



TONY STEWART

## ENTERTAINING FOR A GOOD CAUSE

One of my favorite events of the year will take place Wednesday, June 9, when we run the Gillette Fusion ProGlide Prelude to the Dream at Eldora Speedway in Rossburg, Ohio. As in previous years, more than 25 drivers from a variety of disciplines will be there. The race will get televised live on HBO Pay-Per-View at 7 p.m. ET, with proceeds from the telecast supporting four of this country's top children's hospitals:

Riley Hospital for Children in Indianapolis ([www.RileyChildrensHospital.com](http://www.RileyChildrensHospital.com)); Cincinnati Children's ([www.CincinnatiChildrens.org](http://www.CincinnatiChildrens.org)); Levine Children's Hospital in Charlotte, N.C. ([www.LevineChildrensHospital.org](http://www.LevineChildrensHospital.org)); and St. Jude Children's Research Hospital in Memphis, Tenn. ([www.StJude.org](http://www.StJude.org)).

This year, every driver will compete as a team member on behalf of one of those four children's hospitals. Why do we do this? Easy – we just tried to find an angle where we could spice it up to a point where everybody in the field feels like, even if they don't have a shot to win the race, that there's still a purpose and a reason to work hard. They all do that anyway, but we were trying to find a way to make it even that much better for the fans.

And, adding the four charities this year, by designating teams to each charity, that dictates what percentage of the proceeds go to which of these charities, so every driver's performance is important in what happens.

We also feel like it's important to rotate support from this event among a variety of worthy causes. Starting last year, we decided to do something different each year and try to find a different group to support, so that's kind of where we're at. This year, we have four children's charities. Last year, it was a great feeling to support our military and we felt like that side of it went well. This event has raised over \$2.5 million in the last five years, so we wanted to make sure we spread the wealth as much as we could – children, our military and animal charities are really special to me, and having these four children's charities for 2010 is something that made a lot of sense to us.

Naturally, none of this could happen without Gillette's support and the involvement of so many of my friends from the Sprint Cup Series. This year's race will be headlined by the so-called Gillette Young Guns – Clint Bowyer, Kasey Kahne, Kyle Busch, Denny Hamlin, Carl Edwards and Joey Logano. In addition, Jimmie Johnson, Jeff Gordon and Matt Kenseth have all committed to race, and we have extended a standing offer to the winner of this year's Indy 500 to race here, with a car and crew provided! All told, there are 50 championships represented in the field among the drivers. When I saw that number it surprised even me.

The Gillette Fusion ProGlide Prelude to the Dream is a big deal for my fellow NASCAR Sprint Cup drivers and I. It's hard for us at this level to go out there and do things strictly for fun.



**NO. 39'S BIG STEPS** Tony Stewart's teammate Ryan Newman scored the first win of the year for Stewart-Haas Racing at Phoenix in April. (BELOW) Next month, Tony and many of his NASCAR Sprint Cup rivals will compete in the Late Model race at Eldora in the Prelude to a Dream.

There's the pressures of coming to a Cup weekend, and the media obligations, the sponsor obligations, the time that you have to dedicate to running the cars and thinking about what you have to do to make your cars better. There's a lot of stuff going on each weekend. We all love what we do and we're very passionate about being Cup drivers, but it's still a job, it's a lot of work and so there's a lot of pressure that goes with it. Coming to Eldora for a night takes that pressure away and let's them have fun behind the wheel. To be able, for one night, to just forget about all that and just get in racecars, to be able to walk around and talk to each other – that's something that these guys miss. I think the first time they do it, they're like, 'Wow, I forgot how much fun racing is.'

It's fun for me, too. Obviously, since becoming the owner of the racetrack, I've spent a lot of time there. I've spent more time running laps backward driving a tractor around there than those guys ever will driving a racecar around it. I know every inch of that place. It's fun for me. You want to be competitive and win every race that you run, but for me, it's been more enjoyable watching these guys who have never been there before, have never raced on dirt, have never raced at Eldora in a late-model – to see these guys have fun and watch how quickly they adapt, that's the part that is the most gratifying to me.


Of course, I still have a day job, as the co-owner/driver of the No. 14 Old Spice/Office Depot Chevrolet Impala, so one of the most rewarding things that's happened this year was seeing my teammate, Ryan Newman, put the No. 39 Tornados/U.S. Army Chevy in Victory Lane at Phoenix International Raceway.

Obviously, we had a great season in 2009 with the No. 14, and at the end of the year, it was great to get both of the cars in the Chase for the Sprint Cup and have us both running good. However, the one thing we missed was getting Ryan that first win last year. So to see him

getting his first win for the organization this early in the year, totally made it for the organization. There's now an attitude in the shop that wasn't previously there, period, and there was a buzz around there that we had finally made it to another level of our goals.

But that satisfaction comes from more than just being an owner; Ryan is a friend away from the track, too, so I know how much it meant to him and I know how much that night in Phoenix meant to everyone at Stewart-Haas Racing.

As for me, I hit an important milestone earlier this year, with my 400th career NASCAR Sprint Cup race. When I got started back in 1999, I was just happy to be here. There are so many talented drivers and teams in this series that you can't go in *expecting* to have those kinds of results. I think if you do, you're being kind of foolish and being more ambitious than realistic. We've been really lucky to be with really good people for 12 years now in this series, and that's what's gotten us where we are.

Anyway, I hope you can all join us on June 9 at Eldora for the Gillette Fusion ProGlide Prelude to the Dream. I promise you it'll be lots of good fun and it's all for good causes. 

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