

Racing to the Finish: My Story

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It was a seemingly minor crash at Michigan International Speedway in June 2016 that ended the day early for Dale Earnhardt Jr. What he didn't know was that it would also end his driving for the year. He'd dealt with concussions before, but concussions are like snowflakes—no two are the same. And recovery can be brutal—and lengthy.

As a third-generation driver in a family forever connected to the sport of stock-car racing, how could Dale Earnhardt Jr. sit on the sidelines and watch everyone else take their laps? It was one of the toughest seasons of his life—one that changed him forever.

In this gripping narrative from one of professional sports' most beloved figures, Dale Jr. shares stories from his journey: how his career and his injury have transformed him, how he made the decision to retire at the end of the 2017 season after eighteen years behind the wheel, and what lies ahead for him in the next chapter of his life. There's no second-guessing and no regrets from Driver #88. He simply wants to go out on his own terms and make the rest of his life off the racetrack count. Junior says, "I don't want these last races to be just about me but rather the people who made my success possible: my fans, the folks who pack the grandstands rain or shine, my teammates and crew members through the years, industry colleagues, track volunteers, friends, family, sponsors. They've all played a role. I couldn't have done it without them."

Racing to the Finish: My Story Details


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From Reader Review Racing to the Finish: My Story for online ebook

Martha says

You do not have to be a Dale Earnhardt, Jr. fan, a NASCAR fan, or even a fan of any sport to read this book. Dale Jr., with the help of Ryan McGee, takes you through his silent struggle with concussions and how Dr. Michael 'Mickey' Collins of the University of Pittsburgh Medical Center helped him get his life back and be able to marry the woman he loves as well as retire from the sport he loves on his own terms.

Much like what Dale Jr. says in his book, I never realized that there were various types of concussions a person can experience. This book is written in Dale Jr.'s own words including entries from the Notes app on his iPhone. It's well-written from the point of view of a patient who is suffering in silence because he refuses to share what's happening with this family, closest friends, or even his physicians.

This book is definitely worth reading. Don't look for a work of art like the classics. That's not the purpose of the book. If his story can help you realize you need to seek help for similar problems, Dale Jr. has accomplished what he set out to do.

Jeri says

Ok, I admit I have ALWAYS been a Dale Jr. fan. I cheered every time his car went around the track, was sorely disappointed when he didn't finish a race for whatever reason. When he had to sit races out, I was one of those fans that thought, oh, he'll be back and things will be back up to par again. Racing has always been a "tough guy" sport. You don't think of concussions affecting them when they walk away from crashes at close to 200 mph without a scratch. But seeing the sports most popular driver being practically disabled by repeated concussions opened everyone's eyes. It isn't only athletes, and yes, NASCAR drivers ARE athletes, that suffer concussions. You, in your everyday life, can suffer a head injury. Dale's story lets others know that they aren't alone, there are multiple types of concussions and there IS help available and you can get better! I am so thrilled to see Jr. enjoying his life with his wife and little girl and that he is doing so much better healthwise from his injuries.

I was given an eARC by the publisher through NetGalley.

Cheryl Dubry says

Engaging Story for Any NASCAR Fan

Thank you, Dale Jr, for sharing a glimpse of your life though the struggles of dealing with concussions. As I read the book, I remembered (and looked up) the wrecks (we were in the front row for the 2014 Texas wreck), the time out of the car and the press releases. While I was entertained by the behind the scenes glimpse of the racing world, I also learned about how concussions can affect every day life. I truly hope that this book helps people realize when they need help and where to go to get it.

Heidi says

I really enjoyed this book and it is clear that Dale Jr. shared very personal details of his injuries and recovery throughout his years of suffering concussions. As someone who lost interest in the sport around the year 2015 I was unaware of the details of the events leading up to his retirement. I was very interested to learn the events that led to his retirement. I never knew exactly what people go through who suffer concussions and this book taught me a lot. It is very scary that many athletes suffer severe concussions and keep participating in their sports. One of the best aspects of the book is when he discussed his relationship with his sister and how much his wife helped him through this difficult time in his life.

Jorge says

With so much in the news about sports related concussions, this book made for an interesting read. I'm a racing fan, so I was interested in Junior's story. The book is about the ups and downs of living with this type of brain injury and his struggles dealing with the condition personally and racing. Just goes to show you how little we know about athlete's personal lives, as much of this book he kept his true condition a secret for a long time. Overall, I would recommend this book.

