

# Chase Elliott focused on wins first, then fun

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FORT WORTH STAR-TELEGRAM

DAYTONA BEACH, Florida — NASCAR is a character-hungry industry. The lifeblood of the sport centers on drivers' personalities to connect with fans.

And, right now, it faces an uncertain future with how the next wave of drivers carry the torch from drivers who made the sport explode in popularity in the 1990s.

Jeff Gordon is among the most transcendent driver in the sport's history, doing everything from winning four championships to hosting shows such as "Saturday

Night Live."

Gordon, however, called it a career after last season.

Tony Stewart, another household name known for his brash personality, is retiring after this season. Jimmie Johnson and Dale Earnhardt Jr. are in their 40s, and on the backside of their careers.

But there is hope in NASCAR that they have a promising, talented group on the horizon that will help keep the sport relevant for years to come.



Elliott

Chase Elliott ranks as the No. 1 prospect, and has already created a buzz going into Sunday's iconic Daytona 500 at the freshly renovated Daytona International Speedway.

Elliott, the 20-year-old son of Hall of Famer Bill Elliott, became the youngest driver to win the Daytona 500 pole Sunday, and all signs point to Chase Elliott being the perfect fit in replacing Gordon in the No. 24 car.

Winning the Daytona 500 pole in his first attempt to qualify for the race should have been a signature moment for Elliott, something that should have been celebrated. The problem, how-

ever, is that it didn't seem as though Elliott enjoyed the moment that much.

Did he smile at all? "I mean, I don't know," Elliott said. "For me, it's more for the guys [on the pit crew] to celebrate, not for me. There was nothing special I did to make that happen on Sunday. It's about those guys, the kind of car, the engine shop, the kind of engine they put in that thing."

"For me, you know, the race is the most important thing. That's the starting spot. It's not about where you start, it's about where you finish. We recognize it's a very long week ahead. ... Me, being in my position, I look at that as just a way

that I give credit where credit is deserved, and those guys are the ones that deserve it, not me."

Those are the right things to say, of course, and Elliott is only a 20-year-old who is doing his best to handle the pressure he finds himself in by taking over for Gordon and carrying on the Elliott name.

And, in fairness, Elliott hasn't accomplished much at the Cup level, so maybe it's too early for him to dab or flash the money sign. He also has to stay true to himself, which is an ultra-focused, ultra-competitive driver who might not be willing to let his emotions show until ... well, he actually wins a race.

As NASCAR's most popular driver for years — Earnhardt Jr. — said: "I think the one thing that he's probably worried about is perception. I think when I see a driver make those style of comments, he's just trying to say the right thing. He doesn't want to step on anybody's toes or give anybody the wrong idea."

"He just wants people to understand that he's committed, he's a hard worker, and he's here to accomplish his dreams and goals and win races and championships. He doesn't want people to lose sight of that or make assumptions that he's taking things for granted, I guess."



Bucksport's Kyle Jackson (center) celebrates with teammates after defeating Hodgdon in a Class C North boys semifinal basketball game on Friday at the Cross Insurance Center in Bangor. Bucksport won 49-44.

## Bucksport

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Hayden Craig followed with a 13-foot jumper from the lane, before Woods answered for the Hawks with a close-range basket

off a feed from Palmer.

However, consecutive turnovers against Bucksport's 2-3 zone resulted in a fast-break layup by Pye and an offensive rebound bucket by Jackson that gave the Bucks a 42-34 advantage with 3:16 remaining.

"We just hit a couple

shots in a row. We were feeling good," Macleod said. "Momentum builds from there."

Hodgdon rallied behind a basket from underneath by Woods and Buzzell's 3-pointer, but Jackson countered with a drive to the hole to reinstate the five-point lead.

Bucksport made five of seven free throws down the stretch to put the game away.

