

Fans mourn death of Earnhardt

DAYTONA BEACH, Fla. (AP) — The newspapers were all gone before sunrise. The fans lined up several deep to place flowers at a makeshift monument outside the track. A hastily scrawled sign on a pickup truck read, "No. 3, RIP."

Daytona Beach was in mourning Monday, as race fans began the 11th annual retreat home after the death of the great Dale Earnhardt.

"I guess I'll go out to the races to watch his son, now," said race fan Mark Yarashewski of Highland Falls, N.Y., dressed head to toe in Earnhardt's signature black. "But it's never going to be the same."

The top officials at NASCAR admitted as much, even though they couldn't stray from their traditional fences. Their afternoon news conference was full of pronouncements about what they wouldn't do.

They wouldn't cancel next week's race in Rockingham, N.C., they wouldn't immediately decide whether to retire Earnhardt's famous No. 3 Chevrolet and they refused to stopgap safety measures following their latest tragedy.

They also had no immediate plans for a special tribute.

"We're not going to react for the sake of reacting," said NASCAR president Mike Helton.

Helton said NASCAR officials had impounded Earnhardt's car and were holding it in an undisclosed location to analyze the accident.

Earnhardt's family made no funeral arrangements as of Monday. Dale Earnhardt Jr., who finished second Sunday in the Daytona 500, said his family appreciated the outpouring of support.

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— Mark Yarashewski
racing fan

"We'll get through this," he told WBTV in Charlotte, N.C. "I'm sure he'd want us to keep going, and that's what we're going to do."

Dr. Steve Bohannon, who tried to save Earnhardt's life as the driver slumped in the wreckage, said the autopsy confirmed what everyone suspected: Earnhardt died on impact when his car slammed into the wall on the final turn of the final lap.

He sustained a skull fracture near

the base of his brain. It was much the same injury responsible for the deaths of three NASCAR drivers last year.

Once again, the debate began whether the Head And Neck Safety (HANS) device would have saved his life.

"He was just doing his job," said Daytona 500 winner Michael Waltrip. "Close racing sometimes makes contact happen and sometimes contact happens with the wall. I don't think anyone could have done anything any different in that situation to help Dale."

Newspapers were sold out before sunrise. The Orlando Sentinel and News-Journal of Daytona Beach hastily printed thousands more copies to satisfy unprecedented demand.

Outside the track, fans had already come up with thousands of ways to pay tribute and send their message.

The centerpiece of a makeshift memorial to The Intimidator was a wide semicircle of white posterboard sitting atop bronze easels outside the Daytona USA museum.

Among the hundreds of poems and heartfelt messages scrawled on the boards was one simple thought, offered by a couple in Texas: "The Master. You Will Be Missed By All."

HOME ATHLETIC EVENT			
WEEKLY CALENDAR			
Mens Tennis	Abilene Christian	Tuesday 20th	1 p.m.
Softball	Houston	Wednesday 21st	7 p.m.
Mens Basketball	Oklahoma State	Wednesday 21st	8:30 p.m.
Womens Tennis	Oklahoma State	Friday 23rd	2 p.m.
Mens Basketball	Texas Tech	Saturday 24th	5 p.m.
Baseball	Baylor	Saturday 24th	7 p.m.
Womens Tennis	Nebraska	Sunday 25th	1 p.m.
Baseball	Baylor	Sunday 25th	2 p.m.

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