

DAYTONA 500 PREVIEW

# AN ICON

MAKES ITS RETURN

## NO. 3 IS BACK AT DAYTONA

The last time the No. 3 Chevrolet was on a NASCAR Sprint Cup track, it was one of the darkest days in racing history: the death of legendary driver Dale Earnhardt in the 2001 Daytona 500.

Now on that exact same Daytona track, the No. 3 Chevrolet is making its return in a big way.

For the first time since that tragedy in 2001, the No. 3 car will be back in a NASCAR race. And it will be starting at the front of the pack, as rookie driver Austin Dillon set the fastest pace in qualifying to put the No. 3 on pole for Sunday's season-opening Daytona 500.

While some NASCAR fans would prefer to see the No. 3 retired in tribute to Earnhardt, team owner Richard Childress allowed his grandson, Dillon, to use the number in his first Sprint Cup season.

Childress' team also locked up the front row at Daytona, as Dillon's teammate Martin Truex Jr. qualified second.

## THE 3 CAR: A HISTORIC NUMBER IN RACING

While Austin Dillon has taken over the No. 3 Chevrolet this year, for many NASCAR fans it will forever be associated with one man: Dale Earnhardt.

"The Intimidator" drove to six NASCAR championships and 67 race wins — including the 1998 Daytona 500 — in the No. 3 car. The fact that it was returning to the racetrack after a decade-plus hiatus has

been a controversial topic in the racing world since it was announced last year.

"You want to perform with the No. 3, and everybody wants to see it perform, and that's why my grandfather is always concerned. You want to go out there and run well," Dillon said.



JULIAN GONZALES / ALLSPORT / NASCAR MEDIA

Dale Earnhardt, shown here in the 1995 Brickyard 400, made the No. 3 Chevrolet famous.

**DATE:** Sunday, Feb. 23

**TIME:** 1 p.m. Eastern

**TV:** Coverage begins noon Eastern on FOX

**ON POLE:** Austin Dillon, Chevrolet



JAMIE SQUIRE / GETTY IMAGES / NASCAR MEDIA