

Busch brothers make up

Associated Press

CONCORD, N.C. — Kurt Busch had a talk with his kid brother after the two crashed into each other during NASCAR's All-Star race.

At issue was who was to blame for the accident that took both out of contention for the \$1 million prize. They agreed to disagree on that point.

But when it was over, they seemed to be in unison that Kyle Busch's aggressive driving style can sometimes be over the edge.

"The initial discussion was over who was giving and who was taking and who wasn't," Kurt Busch said Thursday. "Over that discussion I think he got the sense of realization that he has been driving maybe a percentage point or two too high as of late. We've all been young drivers before (and) have gone through the, 'Hey, I've got a fast race car, I deserve to win.'

"But yet you can't count your chickens before they hatch. I think he realized that, and I hope it helps him, wrecking with his brother, that he can mature in a stronger fashion and a quicker fashion. I think he enjoyed the talk that we had."

Any bad blood between the two appeared to be wiped away as the Busch brothers prepared for Sunday's Coca-Cola 600. But it took them four days to get to this point, as each was too angry to discuss their first on-track altercation.

When they finally touched base in a Wednesday phone call, Kyle Busch recognized he probably expected too much leeway from his brother on Sat-



Brothers Kurt Busch, climbing into his car in photo at left, and Kyle Busch, sitting in the garage area at Charlotte in the photo at right, got into a wreck during Saturday night's NASCAR Nextel Cup All-Star race. The two have talked out their differences and hope to put the bad blood behind them.

AP photos

AUTO RACING

urday night at Lowe's Motor Speedway.

The two were racing each other for position late in the \$1 million event when Kyle crowded Kurt in an attempt to pass him.

Kurt refused to give an inch, and the two cars collided.

Each blamed the other, and even though they played in the same golf tournament on Monday, they were too angry to speak. After hearing Kurt out, Kyle admits Kurt wasn't obligated to move over for him on the track.

"I figured 'It's Kurt. I'm going to get on his inside if I can make it in there, and he'll give me the room. He's my brother,'" Kyle Busch said. "And it just didn't happen."

But he disagreed with Kurt's assessment that he's been too

aggressive all season long. Kyle Busch has wrecked several cars in both the Busch and Nextel Cup Series, but some of the accidents were due to circumstances.

"I feel like there's probably been a couple situations where I maybe was a little too high," Kyle Busch said. "But I feel like there's other situations where the level I was racing at put me in the right positions at the right time."

"So it can be taken both ways, and hindsight is 20-20. You want to do what's best for you at that given moment."

It's a fine racing line that the Busch brothers are on. They drive for different teams in pursuit of the same prize, but in two-plus seasons together in the Nextel Cup series they had never before wrecked each other.

Jeff Burton, who races weekly against his older brother, Ward, said it will take time for the Busch's to realize that their relationship is more important than collecting trophies.

"Ward and I had a time when we didn't understand how to race against each other and still have a lot of respect for each other," Burton said. "And there will be a day that it becomes very aware that my brothers that family is more important."

"You just hope that it doesn't have to get ugly before you realize that."

Opinion was split through the garage about who was at

fault in Saturday's wreck. But most agreed with Kurt Busch's assessment that the kid he calls "The Shrub" has been a bit overzealous this season.

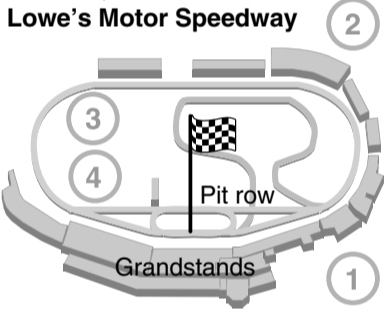
"Kyle is aggressive, and Kyle tends to err on the aggressive instead of passive, that's for sure," said Jeff Burton, who has repeatedly praised Kyle Busch for racing him clean.

"His aggressive nature certainly has put him in some positions he might not have been in, and at the same time, that aggressive nature has put him in that car. It's a catch 22. Experience will teach him when to push that button, and when not to push it."

It's a lecture Kyle Busch has heard often from his Hendrick Motorsports teammates, who think the young driver has made strides since breaking into the Cup Series in 2004.

