

Woody Gap 2015-16 basketball season nearing conclusion

By Todd Forrest
North Georgia News
sports@nganews.com

Suches - With two weeks remaining in the season, Woody Gap's Falcons and Lady Falcons have given their fans plenty to cheer about over the last three months.

Last month, the Falcons defeated Faith Christian Academy 54-33 thanks to Easton Wood's 24 point performance.

He connected on six treys as Woody Gap blew things open following an 8-8 tie after one quarter.

The Falcons stretched their lead to 24-13 at the break and in the third quarter, they put things away with a 16-3 run that resulted in a 40-16 advantage entering the final frame.

Austin Clark scored 16 points, while knocking down four treys. Gabe Mott connected twice from downtown for 7 points.

Luke Mott added 4 points and Zeb Harkins scored 3 points.

During a 49-33 loss to Tallulah Falls, Wood posted 16 points on four 3-pointers.

Clark chipped in 12 with a pair of treys. Gabe Mott scored three, Joseph Corbin and Harkins scored 1 point each.

In a game with North Georgia Christian Academy, Clark was the Falcons' leading scorer with 15.

Wood scored six, Gabe and Luke Mott each scored three, while Harkins had 2 points.

North Georgia Christian went on to win 44-29.

At Tallulah Falls, Wood and Clark put up 12 points a piece, Corbin scored 5 points, and Luke Mott had three.

Tallulah would win 52-32. The Lady Falcons have seen two different players reach double-digits in the scoring column this season.

At North Georgia Christian Academy, Montana Barnes connected three times from beyond the arc to finish with 10 points in a North Georgia Christian win.

Eliza Wilkins, Kianna Martin, and Brooklyn Dockery each scored 2 points. Heather Sorrells scored 1 point.

Against Tallulah Falls, Barnes finished with 10 points and Martin added two.

In the second contest with



Woody Gap High School 2015-16 girls and boys basketball teams.

Tallulah, Barnes scored 6 points, Wilkins had 5 points, and Dockery had 3 points.

In another meeting with North Georgia Christian, Martin led the Lady Falcons with 10. Barnes scored five and Dockery

and Wilkins had two each. Wilkins led the Lady Falcons against War Hill with 9 points. Barnes scored eight and Cheryl Aponte added 5 points.

Woody Gap will host Rabun Gap on Jan. 27th. The middle

school teams begin at 4 p.m. with the high school to follow.

On January 29th will host North Georgia with the middle school opening up the action at 4:30 p.m.

NASCAR 2016

By Gerald Hodges/the Racing Reporter

STEWART IS LIVING OUT HIS FATE

Tony Stewart isn't letting go of racing. He said a few weeks ago that the 2016 season would be his last as a driver in NASCAR. Last week, he announced an update to his plans that calls for him to continue driving sprint cars after he leaves NASCAR.

Throughout his racing career, Stewart has won racing titles in Indy, midget, sprint and USAC Silver Crown cars. He is the only driver in history to win a championship in both IndyCar and NASCAR.

Stewart owns and drives the No. 14 Chevrolet in the NASCAR Sprint Cup Series for his own team, Stewart-Haas Racing. While driving for car owner Joe Gibbs, Stewart won two Cup Series championships in 2002 and 2005. In 2011, he became the first owner-driver since Alan Kulwicki to win the Cup Series championship.

He is the only driver to win the Cup Series championship under the old points system and the Chase playoff format. He also has a Sprint Cup Championship as an owner, when the No. 14 car driven by Kevin Harvick won the Cup title in 2014.

It's been a great ride, but it hasn't been without a lot of bumps and grinds. Before he won the 2002 championship, he often got cross-ways with NASCAR officials. During 2001, there was talk that he might be suspended. During an interview prior to the 2001 Martinsville race, he said, "It's NASCAR's way or no way, and you know how I am. So, I might be hitting the highway."

