



# In the Blink of an Eye: Dale, Daytona, and the Day that Changed Everything

*Michael Waltrip , Ellis Henican*

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There was one lap to go in the 2001 Daytona 500, NASCAR's most celebrated event. Michael Waltrip and Dale Earnhardt Jr. were running one-two. Junior's legendary dad, the driver race fans called "The Intimidator," was close behind in third, blocking anyone who might try to pass. Waltrip couldn't stop thinking about all the times he'd struggled to stay ahead--and the 462 NASCAR Cup races he'd lost without a single win. He'd been a race-car driver all his adult life, following in the footsteps of his brother Darrell, a three-time NASCAR champion. And his losing streak was getting more painful every race.

But this day, he knew, could be different. He was driving for Dale Earnhardt now, racing as a team with his close friend and mentor. Yet as his car roared toward the finish line, ending that losing streak once and for all, Waltrip had no clue that the greatest triumph of his life could get mired in terrible tragedy.

This is the story of that fateful afternoon in Daytona, a day whose echoes are still heard today. But the story begins years earlier in a small town in Kentucky, with a boy who dreamed of racing cars, a boy who was determined to go from go-karts to the highest levels of NASCAR. For the first time ever, Michael Waltrip tells the full, revealing story of how he got to Daytona, what happened there, and the huge impact it had on so many in the racing world. He reveals for the first time how his own life changed as he dealt with guilt, faced his grief, and searched for the fortitude to climb into a race car again. It's an inspiring and powerful story, told with Michael's trademark humor, honesty, and irreverence. It's a story of family, fulfillment, and redemption--and well-earned victory in the end.

## **In the Blink of an Eye: Dale, Daytona, and the Day that Changed Everything Details**

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Author : Michael Waltrip , Ellis Henican

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# From Reader Review *In the Blink of an Eye: Dale, Daytona, and the Day that Changed Everything* for online ebook

## Caitlin Moyer says

When I first picked up this book, I had never set foot on a racetrack or watched a lap on TV. In fact, I'm a Will Ferrell fan and I've never even seen *Talladega Nights*.

But none of that mattered because *In the Blink of an Eye* is not just a story for NASCAR fans about NASCAR. Two-time Daytona 500 winner Michael Waltrip's story is a story for the entire human race that just happens to be about racing.

Although the book is centered around one fateful event in 2001 (the tragic loss of NASCAR legend Dale Earnhardt on the very same day that Waltrip won his first Daytona 500), the story really reads more like an autobiography of Waltrip's life.

Told with his simple, unassuming, painstakingly honest and sometimes off-beat style, Waltrip starts the book by giving the reader an all-access pass into his childhood with a look at his family life growing up in the small town of Owensboro, KY and how he got his start in the sport. From there, Waltrip takes the reader's emotions on a ride as they experience the twists and turns and ups and downs of his career, that day that changed everything, the aftermath and the road to recovery.

This story isn't just about driving. It's about the drive to succeed and the drive to overcome. It's a story about friendship, family and what matters most when the rubber meets the road.

Yes, my genre of choice is typically chicklit, and yes, there were a lot of racing terms in the book that I wasn't familiar with, but that wasn't the crux; in fact, because I was so unfamiliar with the racing world, the story actually read more like a novel to me as I couldn't wait to find out "what would happen next."

No, I still haven't set foot on a racetrack and no, I still haven't seen *Talledega Nights*, but this book did give me a new appreciation (okay, maybe just my first appreciation altogether) for the sport and I will admit that my interest was piqued enough to tune in for the last few laps of this year's Daytona 500.

So, in sum, whether you're a race fan or not, I highly recommend Waltrip's book. You'll laugh, you'll cry, but one thing you won't want to do is put it down.

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## Jessica says

I was very surprised that this book was that good. It was like sitting somewhere and listening to Mikey tell his story. Yes it was a bit disjointed at times with the normal Mikey ramble. But that really made it seem that Mikey was writing it, other than his cowriter.