"He's aggressive, there is no doubt about it, and we all laugh and joke about it," said defending Cup champion Jimmie Johnson, a Hendrick teammate. "We recognize that and I know his team does, too, and they spend a few hours a week working on his cars because of it. But that's Kyle's style and it's what got him to where he is today."

"I've seen a big level of maturing going on, how engaged he is on the debriefs and talking race cars. I know he's aggressive, and that's what makes Kyle Busch who he is. But I think he's maturing in a lot of ways, too."

NEXTEL CUP	
Coca Cola 600	Completed: 1959
Concord, N.C.	Distance: 1.5 miles
Lowe's Motor Speedway	Track: Quad-oval
	Banking: 24° turns 5° straights
	Frontstretch: 1,980 feet
	Backstretch: 1,500 feet
	Total seating: 165,000
Last year: Kasey Kahne ended Jimmie Johnson's run of three straight Coca Cola 600 victories by taking a huge lead with 29 laps to go.	
Schedule: Thursday, qualifying (Speed Channel, 7 p.m.); Sunday, race (FOX, 5 p.m.)	
Next race: Dover 400, Dover Del., June 3	
SOURCE: NASCAR	AP

Titans' tackle has great deal to prove

Associated Press

NASHVILLE, Tenn. — Titans defensive tackle Albert Haynesworth has a simple goal for 2007: Play 16 games this season.

"I haven't played a full season since my rookie year. I've just got to get back on the field and stay on the field. If I stay on the field and be productive, I'll be fine," Haynesworth said.

Staying on the field has been a problem for the six-year NFL veteran, the man most people remember for stomping his cleated foot onto the face of Dallas center Andre Gurode's unprotected face last October.

That act cost Haynesworth a five-game suspension, unprecedented in NFL history for an on-field act and more than double the previous such suspension.

But the Titans' first-round pick in 2002 hasn't played more than 14 games in a season since his rookie year, playing in 63 of 80 possible games because of injuries.

That is why Haynesworth has been working hard for months this offseason to be lean, strong and healthy for his sixth NFL season — the final year of his contract with the Titans.

"I want to get stronger and make sure there's no excuses why I get hurt ... That's why I want to make sure I'm strong. I'm in shape, and I'm here. I don't want to cram it in in the last two months. I want to be here for five or six (months)," Haynesworth said.

The Titans like what they see from the tackle so far.

"He's worked hard," coach Jeff Fisher said Thursday after a workout. "He's inside. He's here every day working hard,

NFL

and that's good to see."

Haynesworth can be one of the NFL's most disruptive tackles when he's healthy. Listed at 6 feet 6, 320 pounds, he started off 2006 with 27 tackles through the first three games and the first half on Oct. 1 against the Dallas Cowboys.

Then in one moment of rage, which he later said he couldn't explain, he put his foot down and swiped his cleat across Gurode's face as the center was on the ground with his helmet knocked off. Haynesworth was ejected, video of the moment replayed over and over, and criticism flowed in from around the world.

NFL commissioner Roger Goodell suspended him 24 hours later, and he was required to undergo anger management counseling. The Titans told him he had to continue that counseling before they let him return once the suspension ended.

Haynesworth said at the time he returned that he learned to quit bottling up his feelings.

But sitting out six weeks, including the Titans' bye week, took its toll. He played in the final seven games and finished with 32 tackles in that stretch — good for 10th on the Tennessee defense. He had two sacks and 13 quarterback pressures on a defense that ranked last in the NFL.

Defensive line coach Jim Washburn said Haynesworth has been working hard. Asked if he's seen changes in the tackle, he said, "I've always seen a lot of good in him."



AP photo

Tennessee Titans defensive tackle Albert Haynesworth watches as head coach Jeff Fisher talks with officials after Haynesworth was ejected from an Oct. 1, 2006, game against Dallas for stepping on an opponent.

The Titans, who are several million dollars under the salary cap, haven't indicated yet if they want to sign Haynesworth to a contract extension.

Signing him before the season could bring them a bargain if he finally lives up to the potential seen when he was drafted with the 15th pick overall. Waiting to see what kind of season Haynesworth has risks the veteran becoming a free agent who could attract a very large pay day next spring.

Health will be a key. Injuries limited him to 12 games in 2003, 10 in 2004 and 14 in 2005. Stay-

ing healthy, not playing for a new contract, is what Haynesworth thinks of most.