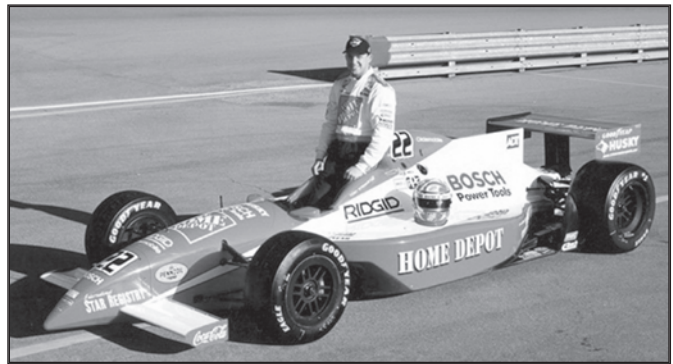
But after attending anger management classes during the off season, Stewart seemed to work through some of his emotions and demons, and the 2002 season was one of his best.

He has many fans that love to see him race, but the man has never overcome his negative emotions. The least little thing can set him off on a name-calling tirade. He's unable to handle the blackness when it boils up.

During a sprint car race on August 5, 2013 in Iowa, Stewart broke both bones in his right leg due to a crash and missed the remainder of the NASCAR season.

But the most tragic event came in August 2014, when his sprint car hit and killed young racer Kevin Ward Jr. at Canandaigua (New York) Motorsports Park.

Ward's family alleges that Stewart lost his temper and caused the tragedy. They think



Tony Stewart at Indianapolis in 1999. He started 24th and finished 9th.

he tried to intimidate their son. After swerving toward him, Stewart ended up accidentally striking Ward, who had walked on to the track while the drivers were doing laps under caution.

Stewart says he didn't know Ward was on the track until just before his car struck Ward. He also said he didn't know it was Ward he had hit and that Ward is responsible for his death by walking on to the racing surface, trying to make contact with Stewart's car and also being under the influence of marijuana.

He still faces a wrongful death civil lawsuit over the incident.

After a sprint car race in Australia in 2011, he was questioned but not charged by Australian police after an altercation at a Sydney track.

He also was fined \$25,000 by NASCAR in October 2014 for backing into Brad Keselowski's car on pit road in retaliation for his car being hit by Keselowski's after the race.

The latest incident occurred last week prior to a race at the Chili Bowl Nationals in Tulsa, Oklahoma.

Stewart was on the track helping to prepare the racing surface when a fan started heckling him and calling him names.

"Enough is enough," said Stewart.

The two exchanged words and the fan appeared to push Stewart, who continued to yell at the fan for a few more seconds until another man moved the fan back into his seat.

If he never wins another race, he will have had a great career.

He grew up racing go karts and was successful very early, winning a World Karting Association championship in 1987. He moved up to the United Midget Racing Association where he raced three quarter midgets until 1991, when he again moved up this time to the United States Auto Club Series. Stewart was the USAC Rookie of the Year in 1991, USAC National Midget Series Champion in 1994 and

1995 and USAC Silver Crown Series champion in 1995.

In 1995, Stewart became the first driver to win USAC's version of the Triple Crown, earning championships in all three of USAC's major divisions, National Midget, Sprint, and Silver Crown. His winning the Hut Hundred and 4-Crown Nationals were the highlights of the year.

When he was not racing IndyCars, he raced stock cars. In 1996, Stewart made his NASCAR Busch Series debut, driving for car owner Harry Rainer. In nine races, he had a best finish of 16th place. He had more success in a one-time ride in the Craftsman Truck Series with Mueller Brothers racing, where he finished 10th.

Stewart was poised to improve his Indy Racing League standing in 1997 but at times he struggled to finish. He failed to finish the first three races of a ten race schedule, but recovered to come in second at Phoenix. He finally got his first career win at Pikes Peak, where he led all but seven laps of a 200-lap race.

He became the leading contender for the series' championship after a bad slump knocked points leader Davey Hamilton out of first place. Despite an average end to his season, Stewart had just enough points to beat Hamilton for the IRL title. He also raced in a few midget events, finishing thirteenth and eleventh in the 1997 and 1998 USAC national points, and winning the Copper Classic. Between his time in USAC and the IRL, Stewart earned the nickname of "Smoke", first for slipping the right rear tire during dirt races and then for blowing his engine often during his 1997 championship run.

