The Daytona 500 has produced some of the most dramatic moments in NASCAR Sprint Cup Series history. Since the event’s inception in 1959, “The Great American Race” has produced 35 different winners, and 53 years of action-packed, sheet-metal banging races. These seven Daytona races not only redefined the Daytona 500, but changed the course of NASCAR history.

Richard Petty wins his first (and only) Daytona 500 after 20 years of racing in the event.

Kevin Harvick edges Mark Martin to the finish line by .020 seconds to win the closest race in Daytona 500 history.

Trevor Bayne becomes the youngest race winner at 20 years of age in his second NASCAR start.

Michael Waltrip’s first NASCAR win is overshadowed by the death of Dale Earnhardt on the final lap of the race.

Richard Petty wins the race, as Allison and Yarborough get into a fist-fight on the track. The 1979 race was the first flag-to-flag coverage of a NASCAR event.

Lee Petty wins the inaugural Daytona 500 by two feet over Johnny Beauchamp. The results were made official two days after the race.*

Richard Petty and David Pearson are involved in an accident on the final lap of the race. Pearson limps his car to the finish line first and wins.

* NASCAR initially named Beauchamp the winner of the race, but Petty was correctly named the winner after filing a protest of the results.

Sources: www.daytona500.com; www.nascar.com

Daytona 500 Logo from washingtonexaminer.com