"If you think about the money, then you're in it for the wrong reasons," he said.

Hearing Haynesworth talk of playing 16 games is the goal both Fisher and Washburn hope to see him reach.

"If he plays 16 games for us, he'll have a good year," Washburn said. "And we'll have a good year."

Notes: It's tough to miss what you never had. Quarterback Vince Young said when asked Thursday about missing out on veteran receiver Keyshawn Johnson, and he also was asked if he could go through the season with the young receivers on the roster. He said he's fine with that. "Everybody else is doubting them. That's the good part about it. That keeps motivating them guys to go out every day to show they can do this and that," Young said.

Dolphins sign rookies

Running back Lorenzo Booker was one of three draft picks to sign four-year contracts Thursday with the Miami Dolphins.

Booker, a former Florida State star, was the Dolphins' third-round choice. They also signed punter Brandon Fields and linebacker Abraham Wright, both seventh-round picks.

Eagles ink pair

The Philadelphia Eagles signed a pair of third-round picks, linebacker Stewart Bradley and running back Tony Hunt, to four-year contracts Thursday.

NORWALK LITTLE LEAGUE

Majors

VFW beat Rowayton Fuel, 14-5.

VFW (7-3) got timely hitting from Trevor Tomlinson, Kevin Cronin, Derick Edwards, Keegan Roberts, Kyle Buswell, Mike Bottex and Pete Romsy. Derick Edwards getting his third win as the starting pitcher.

Monker Grotto (5-4) played its second extra-inning game in two days and came away with a win over the Laurels (4-6). Tristan Opdahl pitched three shutout innings with six strikeouts, Jordan McDonald fanned six and got the win, and Pete Ferguson picked up the save.

Tyler Annunziata had three hits and three RBI, Tristan Opdahl had a double, triple and two RBI, Nick Lampman had two doubles and an RBI, Jordan McDonald had two hits including a double, Matt Savona had two hits and Pete Ferguson one.

For the Laurels Ty Doris, Mark Salvioli, Thomas Clyne, William Clyne, Ty Singewald and Patrick King had hits.

Rowayton Hardware beat Rowayton Fuel, 12-0, and Kiwanis, 3-2.

Hardware (8-1) got hits from Elliot Henson, Ian Coupe, Gareth Fancher, Stephen Knight, Jack Sory, Ryan Grant, Dawson Jones, Jimmy Pace and Kyle Simmons. Kiwanis is 7-4 and Fuel is 2-7.

Peter Ostasiewicz threw a complete game two-hitter as Laurel AC (4-5) topped the Int'l Lions, 10-1. William Clyne had three extra base hits for Laurel AC. Also for Laurel AC, Thomas Clyne had three hits and scored three runs, and Ostasiewicz and Patrick King each singled twice.

Steve Curran led the way as New York Bakery (3-6) downed the Lions Club, 12-4. Curran pitched 3-1/3 innings, allowing no hits while striking out eight. He helped his own cause at the plate by going 3-for-4 with two doubles, three RBI and three runs scored. Hunter Sharkey went 2-for-3. Ryan Halloran went 1-for-3 and pitched two innings while striking out four. Andrew Bilardo had a single. Joe Ponger had a key double in the fifth going deep to center with two RBI. Keven Partida was 2-for-2 with a double. Matt Drain scored a run. Connor Halloran, up from AAA, scored twice and had an RBI.

In a hard-fought game, Monker Grotto (4-4) lost, 5-4, in eight innings to Rotary (5-3). Tyler Annunziata started and pitched into the seventh inning, striking out 10 and giving up one earned run. Nick Lampman pitched in relief giving up an earned run and striking out three. Annunziata led the offense with two hits including a three-run home run and four RBI. Peter Ferguson had two hits, Jack Hefferan had a double, Jordan McDonald, James McQuillan and Eric Freeman each had a hit, and Matt Savona walked twice.

Triple AAA

Norwalk Pizza and Pasta used a five-run fourth inning to defeat Rowayton Pizza, 5-4.

After trailing 3-0 in the fourth inning, Brendan Hanzlik singled in a run, Matt Jimenez tripled in two runs (including the tying run), Shawn Hanzlik delivered a two-out go ahead RBI single and Pete Kotulsky hit the game-winning RBI single. Justin Jimenez single twice and scored a run. Joey Benincaso also had a single.

