

# NASCAR 2014

By Gerald Hodges/the Racing Reporter

## Can Keselowski rebound this year

Brad Keselowski won the 2012 Sprint Cup championship.

After starting out strong in 2013, with seven top-10 finishes in the first eight races, Keselowski's team made a multitude of mistakes. He and his team became immersed in suspensions, penalties that took away driver points, and parts failures.

They never regained their early season form, and failed to make the 12-driver Chase field.

Will he be able to turn things around and make a run for this year's title?

"Yeah, I mean, you've got to continue to work hard and strive to get better," Keselowski said. "For missing the Chase by what we did, yeah, we had a lot of technical problems, but I'm sure there were a few races where we could have finished better. So we've got to get better every opportunity that we can."

Keselowski had only one win and was more known for what he did off the track than on.

He stuck his foot in his mouth more than once by his comments. At one point he was told by NASCAR that he needed to "shut up and drive."

It's not to say that Keselowski's struggles in 2013 were entirely his fault. The team switched from Dodge to Ford, and was further hampered by Ford's continued issues with the lack of horsepower.

Keselowski had driver points taken away when it was discovered that Penske was using unapproved suspension pieces, and his crew chief and lead engineer were suspended for a couple of weeks.

"Some weeks last year we were pretty good," Keselowski continued. "We run well. We were fast. Sometimes we were probably a third to fifth to sixth place car. But at times, I felt like we were a winning car if we could have gotten out front."

I think track position meant that much, which we'll work every week. It's just a matter of continuing to evolve and get better as a team and communicate because with the new Gen-6 car, it's all new for everybody. So we'll work on all of that stuff in 2014

"It didn't feel good to not make the Chase or run better than we did, but there is a part of you that just feels like you're first in class."

"I'm confident that things will come back around, and when it does, we'll change these seconds and fifths or whatever into wins."

"I feel like that's bound to happen next year, and we have the team to pull it off. I also feel like the way the points are right now, we still control our own destiny, which is if we win the race, we get the points lead. So that's about all you can ask for."

"Certainly I would have liked to have won more than we did last year, but I feel like we're fighting the good fight and doing some great things as a team that I'm really, really proud of."

"Obviously, it's not going to come easy. But anything worth doing in life shouldn't come easy, and I appreciate the efforts of the people that I'm around to make it happen. I appreciate



Brad Keselowski at New Hampshire in 2013. *Furnished by NASCAR*

the fact that it's difficult, because it brings out the best in everybody. As a group, I feel like we've brought our best, and I'm really proud of everybody for that."

It would help Keselowski and his team if they could get an early win. Penske has excellent equipment, Keselowski has shown the ability to win on any kind of track and the team is capable of providing him a race car that can run upfront.

I'd say that if Keselowski can avoid some of last year's distractions and focus on racing, maybe some of the problems they experienced won't reappear, and they can find that positive image once again.

### NEW QUALIFYING FORMAT

NASCAR has announced a new group qualifying format for the Cup, Nationwide and truck series.

"We believe the timing is right for a new qualifying format across our three national series," said Robin Pemberton, vice president for competition and racing development. "This style of group qualifying has all the makings of being highly competitive and more engaging to our fans in the stands and those watching on television and online. For the drivers and teams, we believe this new qualifying will fuel even greater competition leading into the events."

Additionally, it provides our tracks, broadcasters and other key partners with a greater opportunity to develop more entertaining content for our race weekends."

At tracks measuring 1.25 miles in length or larger, qualifying will consist of three rounds:

The first qualifying elimination round will be 25 minutes in duration and includes all cars/trucks. The 24 cars/trucks that post the fastest single lap from the first qualifying round will advance to the second round.

The remaining cars/trucks will be sorted based on their times posted in the first round of qualifying in descending order.

The second qualifying elimination round will be 10 minutes in duration and the 12 cars/trucks that post the fastest single lap time will advance to the third and final round.

The fastest remaining cars/trucks earn positions 13th through 24th based on their times posted in qualifying in descending order.

The third and final

qualifying round will be five minutes in duration and the fastest single lap time will determine positions 1st through 12th in descending order.

At tracks measuring less than 1.25 miles, qualifying will consist of two rounds:

The first qualifying elimination round will be 30 minutes in duration and includes all cars/trucks. The 12 cars/trucks that post the fastest single lap time from the first qualifying round will advance to the second and final round.

The remaining cars/trucks will be sorted based on their times posted in the first round of qualifying in descending order.

There will be a 10-minute break between the two qualifying rounds.

The second and final qualifying round will be 10 minutes in duration and the fastest single lap time posted will determine positions 1st through 12th in descending order.

The new qualifying format does not apply to the Daytona 500. Additionally, it does not apply to non-points events or the Truck Series event at Eldora Speedway. NASCAR previewed the concept of group qualifying with its national series teams late last fall.