## UMaine opens with win over Clemson

Justin Courtney of Bangor pitched five innings of three-hit ball and did not surrender an earned run as the University of Maine baseball team

### COLLEGE BASEBALL

opened its season with a 4-3 victory over the ACC's Clemson Tigers on Friday at Kingsmore Stadium in Clemson, South Carolina.

The sophomore right-hander struck out eight and walked one before giving way to three teammates, who limited the Tigers to one run and one hit the rest of the way.

Lefty Connor Johnson pitched a scoreless sixth inning to pick up the win, before Charlie Butler worked two shutout innings and Logan Fullmer earned the save by pitching the ninth.

Brett Chappell posted two hits to lead the UMaine offense, including a sun-aided RBI triple to right-center in the seventh that plated Jeremy Pena with the eventual winning run. Pena reached with a double to left.

Jon Salcedo stroked a run-scoring single in the

sixth for the Black Bears to score Kevin Stypulkowski, who smacked a one-out double down the third-base line and advanced to third on Brenden Geary's single.

Maine's win ruined the debut of new Clemson head coach Monte Lee, who replaced Jack Leggett, a former UMaine baseball and football standout.

Clemson took advantage of an error to score two runs in the first inning, but Maine answered with two runs in the third inning.

Caleb Kerbs reached on an infield single to short, and Danny Casals followed with a walk before each runner moved up a base on a Pena sacrifice. Tyler Schwanz then reached on an infield error to score Kerbs, and Chappell's groundout to second plated Casals.

Weston Wilson singled twice and drove in a run for Clemson, and Reed Rohlman doubled and had an RBI.

The two teams play again at 2 p.m. Saturday and then finish the three-game series at 1 p.m. Sunday.

## Freeport skiers beat Caribou to capture Class B Nordic title

FARMINGTON — The Freeport High School boys ski team showed off strong depth to capture the Class B Nordic state title at Titcomb Mountain on Friday.

### HIGH SCHOOL SKIING

The Falcons finished with 43 points after two 5-kilometer races, classic and skate on Thursday and Friday, to beat second-place Caribou's 82.

Maranacook of Readfield finished third with 91 points and was followed by Yarmouth (139), Mount Abram of Salem (223), Cape Elizabeth (232), Presque Isle (263) and Spruce Mountain of Rumford/Mexico (304).

Yacob Olins paced Freeport in the classic race with a third-place finish in 14 minutes, 7.4 seconds. Teammates Bennett Hight and Kyle Dorsey followed up in

fourth and fifth, respectively, while Caribou's Riley McDuffie and Daniel Randolph captured the next two spots in sixth and seventh.

The Falcons went on to edge the Vikings in a close race 22-33.

Maranacook's Luca DeAngelis won the individual title with a 13:19.5 clocking.

Hight and Olins turned in strong efforts the next day in the skate race with Hight placing third and Olins taking fourth. Dorsey provided valuable points with a sixth-place finish while teammate Nathan Smail captured eighth.

Lukas LaGasse sparked Caribou with a 10th-place finish with McDuffie earning 13th place while teammates Caleb Willett and Randolph took 15th and 16th, respectively.

DeAngelis recorded an

11-second winning margin over Yarmouth's John Lane with an 11:49 finish to again claim individual honors.

In the girls competition, Yarmouth captured the team crown with 41 points and was followed by Maranacook (65), Freeport (138), Caribou (150), Gray-New Gloucester (168), Presque Isle (169), Spruce Mountain (290) and Mount Abram (302).

Sophia Laukli, Lucy Alexander and Grace Cowles finished third, fourth and fifth to spark Yarmouth in the classic race while Gray-NG's Kaelyn Woods won the individual title in 15:23.3.

Yarmouth was led by the same trio in the skate race with Alexander finishing third, Laukli placing fourth and Cowles taking fifth while Woods turned in another dominating finish to claim individual honors with a 13:01 time.