Johnny Swick pitched the middle two innings, striking out four, allowing no runs and no hits to get the win. Justin Jimenez pitched the final two innings striking out four and allowing no earned runs to get the save.

Heritage Carpentry stormed back to defeat Stew's, 12-11.

Anthony Granchelli, Alli Pitasi and Matt Salata picked up big hits in the top of the sixth to key a six-run rally for Heritage. For Stew Leonard's, Cole DeBeradinis tripled and hit an inside-the-park home run, Billy Passero singled and doubled, Bobby Butler picked up two singles and Max DeBeradinis and Connor Halloran singled.

C&C held on to defeat Rowayton Pizza.

Strong pitching by Jesse Rodriguez, who struck out seven and allowed no runs in three innings, allowed C&C's early lead to hold thru three innings. Greg Goldstein pitched a solid fifth and sixth with five strikeouts while allowing one run to stop Rowayton Pizza.

Norwalk Pizza and Pasta, with the help of 13 walks and three timely hits, came away with a 10-5 win over Rowayton All Seasons. Shawn Hanzlik's two-run single tied the game in the third inning. Matt Jimenez's second and third RBI came on a two-run single and Joey Benincaso's second single — a two out RBI single in the fourth — sealed the victory.

Tommy Benincaso also added a single and two runs scored. Brendan Hanzlik pitched the final three innings striking out four and allowing one earned run.

For All Seasons, Zack Ely and Max Blumenthal had two singles each and Will Adams doubled and scored. Blumenthal scored two runs and Ely scored one.

Heritage topped Diamond Deli, 15-3.

Heritage was swinging heavy bats led by both Brendan Mills and Brent Besterly with three hits each. Corey Haye's homered. Diamond Deli sparked some offense in the fourth. Nick Locastro drew a key walk then stole third followed by a two-run single by Dan O'Brien. Earlier in the third, Matt Arduino smacked a double to drive in a run.

Hatch and Bailey hammered Stew Leonard's, 14-4, behind the pitching of Diego Partrida (six strikeouts), Justin Hufnagel (seven strikeouts) and Isaiah Rodriguez (one strike-out). Rodriguez pounded out three hits. Sam Starkman had a triple and three singles. Matt Diurno had three hits. Sean Geercken, Kyle Mossop, Brian Coffey and Hufnagel all picked up two hits. Dan Partida doubled and Breck Taylor and Diego Partida picked up singles.

For Stew's, Billy Passero had two hits, Bobby Butler and Max Helfand each tripled and Connor Halloran and Eddie Marcarelli singled.

Norwalk Pizza and Pasta scored five runs in the first two innings and the pitching held t for a 5-3 victory against Heritage Carpentry.

Brendan Hanzlik pitched the first three innings allowing no earned runs with five strikeouts. At the plate, Hanzlik tripled driving in three runs and scored one run. Shawn Hanzlik singled and drove in one run.

Tommy Benincaso singled and scored a run. Justin Jimenez pitched the final three innings, striking out six, walking one and allowed no runs. Jimenez also singled and scored a run.

Matarese Service Station beat Snellman Construction, 8-6.

Matarese got hits from Joseph Bartlett, Mike Boguski, Christian Bonebrake, Parris Fort, Joey LaRacca, Chris Lato and Andrew Starr. Hitting for Snellman were James Campbell, BJ Buckle and Mathew Crowley.

LaJoies beat John Glover, 7-3.

Leading Lajoies to victory was RJ Kenez with two hits and three RBI. Kenez also closed out the game with a scoreless inning.

C&C Landscaping defeated Diamond Deli, 13-0.

The pitching duties for C&C were handled by Daniel Romanello and John Luke Kanzler, who combined for 11 strikeouts, four walks and no hits. The offense was led by Kanzler and Scott Brandfellner with four hits apiece, and Jesse Rodriguez, Ricky Mejia, and Michael Stein with two hits each.

Hatch and Bailey defeated Rowayton All Seasons, 5-4.

Kyle Mossop and Brian Coffey put in a great pitching effort for H & B, but the real excitement came with two outs and the bases loaded in the bottom of the sixth when Matt Diurno made a game-ending catch in center field.