



Dumb and Dumber, the Dale Earnhardt saga.

By Kerry Schmidt 05-13-2007

There have been thousands of dumb-ass decisions made in the business world, most of which you never heard of unless your No.1 paper is the Wall Street Journal. But when the major screw-up is in the sports world, it is wildly covered, especially if it is a major sport of great popularity.

Thus, I give you DEI. Dumbest Ego Invented. Done Evicted Itself (from NASCAR).

Before I sat down to write this, I wracked what is left of my brain trying to figure out how Teresa Earnhardt could be so incredibly stupid.

(Teresa Earnhardt is Dale Earnhardt's stepmother, who inherited the Dale Earnhardt Inc. Corporation when Earnhardt Sr. was killed four years ago.

DE junior had given his sister, Kelly Earnhardt Elledge, the main job of negotiating with stupid stepmom to come to some mutually satisfactory way for the most popular racing team to stay together.

Earlier this year, DE Jr. had made it clear he wanted 51% ownership of the company.

About a month ago, Jr. said his relationship with his stepmother "ain't no bed of roses."

Apparently the bed of roses died, because Jr. announced Thursday that he was leaving DEI after this season.

So, how freakin dumb is this?

According to sources close to the situation, Terrible Teresa has a "huge ego," and thus would not agree to Jr's terms. Thus, Jr. is gone.

How can you have a team called Dale Earnhardt Inc. when there is no Dale Earnhardt there?

Someone should have explained to Teresa what DEI stands for, and it is not Teresa Earnhardt Inc.

Her only statement on the subject was, "While we are very disappointed that Dale Jr. has chosen to leave the family (Teresa's) business, we remain excited about our company's future," she said. "Dale and I built this company to be a championship contender, and those principles still apply. DEI will win... This company has a great legacy and a bright future, built on loyalty, integrity and commitment."

She should have been straight forward and said, "Dale (Sr.) built this company. I doubt she knew jack shit about racing before she started humping her new hubby.

And, she should have said "had" a great legacy, and a lousy future.

Imagine taking Elvis Presley out of his legacy, i.e., leaving just his band. How popular would that be? Take Oscar de la Hoya out of Golden Boy productions and what are you left with?

Jr. has been the most popular NASCAR driver four years in a row, and the highest paid.

Not only will Teresa be left without the most popular driver, she likely will lose a number of other individuals on the team, drivers, crew, et al.

But far and away will be the loss of major sponsors. DEI has been promoted by Budweiser beer forever. They have already pretty much said they will follow Jr. wherever he goes.



Bud does have a contract with DEI through 2008, but many legal beagles say there are clauses that would get them out of 08 if Jr. leaves.

There goes over \$20 million a year! So, we know her ego is at least that big.

It is sort of akin to the clash of egos several years ago on the Dallas Cowboys. Owner Jerry Jones, he of the Donald Trump sized ego, got pissed at Coach Jimmy Johnson because he was getting all the credit for winning the Super Bowls, and he fired him.

Dallas has not come close to the SB since.

Most of the media that follow NASCAR say that DEI will have a very rough time of it sans Jr.

During his press conference on his announcement, Jr. took the high road.

He said, they worked hard to find common ground, but “As negotiations continued one thing became evident – we both wanted to be in and get to the same place, but we had different visions of how to get there.”

The media tried many times to get him to criticize DEI and Teresa, but he declined.

“Trust me when I say DEI will come out of this successfully,” he said. He added that DEI’s president, Max Siegel “is going to be a huge asset to that company. “.....(sic) he will get things moving and shaking over there.”

Maybe so, but Siegel sure as hell can’t drive a car, and, Siegel sure as hell ain’t a good ole Southern Boy name or background.

The media again tried to get him to compare DEI’s current efforts to his late father’s vision, but again he showed real class and declined.

All he said was that if (Dale Sr.) were still here, “we would all be on a different place right now. He was a great driver and totally focused and devoted to the company.”

He....was the only one that was able to make it all happen.”

Thus, DEI definitely seems to be pretty much in the crapper for next year.

Sans Jr, many of his close associates, his biggest sponsors, among other things, I believe DEI is in for a tough road. Instead of just taking all those left turns, Teresa has made all the wrong turns.

But what about Jr. To say it mildly, the world, at least the NASCAR world, is his oyster. There is expected to be a frenzied free agency period wherein most major teams will try to roll out the red carpet for the most popular driver. This process could shake up the sport big time, causing long-term ripple effects in driver salaries and sponsor deals.

Though virtually all the teams would jump at the chance to get him, Jr. has stated that he wants to keep driving Chevrolets. Chevy has won 9 of the 10 races this year, the three of the sports top four teams: Hendrick Motorsports, Richard Childress Racing (RCR) and Joe Gibbs racing are all Chevy.

RCR seems to be the front runner for his services. His dad won 6 of his 7 championships with RCR, plus Childress and DE Sr. were very close and Jr. has a good relationship with Childress also.

Plus, RCR has an opening for a driver (each team can have four, and RCR currently has only three).

And, RCR owns the right to car # 3, the one his father drove.

However, Jr. said, “I’ve got to do a little soul searching on how I feel driving the No. 3 car.”



OFF THE WALL SPORTS

Another option is for Jr. to start his own team – sponsorship money would be no problem, and Hendrick Racing (they already have four drivers) could lease Jr. engines, like it does for two other racing teams. RCR also would lease him the engines.

“I believe our first choice would be to drive for another top, competitive team,” his sister Elledge said. “Our last choice would be to form our own, if necessary. Somehow, I don’t think that will be necessary.

Jr. stated simply that he and his sister would choose the team that gives him the best chance to win.

“We will look at all the possibilities,” he said.

Jr. did add that it was a hard decision to make, mainly because of his loyalty to DEI’s employees. Telling them he was leaving was one of the hardest things he has ever done, he said.

Despite his good ole Southern boy and party animal personas, Jr. really cares what people think and worries his father’s fans will feel betrayed by his defection.

Somehow, I doubt that. Jr. is the most popular NASCAR personality because, well, quite simply, he is Jr.

To say the least, the options for Jr. are many and all of them good. He can just about write his own ticket. Despite the fact that he has not won a race since May, 2006, his persona still makes him “the man.”

On the other side of this picture, Teresa and her DEI, well, despite what she said, her options pretty much suck. It just boggles my mind that anyone would do something so stupid as to jettison the single entity that made DEI what it is. Without Jr. they are, well, pretty not much of anything. How many fans can name the other drivers on DEI?

Teresa may have married into Dale Earnhardt’s money, but she sure brought along a whole shit load of stupid with her.

I can only guess that once she married into the celebrity world, especially one such as NASCAR, where the fans are as rabid and faithful as you can get, perhaps she quickly grew this giant ego, thinking that, once Sr. died, that she was the attraction, that she ran the show, when in fact, all she was left with was money and the name.

Talk about killing the golden goose, biting the hand that feeds you, etc.

Assuming Jr. does go to another team, by this time next year I think Teresa will have awakened from her nightmare and realized her ego was what ate the golden goose.

Yes, the future for Jr. is brighter than ever, but to Mother Teresa, a rude awakening awaits. And, she has no one else to blame but herself.

Dumb bitch!