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## **Kristin says**

My aunt lent me this book in advance of the 2011 Daytona 500. She was a lifelong Dale Earnhardt fan, so being able to read Michael Waltrip's perspective on The Intimidator's influence and the highs and lows of that fateful day in 2001 I'm sure helped answer some lingering questions as the 10th anniversary of his passing approaches. For me, I've been loyal to a different driver and actually was anti-Earnhardt back in 2000 when he was challenging my guy, Bobby Labonte, for the title. That said, I knew about Waltrip's futility streak, and once the car of Labonte's teammate landed on Labonte's hood, taking him out of the race, it was hard not to root for Waltrip and his chance of breaking that streak and thought it was great that Earnhardt had given him the opportunity to run a car capable of doing so.

The early part of this book is about Michael Waltrip and the path he took to be driving in the #15 Napa Chevy in the 2001 Daytona 500. Despite his brother, Darrell, being a famous NASCAR driver already well-established, Darrell played a minor role in the book, as the brothers were never teammates and their age gap meant that Darrell was an adult and out of the house before he and Michael could build a strong relationship. I found this section of the book interesting and necessary to build up to 'the Day', but understand that this is as much an autobiography of Waltrip as it is his reflection of his 2001 Daytona 500 experience.

Of all the drivers who ran that race, Waltrip seems to be the right guy to reflect upon the day. Here was a man who struggled at the highest level of racing, made friends with some of the biggest names in the sport, and had convinced one of those big names to give him a chance. Then, he goes out in his first race for the team, executes the strategy his boss plans, and wins the biggest race of the season, only to discover after the celebration winds down that Earnhardt, his new boss, was killed in the crash that he essentially ignored while driving a celebratory lap. Above and beyond Dale's passing, the book made me sad, as next to some excellent performances with the 15 team at Daytona, Waltrip's career never took off like his brother's did, and I can't help but wonder how different things would have been not only for Waltrip, but for Dale Jr. and the DEI teams as a whole, if Dale had been around these last 10 years.

A very good read for fans of Michael Waltrip and Dale Earnhardt, plus those still feeling the void left by Earnhardt's death.

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## **Reca says**

Off the track, I've found Michael Waltrip to be a pretty funny guy and there were many times when I could get that same humor in the writing. For the title being about the 2011 Daytona 500, there is a lot more to this book than that, but it was a day that changed anyone associated with NASCAR and it does get plenty of pages. I always enjoy insights into athletes and this book as definitely enjoyable.

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## **Robbie says**

Robbie Sheets

Book: In the blink of an eye.

Author: Michael Waltrip

Pages: 223

Why did I choose this book because I love the sport.

Genre: non-fiction biography.

Setting: 1963 present anyplace where NASCAR has a race.

Main character: is funny, nice, and never mad.

Plot: how he got into NASCAR and the death of Dale and where he is today.

Conflict: how he got into NASCAR.

Problem resolved: winning his first race and loose a friend in the same day.

My opinion of the book: I like this book and would recommend it to anyone who likes NASCAR.

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### **Chris Hearn says**

I am a Micheal Waltrip fan. And, I like him even more after reading this book. The man has a ton of personality and it is reflected on every page. I enjoyed reading about his life in racing, but also appreciated his perspective on the day that Dale Earnhardt died...a perspective that really could only come from him. If you like Micheal Waltrip, Dale Earnhardt, and racing, well, you will like this.

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### **Michael Jobs says**

I ripped through Michael Waltrip's book "In The Blink Of An Eye", literally, in the blink of an eye. I finished it in two days, between the 10th Anniversary of Dale Earnhardt's death (Feb 18th) and the running of the 2011 Daytona 500 (Feb. 20th). The book drew me in from the very beginning, and Michael's style makes for a very accessible and easy read. I vividly remember the day that we lost Dale. I was glued to the TV rooting him on. I didn't know who Michael Waltrip was, or what his significance in the story was. He really is tied into the events of that day, and has a unique perspective on those events. The book definitely caused me to re-live the highs of a racing fan and the lows of the death of a childhood hero. My only criticism of the book involve the end. The story moves along at a good clip, then after the main events of the story conclude, the book drags a slight bit as Michael recounts his involvement with Toyota's entry into NASCAR. Overall a great read and a story that sheds some extra light into the death of Dale Earnhardt and it's aftermath.

