

Rhodes' DUI hearing postponed to Monday

The Associated Press

INDIANAPOLIS

Colts running back Dominic Rhodes's initial court appearance on a drunken-driving charge was postponed to Monday after prosecutors did not receive a paper work from the arresting officer.



RHODES

The officer did not turn in completed documents as expected Wednesday morning, said David Wyser, chief trial deputy for the Marion County prosecutor's office.

An Indiana State Police trooper arrested Rhodes, 28, about 3 a.m. Tuesday after he was stopped for driving a GMC truck 81 mph in a 55-mph zone on Interstate 65 in Indianapolis' far northwest side, authorities said. Rhodes was released on his own recognizance later in the day.

Rhodes, who becomes a free agent when his contract with the Colts expires Wednesday, did not respond to a request for com-

ment outside the courtroom.

His attorney, Jim Voyles, also had no comment.

"We'll say everything we need to say in court," Voyles said.

Rhodes was wearing a light gray suit and joined in the courtroom by a woman, but Voyles and others would not identify her.

Rhodes faces a class A misdemeanor charge with no possibility of a diversion program. Penalties range from no jail time to one year behind bars, but a conviction on a first-time offense typically results in probation, a fine and substance-abuse treatment, Wyser said.

Rhodes will be treated like any other first-time offender, he said.

Colts president Bill Polian said Rhodes would be subject to NFL discipline under the substance-abuse policy.

Rhodes has been in trouble with the law before. Following a 2002 domestic disturbance at his home, Rhodes pleaded innocent in Marion Superior Court to misdemeanor charges of battery and domestic battery.

Under an agreement with prosecutors, Rhodes was charged with domestic battery but avoided prosecution.

NASCAR stars start season in hole

Series' biggest drivers behind in points race after wrecking at Daytona

By MARK LONG
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Some of NASCAR's biggest stars left Daytona International Speedway in big holes.

Jimmie Johnson, Tony Stewart, Kurt Busch and Matt Kenseth — the past five Cup series champions — wrecked in the season opener and finished well back in the points race. Fan favorite Dale Earnhardt Jr. had similar results.

This weekend, the five drivers have little momentum heading to California. They do have lots of hope, because only two of the past 27 Daytona 500 winners have claimed series titles.

"The season, in some people's minds, starts this weekend," said Johnson, who accomplished the rare feat of winning the "Great American Race" and the championship last season.

Others haven't been as fortunate. Only four of the past 12 series champions even finished in the top 15 at Daytona. Stewart was last in 2002 but rebounded to win his first of two series titles; Ward Burton won the opener that year and ended up 25th in the standings.

"It's completely a clean slate,"



AP PHOTO

Kurt Busch, left, and Tony Stewart collide during the Daytona 500 Sunday at Daytona (Fla.) International Speedway.

Earnhardt said. "You can't compare the two. Daytona is like a season of its own, and the superspeedway program is different than the rest of the tracks. So, we're not going (to California) feeling like we're in trouble in the points or worry about being in a big crash at Daytona."

"That was only the first race, and if we do what we know we can as a team, we'll be in the top 12 in points when the Chase begins."

NASCAR's opener has so much hype, buildup, attention and emphasis that what's often overlooked is the fact that the Daytona

500 means no more to the championship than less prominent races in Virginia, Delaware, New Hampshire and Kansas City.

But Daytona can set the tone for the season.

In 2004, six of the 10 drivers who made the Chase started the year by finishing in the top 10 at Daytona. The following year, seven of the 10 were in the top 20. Last year, six of the 10 were in the top 15.

Sunday's Daytona 500 top 10 featured Kevin Harvick, Mark Martin, Jeff Burton, Mike Wallace, David Ragan, Elliott Sadler, Kasey Kahne, David Gilliland, Joe Nemechek and Jeff Gordon.

So Kenseth (27th), Earnhardt (32rd), Kurt Busch (41st), Johnson (39th) and Stewart (43rd) know they have ground to make up.

Kenseth might be in an even bigger hole, pending his appeal. Roush Fenway Racing formally appealed the 50-point penalty assessed to Kenseth and the team last week for illegal modifications during qualifying. If NASCAR upholds the punishment, Kenseth would drop from 28th to a tie for 40th in the points standings.

Kenseth, Stewart, Busch and Earnhardt had cars that seemed capable of winning Daytona

before they wrecked.

Busch and Stewart started the crashfest when Stewart's car wiggled on Lap 153. Busch, running right behind, tapped Stewart's bumper, causing both cars to lose control. Stewart finished last, and Busch was two spots better in 41st.

"We know that we've dug a hole with that 41st-place finish at Daytona, and we'll have to work hard to get out of it," Busch said. "We'll go to work on it this weekend at California."

Next to go was Johnson. He was running well behind the leaders about 20 laps later when he lost control in Turn 2 and triggered a multi-car crash. Then went Earnhardt, taken out in a crash just four laps from the scheduled finish.

But the real chaos came on the final lap, when Kenseth and Kyle Busch collided, causing a chain-reaction pileup that sent cars flying in all directions. Kenseth dropped to 27th as Harvick edged Martin for the victory.

"We've always bounced back in a big way after Daytona, so I'm expecting nothing less this weekend," Kenseth said.

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