Please note I listened to the Audible version on this book. Junior only narrates the first and last chapter. The book is short, so you have to wonder why he did not narrate the entire book, especially being an easy read. Sorry, I get annoyed when authors do not read the entire book.

Nicki - The Overflowing Bookcase says

Every coach/sport team/educator should read this book!! Not only did it finally give answers to the NASCAR community as to why one of the most popular driver retired so young, but it gave a human face to the issue of concussions in sports. Everyone has their own take on what the "normal" concussion indicators are but reading this book gave the reader a better understanding of the idea that not all concussions are the same as well as no two recoveries will be the same. Thank you Dale Jr. for this emotional and well written account of what you went through and I wish you only the best in all endeavors and travels your life takes you on.

Truly says

Dale Jr writes from the heart as he opens up about his struggles both internal and external in his book titled Racing to the Finish. He shares personal stories of battles with concussion symptoms, loss, love, and the career he loves. An eye opening and inspiring read that Jr. hopes will raise awareness to the associated symptoms of concussions and the impact they have on a person's life. Racing to the Finish is not just for racing fans but anyone who wants to learn more about something that affects everyone no matter what sport or career.

Nancy Bradford says

I found that this book while it has a lot of personal information it has even more information about concussions. It is a well written book. Even if you don't like auto racing this is book you can read and enjoy.

Reca says

This book is a great read if you are a NASCAR fan. Through the 2017 season, Dale Earnhardt Jr. was one of the few drivers in NASCAR who competed before many tracks implemented SAFER barriers. He was also a holdout on moving from an open face helmet to a full face helmet. The thing is when you're young, your body recovers a lot faster than when you are in your late 30s and early 40s. This book documented concussion like symptoms as far back as 1998. That's long before the safety that became priority in 2001. This was the most eye opening part of the book.

Once you gain the perspective on how long Dale had likely been dealing with concussions, the 2012 crash during the tire test at Kansas causing Dale to sit out two races doesn't seem so weird. But for those of us who sat in shock in 2016 when Dale ended up out of the car for the second half of the season, you see things never really went away completely and smaller crashes aggravated things.

The comeback was not easy and he retired on his own terms. Dale wrote this book hoping to help just one person understand concussion symptoms so they knew they could seek medical care that would help them get better. I'm sure this book will help way more than just one person.

Robert Rich says

This isn't just a biography of Dale Earnhardt, Jr. it's a no holds barred look at his struggle with years of concussion issues, from copies of the notes he took on his iPhone while struggling with the injuries to full, honest disclosures about how he felt when he was out there racing, even when he shouldn't have been. Jr. has turned into a leading voice in concussion treatment, and this book is another step in his journey to convince folks to get help if they need it.

Ashley Hansgen says

This book was truly written from the heart. Dale Jr opens up about his struggles, both internal and external, as he battled concussion symptoms brought on by multiple hits suffered toward the latter part of his racing career. This book is very eye opening and honest. Dale tells his story in an effort to raise awareness of concussions, the associated symptoms and their impact on a person's life, as well as the avenues for seeking and receiving professional help and treatment. In this, he succeeds. I'm thankful that Dale Jr sought and received treatment and hope this book and his story will provide the information and inspiration for others with head injuries to do the same.

Kyle says

I received an ARC of this book via NetGalley in exchange for my honest opinion.

Well-written, informative, and deeply personal account of the struggles Dale Earnhardt, Jr. endured as the result of concussions and the lingering symptoms. Football seems to get all of the headlines in regards to concussions, but they are a real threat in various sports. This book does the best job of humanizing the issue that I have seen thus far.

Amy says

I was proud to be a Dale Jr fan when he left the car in 2012 to deal with concussions he had suffered in racing that year. I was prouder when he had the courage to retire to take care of himself and his health. This book is based on the secret diary he kept during those years, 2012 -2017, detailing the additional crashes and the additional concussion symptoms he dealt with until they got too bad to hide.

It's an interesting story, and a scary one, when you think of the issues other athletes may be ignoring or covering up so that they can keep their jobs. There are other details of his life in the book, of course, and a set of great photographs, but this book is not a general biography. It's a compelling story of injury and recovery, and it's a quick and entertaining read.