As he had done the previous year, he raced a handful of Busch Series races in 1998. This time, he was racing for Joe Gibbs Racing, who was having major success with Bobby Labonte in the Winston Cup Series. He finished in the top-10, and had a 3rd-place finish at Charlotte. Stewart so impressed Gibbs that he was signed to drive the ma-

majority of the Busch schedule in 1998 to go along with a full-time IRL schedule.

The double duty did not affect his performance in either series. In the IRL, he won twice and finished 3rd in the championship. His season was a disappointment as he finished last in the Indy 500 because of an engine failure.

While Busch Series racing, he finished in the top-five five times in 22 starts. He came close to winning his first Busch Series race at Rockingham, but was beaten on a last lap pass by Matt Kenseth. Stewart finished second in two starts, and had an average finish that was comparable to some of the series' top finishers. Gibbs had enough confidence in Stewart that he was moved up to a Sprint Cup ride for the 1999 season. With that move, Stewart ended his three-year career as a full-time IRL driver.

Tony Stewart loves racing. It's his life. He doesn't chase a lot of women, and I haven't heard many stories about him getting drunk. He lives to race. That's his passion. Sprint car racing has caused Stewart a lot of health problems, but I think his brain blocks out those painful memories. I expect he will continue. If he were to do otherwise, he wouldn't be living a life that's right for Tony Stewart.

DRIVE FOR DIVERSITY INCLUDES 11 WOMEN

Watch out men, NASCAR is going after women fans.

The 2016 NASCAR Drive For Diversity Program includes 11 women drivers, nearly half of the 23-driver field.

The 2016 class was formally introduced to the industry as part of the Charlotte Motor Speedway NASCAR Media Tour on Jan. 19.

"NASCAR remains steadfast in its mission to develop multicultural and female athletes and we believe this class has the potential to compete at the highest levels of our sport," said Jim Cassidy, NASCAR senior vice president of racing operations. "The talent pool from which these drivers were selected was unprecedented for NASCAR Drive for Diversity - a testament to the program's growth and success."

Racing Trivia Question: Who won the first Daytona 500?

Last Week's Question: What is the date of this year's Daytona 500? Answer: Sunday, February 21.

You may contact the Racing Reporter by e-mail at: hodges@race500.com.

Union County Recreation Department Presents

The Annual Daddy/Daughter Dance

Saturday, February 6, 2016
6 - 9 PM
North Georgia Technical College
\$50 Per Couple*
Includes dinner and Limo ride.

A semi-formal evening full of music, dancing, photos, dinner, and a limo ride!

Purchase your tickets now in the Recreation Office (310 Wellborn Street) before they are gone!

*After the first child an additional \$20 will be charged for each additional child.

TICKETS ARE ONLY AVAILABLE TO THE FIRST 50 COUPLES

2016 Baseball & Softball Registration
Will Be Open at the
Union County Recreation Office
January 11th-February 12th!

DON'T BE LEFT OUT!
Register in the
Recreation Office (310 Wellborn St.)
OR
Online at meekspark.com before February 12th

Age Groups:

3-4 CoEd- Smart Start	11-12 Boys- Baseball
5-6 CoEd- TBALL	11-12 Girls- Softball
7-8 Boys- Machine Pitch	13-14 Boys- Baseball
7-8 Girls- Machine Pitch	13-14 Girls- Softball
9-10 Boy's-Baseball	
9-10 Girls- Softball	

SPRING SOCCER REGISTRATION IS NOW OPEN!!

Age Groups U6-U16

Register online at www.mountainsooccer.org

Registration forms are also available to print from the website. Forms can be mailed to P.O. Box 1862, Blairsville, GA 30514.

Deadline to register is January 31, 2016.

For additional information please check out our website at www.mountainsooccer.org or email us at musa_soccer@gmail.com.