**Racing Trivia Question:** Who won last year's Daytona 500?

**Last Week's Question:** Which Nationwide team will Chase Elliott drive for in 2014? **Answer:** He will drive a full season for JR Motorsports, a Dale Earnhardt Jr. company.

You may e-mail any questions to the Racing Reporter at: [hodges@race500.com](mailto:hodges@race500.com).

## Bowling scores

Monday Night Men: Steve Brandt 200, 200, Barry Kives 209, John Stevens 223, Ray Everett 203, Jeb Plott 235, 211, 289 Series 735, Mike Brandenburg 204, Larry Cannan 217, 223, DeJay DeJoseph 223, Bill Smith 203, 226, Kevin Mohan 225, Austin Hedden 200, Joe Teague 257, 214, Derrick Rice 223, 280, 257 Series 760, Mike Davis 204, 206, 223, Jim McCreary 243, 212, 205, Dave Davis 231, 201, Gary Brown 215, 201, Johnathan

## Ray Everett bowls perfect game



The ultimate goal when bowling is to roll twelve strikes in a row. Only a small percentage within the sport achieve this. Ray Everett has not only reached this pinnacle once, but repeated it. On Thursday January 16th he rolled another perfect game. His second within six weeks. When asked how he's going to top it he said, "Next I want to get my 800 series!" Ray finished the night with a 767 just short of his next achievement... this time. NJan29Z18)CA

## 8-AA crunch time ...continued from Page 12A

shots despite Washington-Wilkes having a tremendous size advantage over the Lady Panthers.

"Their big girl gave us problems early on," Coach Tucker said. "But she is a good ball player and has great touch and great hands. But it's a win and we'll take it. It wasn't easy, but they're usually never easy for us."

### Lady Panthers 49 Fannin County 59

The week of basketball concluded with a trip to Fannin County. However, the week wasn't the only thing that came to an end. The Lady Panthers were unable to make it seven-in-a-row over Fannin as they were knocked off 59-49 by the Lady Rebels.

In their first loss to Fannin in 3 years, Union's 85 percent free throw shooting the night before eroded into a 33 percent (4-for-12) meltdown at the stripe.

Despite a career high 21 points from Day, Union trailed by a point after each quarter. 16-15 after one - with Day contributing nine of Union's 15 points.

Maurer picked up her fourth foul with 4:56 to play in the second and Fannin led 27-26 at the break.

However, the first half wasn't all Fannin. The Lady Panthers leaped out with 10-2 run following tip off. Day connected from long distance, giving Union a 15-8 lead at the 2-minute mark. However, the Lady Rebels closed with an 8-0 run, including the go-ahead bucket with 3 seconds left.

## Tai Chi and Yoga classes resume



Tai Chi and Yoga classes have resumed after the holidays at the senior center. Tai Chi will be held each Monday at 1 p.m. and Yoga will be held Monday at 2 p.m. Pat Tomczyk, RN, will be the instructor for these classes. Studies performed by the National Institute of Health and the Ar-

The second quarter was a see-saw affair until Fannin got some breathing room at 23-19 with 4:46 left in the half. Trailing 27-21 with a minute to go, Day was money from the top of the key, and Colwell went baseline for two quick scores to bring Union to within a point.

The third quarter saw the Lady Panthers grab a 4-point lead. Maurer opened the half with a corner trey, Day then showed her repertoire with a dribble-drive for two, then she got free under the basket for a lay in off an inbounds pass. Fannin would storm back and Union's inconsistency at the line began to snowball. Once again, the Lady Rebels struck at the buzzer to take a 44-43 lead into the fourth.

The Lady Rebels opened up a 48-43 lead until a mental lapse by Fannin allowed Day to become wide open, and she made them pay with another trey. Maddox went 1-for-2 at the line, Maurer fouled out, and Day hit a runner in the lane, keeping it a one possession game at 52-49.

The Lady Panthers wouldn't connect again from the floor combined with the struggles at the line continuing, and Maddox going to the bench with five fouls, Fannin's seniors were able to celebrate a 10-point victory. Their first over Union since their freshman year. For most of the Lady Rebel players, it was their first win ever over the Lady Panthers.

Day finished with 2 assists and 2 steals to go along with her career high 21 points. Colwell remained consistent off the bench with 8 points, including

a third quarter trey. She would also haul in 4 boards. Maddox was limited to 8 points, despite picking the Lady Rebels for 6 steals and a team high 3 assists. Nalaschi was also contained, finishing with 6 points and 6 boards. Maurer had 3 points, hauled in 5 boards, and blocked a shot, despite being plagued by foul trouble the entire game and picking up her fifth with 5:50 to go. Rich also chipped in 3 points and dished out 2 assists.

