black— was the icon for the world of stock racing at the end of the last century. His blue-collar swagger attracted millions of fans to the sport of NASCAR. He was the leader for what was then a great tradition of racing. His shoes will never be filled!

The race fans that did not love and admire Dale, despised him. They did not appreciate his lead, follow, or get the hell out of the way mind-set. However—regardless of opinions—we all cried when we heard the news on that day.

I can remember Darrell Waltrip—emotional, as Michael had just won the race—asking, “Is Dale okay?” I can still see Kenny Schrader beside Dale’s crashed car, waving for the safety crew. And the ambulance as it proceeded slowly—so very slow—away from the track.

I recollect the void at Rockingham the following week. Even though Steve Parks won the race in his DEI ride, there was not any joy at the



track. Only tears ...

And I recall how the pain began to heal as a young Kevin Harvick found his way to victory lane at Atlanta in Dale’s RCR ride. Mysteriously, this was Kevin’s third start in Cup and the third race after Dale’s death. Both Richard Childress and Harvick stated in post race interviews, “This one’s for Dale”.

Race fans, we can only imagine what NASCAR would be like if Dale was still around. I am certain that DEI would be operating at a much higher level. And I believe that racing would somehow be more exciting with Earnhardt at the track each weekend.

I wonder if he would have been able to convince NASCAR that racing is not a game. We do not need a playoff system!

I would hope that Dale would lobby for the fair

Continued on page 22

