

Dale Earnhardt

Full Name: Ralph Dale Earnhardt
Birth date: April 29, 1951
Hometown: Kannapolis, N.C.

Ralph Dale Earnhardt was born April 29, 1951 to Martha Coleman Earnhardt and Ralph Lee Earnhardt. He died February 18, 2001 on the last lap of the Daytona 500.

Earnhardt worked from the time he was a very young boy helping his dad in the shop behind the family home. He helped build and work on cars that his dad drove, winning all across the East Coast. As a young boy, he was a natural at building motors and was a quick learner when his father explained new things learned in the shop or at the track.

Earnhardt began his life as a father at a very early age. His children, Kerry, Kelley, Dale Jr. and Taylor were all very important to him and his happiness. Racing did not allow a lot of family time during their younger years but they never questioned their father's love and dedication to their futures. Earnhardt was married to Teresa Houston Earnhardt for 19 years when he died in 2001.

Earnhardt drove his first race in 1971. He ran and won on local dirt tracks like Hickory Speedway, Metrolina and Concord Speedway for car owners Ray Oliver, James Miller and James Russell. After the death of his father in 1973, he began his NASCAR career at short tracks across the East Coast.

His NASCAR Winston Cup debut was in 1975 and he started eight races over the next three years. He raced multiple nights each week on short tracks in his family owned cars and pursued a chance to drive full time in Winston Cup. The last race he drove during those three years was in 1978 in a second car owned by Rod Osterlund. He finished fourth in Atlanta. He began his first full time season in 1979 driving for Rod Osterlund in the No. 2 car.

Earnhardt won Rookie of the Year in 1979. He won his first race that year after only 16 career starts. A few weeks later, he won his first pole at Riverside California. He won his first championship the following year in 1980, the only driver to win Rookie of the Year and a Championship in successive years, 1979 and 1980.

After winning his first Championship in 1980, he went on to win a total of seven championships to tie Richard Petty's record.

Earnhardt drove and won for car owners Rod Osterlund, driving car No. 2, Bud Moore in car No. 15 and Richard Childress, where he made car No. 3 famous.

Earnhardt was a seven-time NASCAR Cup Series Champion over the 1980s and 1990s. He was the 1998 Daytona 500 Champion, four-time IROC Champion, and collected career winnings exceeding \$40 million. Earnhardt won the 2001 Most Popular Driver Award and was inducted into the Motorsports Hall of Fame in 2002.

Dale Earnhardt, Incorporated (DEI) was started in 1980 by Dale and Teresa Earnhardt. The team raced their first full NASCAR season in 1995 with driver Jeff Green in the NASCAR Craftsman Truck Series. Over the past 13 years of NASCAR competition, the team moved up to competing successfully in the NASCAR Nationwide and Cup Series and has fielded cars for drivers such as Jeff Green, Ron Hornaday, Steve Park, Martin Truex Jr., Michael Waltrip, Paul Menard, and Earnhardt's son, Dale Earnhardt Jr. DEI has claimed three Daytona 500 victories and four Nationwide Series Championships in 1998, 1999, 2004, and 2005.

Earnhardt accomplished many things during his life and career. He was compassionate, full of life, inventive, hard working, firm on his integrity and a loving husband, brother, son and father. He will be missed for a very long time.