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### College Basketball

#### Men

#### MAINE vs. STONY BROOK

**Time, site:** 2 p.m. Sunday, Cross Insurance Center, Bangor  
**Records:** Maine 8-18 (4-9 America East), Stony Brook 22-5 (13-1)  
**Series, last meeting:** Stony Brook leads 20-14, SBU 81-54 on 1/25/16  
**Key players:** Maine — 6-7 F Issac Vann (15.2 ppg, 5.7 rpg), 6-7 F Devine Eke (10.0 ppg, 6.6 rebounds per game, .636 FG pct.), 6-8 F Till Gloger (9.2 ppg), 5-11 G Aaron Calixte (10.4 ppg, 2.7 apg), 6-2 G Lavar Harewood (5.4 ppg), 6-5 G Shaun Lawton (8.4 ppg, 3.8 rpg, 2.0 spg), 2.0 spg); **Stony Brook** — 6-8 F Jameel Warney (18.8 ppg, 10.3 rpg, 3.1 bpg, .611 FG pct.), 6-0 G Carson Puriefoy (14.4 ppg, 3.1 apg, 1.3 spg), 6-4 G Ahmad Walker (10.9 ppg, 7.0 rpg, 4.2 apg), 6-7 F Rayshaun McGrew (11.0 ppg, 6.0 rpg), 6-3 G Lucas Woodhouse (6.5 ppg, 3.2 apg)  
**Game notes:** The Black Bears will have had a week to prepare for the league-leading Seawolves, who dominated the first meeting. UMaine has lost five straight, including last Sunday's 108-64 drubbing at Albany. Stony Brook looks to refocus after having its nation-leading 18-game winning streak halted Wednesday (82-70) at Albany. The Seawolves feature the stingiest defense (60.3 ppg) in league play while holding opponents to 39 percent shooting. The Bears must be able to contest SBU's ability to get the ball into the paint and have to shoot well to help limit the Seawolves' transition attack. UMaine will be without sparkplug guard Kevin Little, who will miss the rest of the season with an ankle injury.

#### Women

#### MAINE vs. STONY BROOK

**Time, site:** 2 p.m. Saturday, Pritchard Gym, Stony Brook, New York  
**Records:** Maine 21-7 (12-1 America East), Stony Brook 16-11 (8-6)  
**Series, last meeting:** Stony Brook leads 17-16, Maine 55-52 on 1/24/16  
**Key players:** Maine — 5-8 G Sigi Koizar (17.1 points per game, 4.1 rebounds per game, .439 3-pt. FG pct.), 6-2 F Mikaela Gustafsson (8.5 ppg, 4.1 rpg), 5-10 G/F Liz Wood (9.8 ppg, 7.5 rpg, 3.0 apg, 2.7 steals per game), 5-11 F Bella Swan (8.3 ppg, 5.1 rpg, .495 FG pct.), 5-8 G Sophie Weckstrom (6.2 ppg), 5-9 G Lauren Bodine (4.9 ppg); **Stony Brook** — 6-0 F Brittany Snow (14.7 ppg, 6.8 rpg), 6-0 F Ogechi Anyagaligbo (10.4 ppg, 9.1 rpg, 1.1 blocks per game, .581 FG pct.), 5-6 G Davison Wingate (9.6 ppg, 2.3 apg), 5-9 G Christa Scognamiglio (9.4 ppg, 6.2 rpg, 1.9 spg), 5-5 G Kori Bayne-Walker (7.4 ppg, 4.8 apg)  
**Game notes:** The Black Bears head to Long Island riding a nine-game winning streak and look to keep pace with Albany for the regular-season title. UMaine is coming off Sunday's 65-53 victory over Albany, which was its best performance of the season. The third-place Seawolves hope to halt a three-game skid after losing to Albany 62-49 on Wednesday. The Bears' points of emphasis in this one will include rebounding and crisp offensive execution, both of which can limit SBU's transition chances. UMaine also hopes to create numerous turnovers as it did in the first meeting.