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### **Zelda says**

A most read for anyone that calls themselves a NASCAR fan. Was a wonderful look into a his life and what makes Michael Waltrip that loved racer/owner he is today.

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### **Wendie says**

A must read for any NASCAR fan. An inside look at the day that changed NASCAR forever, February 18th, 2001. Interesting behind the scenes view of NASCAR in general.

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## **Christa says**

I knew the underlying story, but not how he got to that point or anything that was going on in the background.

There was humorous commentary throughout.

What I appreciated the most was his opinion of Johnny Benson and Kenny Schrader, especially since I watched the three of them on Speed Channel's NASCAR Inside Nextel Cup.

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## **Mariane says**

If you're a NASCAR fan this is a MUST HAVE, MUST READ

I've been a MICHAEL WALTRIP fan for a long, long time, definitely wasn't disappointed in THIS purchase

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## **Joanne says**

Michael Waltrip rambles a little in this book. He doesn't get real in depth about too much, just kind of blurbs about his life and the incidents that have happened to him. It is unfortunate that the man who had so much faith in him died the day Michael won the Daytona 500 in the DEI car. Definitely for the NASCAR fan.

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## **Kim Clifton says**

Having no interest in NASCAR, I may have subtly rolled my eyes when my dad (big time NASCAR fan) gave this to me five months ago. Knowing I'd see him this week and still hadn't touched it, I thought I should at least start it. I was pleasantly surprised at how interesting and easy this was to read! Since I didn't know anything about Michael Waltrip's story (or NASCAR in general) it kind of read like a novel for me. He is a genuine and likable narrator and tells an emotional story of his journey as a racer and relationship with Dale Earnhardt

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## **Kellie says**

remember that fateful day in February of 2001. I watched that race. It was the day of my son's Christening. Family and friends were at the house celebrating and the race was on. It was an exciting race. I remember talking about Dale playing defense for Dale Jr and Michael. It was an incredible sight. I remember seeing the crash. Thinking Dale might be hurt but no one thought he died. The crash was bad but I've seen a lot worse. I remember the shock when we heard of his death. I read the part about the crash while I was riding the stationary bike at the Y. I asked the guy next to me if he was a NASCAR fan. I told him what I was reading about, mainly so if he saw me start bawling he knew why. I held it together though. The worst part for me was Michael's description of the morning of race day and all the excitement. You know what's coming and it's so painful to read with anticipation. This book is about Michael Waltrip and that day. It really isn't about Michael's life, although it plays a large part. I read reviews where reader's were expecting more information

on Michael's accident with the SUV, his divorce etc. Not necessary. I believe this book was therapy for Michael. I don't think people really understood how much Dale Earnhart's death impacted Michael Waltrip. Well, now we know. I've always been a big fan of Michael and this confirms my admiration. He's a regular guy, with a big heart, who loves racing. Simple as that.

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## **Justin Gerade says**

Justin Gerade

June 11, 2013

Mrs. Dietz and Mr. O'Connor

Period 4

### **In the Blink of an Eye**

In the Blink of an Eye is an auto biography by Michael Waltrip. The publisher is Hyperion and was published on February 1, 2011 in New York. Michael Waltrip is a professional NASCAR Sprint Cup Driver. He competes in the top series of stock car racing. This book tells the story of his life and how he always dreamed of racing, just like his older brother. The book's main focus is on mentor, Dale Earnhardt and the changes that happened to Michael by meeting, working with and driving for him. The book also focuses on the day that Michael won the biggest race of his career and how at the same race, his mentor lost his life. In the Blink of an Eye shows us Michael Waltrip up close and personal. The impact of this book on its audience is everlasting because it shows the reader that if you never give up on your dreams, dreams will come true. The lessons learned from this book will be lessons that will stay with the reader forever. The reader will learn the value of determination, hard work and perseverance. Michael Waltrip shares with us his childhood memories, working with his mentor and the day that changed his life forever.