Recommended for sports fans, and for anyone interested in traumatic brain injury.

Leslie Leone says

Wonderful

You don't have to be NASCAR fan who's followed Dale Jr. The entire time he raced to love this book. He tells his story to you so you understand why he retired. I saw and witnessed the crashes, I was always so scared for him, hoping he'd be okay. If he stopped racing after his father passed no one would of blamed him, but he kept going. For the race world then himself. But to kept racing feeling so badly shows his love and passion for the sport. To bring awareness to head trauma so others can find help. As a avid horseback rider in my youth competing in barrel racing ,I took some nasty spills. I struggled in school a lot and makes me wonder if maybe that was the reason? Makes a lot sense now and luckily I don't have any lasting effects. But if I had gotten a proper exam then maybe my high school days wouldn't of been so rough? The book makes you really look back in life and go maybe if? The importance of not waiting, to get help and admit. This ain't right.

Dale Jr. I have always been your fan and always will be. In or out the car your a class act. I'm proud to wear your number. Always will be. Happiness always.

Donna Hines says

Race car drivers are the toughest individuals on the planet who rarely show emotion.

What a pleasure to see Dale Jr. open up and talk about his experiences that nearly cost him his life and career.

Dale Jr. comes from a family legacy of drivers who have never let circumstances dictate forward progress. There was always another race, another championship, another practice session awaiting.

Until there almost wasn't...

Dale suffered a number of concussions in his career with Kansas in 2012, Kansas in 2012, Texas and Talladega in 2014.

That's when he decided to take matters into his own hands by keeping meticulous records documenting his symptoms for research should something happen down the road.

His career was on the line, his relaxation and retirement issues were now flashing before him, his whole future was now up to questioning?

Could he continue, should he continue, would he jeopardize those who cared so much about him and his legacy?

The mentality of 'never leave the racecar' and 'lie if you must' to the infield docs weighed heavily on his mind.

His wife Amy and others never made the final decision nor did they sway his opinions as they all wanted the best for Dale. Dale had to decide what was best for him.

I must note I'm a Pocono Raceway Fancouncil Member and Nascar FanCouncil Member and have lived my life at the track. I grew up in Pocono Mts. and spent my life following the Earnhardts.

I know how difficult this decision was as I sat in on driver meetings and helped assist VIP members with Tours of the PIT and Garage area. To add to the excitement I was able to take a pic near Dale in 2015 as he jumped off the truck that carried him around the track to wave at the fans. Though Aric Almirola is the man I had the pleasure to drive around the track with I secretly hoped (as did we all) that we could at least see Dale if not drive with him. Dale went alone as did several of the top Nascar drivers but I was able to capture a quick pic of him as he exited and went near his car and I'll never forget that thrill as a fan all my life. It was an honor.

In fact I was thrilled when I was awarded the Pocono Raceway Certificate of Appreciation in Aug 2015 because Dale had just swept the race and the celebrations were on.

Yet, during all this time Dale kept a secret. A pain that was unbearable to hide. He didn't even tell those closest to him that he was suffering in silence.

The journal chronicles his symptoms in specific detail which helps readers which provides much needed insight into the complications he endured daily.

Dale had a nickname and Hammerhead son of Ironhead grandson of Ironheart had one wish and that was to make sure those who needed help for concussions would receive it and thanks to his authenticity and much appreciated openness (which is hard for men) he allowed us a glimpse into his world and that glimpse may just be enough to save a life.

I'll never forget seeing Dale during that time of turmoil and questioning his decision to get back into the racecar especially having lost his father tragically in Daytona. I worried like we all did about his health and safety and in fact it didn't occur to me about the safety of the drivers until I read it in *Racing To The Finish*. I had hoped he knew his fans would always be his fans no matter his decision and hoped the pressure would not be so great as to risk his own health to please the fans or the racing community.

Nascar will always be a staple in our lives but nothing is worth risking your life. No amount of money, awards, and or accolades should warrant the pressure Dale felt to continue on.

An amazing read that I feel blessed to have been selected to read just a day after requesting on NetGalley. A true honor and I'm so glad Dale Jr. has retired safely and has such a gorgeous family with Amy.

God Bless

Thank you Dale, The publisher, NetGalley, and Aldiko for this ARC in exchange for this honest review.