"We just missed some shots and made some simple errors that can be fixed. We'll get it fixed and we'll be fine, I'm not worried. We are fine," Coach Tucker reiterated.

There are no more easy wins left on the schedule and another critical game awaits Tuesday night when Jefferson comes to town. The Lady Panthers need a win over Jefferson or Greene County to guarantee a Top 3 seeding and an easy win over Oglethorpe or Social Circle standing between their sixth trip to State in 7 years. With Rabun all but having wrapped up the top spot and hosting the Region Tournament, a Top 3 spot means Union would avoid Rabun until the third and final day. Ironically, Union's last Region Championship in 2009, a year after the passing of Coach Mike West, came at Rabun County when Candace Williams led the Panthers past the first place Lady Cats despite falling twice to Rabun in the regular season.

Speaking of Rabun, they visit Blairsville on Friday as both Panther squads are out for revenge, especially with the game not counting toward the region standings.

Senior Night will take place on Saturday during a makeup game with Murphy, NC. Rich and fellow senior Allie Stroman, along with Dylan Coyne, Grant Schuette, and Eliyah Ryals will be honored for all of their hard work, dedication, and the blood, sweat, and tears that they have shed for the Purple and Gold and Panther Pride. The two seniors will no longer be players after they graduate, but they will become a family.

They will join the former Panthers and Lady Panthers' alumni who have bled purple and gold for their school. Whether it be on the hardwood or the field. The diamond or the track. The course or the pool. The mat, the courts, or anywhere. Once a Panther, always a Panther.

## Let's walk for a great cause

Candace Renee Lopez, is raising money for the National Eating Disorder Association at a fundraising Walk to be held at 490 Meeks Park Road, Blairsville, GA on Saturday, February 1, 2014. Check in time: 9 AM; Walk start time: 9:30 AM; Walk end time: 11 AM. The Walk Fundraising Goal is \$5,000, please contact Candace Renee Lopez for more information at [candacelopez85@yahoo.com](mailto:candacelopez85@yahoo.com). Teeshirts will be available for \$10 on the Square on Saturday January 25, 2014.

Contact Candace if you would like to pre-order.

Walk as much as you want in those two hours. Remember this is a casual walk, not a race, do what makes you feel comfortable. Along with the attractions of the park, there will be different fun activities such as corn hole and a silent action for some great items.

It's literally a walk in the park. Let's get together as a community, have fun, and help save a life.

Did you know... eating

## MUSA Spring Registration

Mountain United Soccer Association is ready for spring soccer.

Registrations are currently being accepted for age groups U6-U14. This season we are offering online registration at [www.mountainsoccer.org](http://www.mountainsoccer.org). Registration forms are also available on the website, to print and mail in. The deadline to register is Feb. 15th.

In Blairsville, Cott Beverage is our community host for the soccer fields. In Hiwassee, the fields at the Towns County Fairgrounds are utilized through the cooperation of the local recreation department. The league is grateful for their commitment and support.

The spring season will begin in early March. Anyone who is interested in playing needs to register promptly. In some cases space is limited.

MUSA is a volunteer run

organization and is also a 501(c)3 nonprofit. Any and all donations are directed to the youth player. Field Sponsors, Sign Sponsors and Team Sponsors are always needed.

If you are interested in supporting the youth soccer players in our community through sponsorship and/or donation, please contact the association.

For additional info contact the league at 706-994-4351, [musa.soccer@gmail.com](mailto:musa.soccer@gmail.com) or visit us on the web at [www.mountainsoccer.org](http://www.mountainsoccer.org).



## Georgia Dizzy Dean

### 2014 Dizzy Dean Baseball & Softball Registration

**Participant Ages**  
5 yrs. to 14 yrs.

**Registration Dates**  
January 20<sup>th</sup> thru February 21<sup>st</sup> - 2014

**On-Line Register Now Available**

Step 1: Visit - [www.unioncountyga.gov](http://www.unioncountyga.gov)  
Step 2: Under Departments - click Parks & Recreation  
Step 3: Click Youth Athletic Programs  
Step 4: Click Baseball or Softball  
Step 5: Click Register Now under League Name  
Step 6: Follow step by step registration process

**In-Person Register at Rec. Dept.**

310 Wellborn Street, Blairsville, GA 30512

**Additional Questions Please Call Rec. Dept.**

706-439-6074

## Daddy Daughter Dance

WHEN: February 1, 2014

WHERE: North Georgia Technical College

COST: \$50.00 per couple - \$10 for each additional Daughter

Dinner is included and Limo rides are available on a first come first serve basis.

Tickets are available at the Union County Recreation Office at 310 Wellborn St.  
For any questions call (706) 439-6074