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From the Los Angeles Times

## MOTOR RACING

### NASCAR's drug-testing policy under renewed scrutiny

Admission by Aaron Fike that he used heroin before a truck race last summer brings sharp response from Cup driver Kevin Harvick, who urges regular random testing.

By Jim Peltz

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AVONDALE, Ariz. — The admission by a former second-tier NASCAR driver that he raced after taking heroin last year sparked renewed scrutiny of NASCAR's drug-testing policy Thursday.

Hours before qualifying for Saturday night's NASCAR Sprint Cup race at Phoenix International Raceway, Cup driver Kevin Harvick complained at length that NASCAR's policy is too lax.

He was responding to an admission by Aaron Fike, who raced in NASCAR's Nationwide and Craftsman Truck Series, that he used heroin before a truck race last summer.

Fike, 25, later was arrested on suspicion of heroin possession, and NASCAR, in July, suspended him indefinitely.

NASCAR generally tests only when there is "reasonable suspicion" of drug use, but "that is not a proper professional sports drug policy," Harvick said.

He urged regular random testing, noting that he has never been tested in his 10 years in NASCAR. Reigning Cup champion Jimmie Johnson, two-time champ Tony Stewart and Kasey Kahne also said they had never been tested.

On the track, Ryan Newman -- known as "The Rocket" for frequently winning pole positions -- did it again for Saturday's Subway Fresh Fit 500.

The Penske Racing driver, this year's Daytona 500 winner, lapped the one-mile PIR oval in a Dodge at 133.457 mph. It was the fourth time he has started first here, and he set the qualifying record in 2004 with a lap of 135.854 mph.

Elliott Sadler qualified second, at 133.412 mph, and will start on the outside of the front row. Carl Edwards, the sport's hottest driver with three wins in the first seven races, was third at 133.378 mph.

Fike drove in the Nationwide Series (then known as the Busch Series) from 2004 to 2006, and three of his 2006 races were in cars owned by Harvick. Fike switched to trucks last year.

Fike admitted his drug use in an interview with ESPN magazine, partly to spur more stringent testing in NASCAR.

The admission stunned some drivers; four-time Cup champion Jeff Gordon called Fike's admission "mind-boggling." But the outspoken Harvick was particularly annoyed that anyone could race under the influence of drugs.

"I'm just really frustrated about the whole deal," Harvick said. "I want the perception of the fans and sponsors to know this garage is clean.

"There's no reason not to be proactive in the state of the world of sports," he added. "If I have to pee in a cup 15 times a year [in tests], I'm happy to do that."

Harvick said he has urged NASCAR officials to adopt more random drug testing, but "it almost seems like it went on deaf ears."

NASCAR spokesman Kerry Tharp said "no issue or conversation that we have with a driver, owner or team member ever falls on deaf ears."

As for NASCAR's policy, "we test an individual when we have reasonable suspicion" but "no system is flawless," Tharp said. He also said, "The responsibility here rests across the board -- with the drivers and competitors, owners and teams and NASCAR."

Several other drivers said they, too, would support more random testing.

"I'm all for it," Stewart said. "I've never been asked to take one yet and I think it should be mandatory that we have random drug testing all the time."

Fike's admission, he said, "obviously is an indication we need to do a better job than what we are currently doing."

But Gordon was more guarded. "I have confidence" in NASCAR, he said. "I don't think there's a need for a knee-jerk reaction. Maybe they need to look into it a little bit more after this. Obviously that's pretty serious."

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