When Michael Waltrip was eleven years old, his dream was to become a NASCAR driver. He grew up watching his much older brother Darrell race local tracks and eventually become part of the NASCAR circuit. One day, Michael got up enough nerve and asked his dad if he would buy him a go-kart. Michael's father told him that he was much older than when his brother Darrell was starting to race and that he did not have the time to spend on starting a racing career again. "When I came along, he Darrell was sixteen and already making a name for himself sitting down in a car, driving fast and winning races." (26) So much goes into building the fastest go-karts, that you need a lot of time and money for the best parts. Michael would just have to find another way. Michael never gave up hope that he would find someone to help him. He eventually asked his brother Bobby, who was working on Darrell's team, and he said he would help him. After that, there was no turning back. Michael started on small local tracks and all he seemed to do was win. He worked his way up the chain and all he did was win race after race and championship after championship. In 1985 at the age of 22, he made his debut racing in the NASCAR Sprint Cup Series.

One of the highlights and defining moments of Michael's life was the day he met Dale Earnhardt. When Michael entered NASCAR in 1985, Dale was a giant in the sport. He was the most popular driver and was one of the best drivers in NASCAR history. "Dale's nickname was the Intimidator because of his aggressive, unwavering and fearless driving style." (138) Dale took Michael under his wing and started mentoring him. Dale taught him racing strategies and the ins and outs of the whole racing process. Dale explained everything from the mechanics, sponsors, engine builders, car owners, pit crews and crew chiefs. Dale owned his own racing company, DEI, Dale Earnhardt Incorporated. Even though he raced for a different company, he ran a first class company that produced incredibly bright race car drivers. In 2001, Dale Earnhardt asked Michael Waltrip to join his team and race for him. It was a dream come true for Michael. He was going to race for

his mentor and friend.

Everything changed for Michael and the world of NASCAR, on February 18, 2001. The Daytona 500 starts the racing season every year. It was the first race that Michael was going to race for Dale and DEI. It had been an exciting "speed week" leading up to the main event. Michael did many interviews and answered many questions about how important it was to be racing for Dale. Once the race started, Michael knew he had a great car and a great crew to lead him to the top. With just a few laps left, Michael found himself out front and leading the race. Dale Jr., Dale's son, was running in second and Dale Sr. was in third. Dale Sr. did everything he could to keep the other drivers from passing and taking the lead. That eventually caused a crash as Michael was coming out of turn four and getting ready to cross the finish line. Dale Sr. had hit the wall and that started the crash. Michael had no idea what was going on behind him, all he knew was that he had won the most important race of the season for the first time. He could not have been any more excited. "My heart was racing. The adrenaline was pumping through my veins. I was a winner, at last." (374) After finishing in victory lane, Michael had learned that Dale had been taken to the hospital and was not responsive when he was taken out of the car. Michael kept trying to find out how Dale was and decided he did not want to do any more victory interviews or celebrations until he found out about Dale. He and his wife went to his motor home and she told him what he did not want to hear, that Dale had died. Michael was never going to celebrate his win with Dale. He had lost his car owner, his mentor and most of all his friend. In the blink of an eye, everything can change. One minute you can be an eleven year old boy wanting to race and then in the blink of an eye, you are a thirty eight year old whose life was changed forever. The impact of Michael's words and actions shows us that it is not all about the good times, but that what you make of the hard times, will determine what type of person you become. With hard work and determination, anything is possible. Michael Waltrip had many highlights in his career and many upsets. The most important highlight was having Dale Earnhardt in his life. Michael Waltrip has many memories of his childhood, about his mentor and the happiest and saddest day of his career.

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