

NASCAR sees Confederate flags fly outside Talladega Superspeedway

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NASCAR has banned the Confederate flag from being displayed at its events, but supporters of the symbol still managed to be seen Sunday before the race was postponed to Monday because of inclement weather.

Vehicles lined the boulevard outside Talladega Superspeedway in Lincoln, Alabama, waving the flag and a plane flew above the track towing a banner of the Confederate flag that said "Defund NASCAR."

NASCAR has not stated how exactly it plans to stop fans from displaying the flag on track property, and none of the instances Sunday at Talladega were inside the facility.

A pickup truck with Confederate flags flying from the back tooled around Speedway Boulevard. Ed Sugg's merchandise tent flew them prominently in a display alongside Trump 2020 banners and an American flag.

"They're doing very well," said the Helena, Alabama, resident, who has been selling an array of wares at NASCAR races for 21 years. "People are disappointed that NASCAR has taken that stance. It's been around for as long as all of us have been. I don't think anybody really connects it to any kind of racism or anything. It's just a Southern thing. It's transparent. It's just a heritage thing."

David Radvansky, a 32-year-old from suburban Atlanta, brought his wife and boys, who are 3 and 6, on Sunday. He said he started coming to Talladega in the 1990s when his father parked cars at races and applauds NASCAR's decision to ban the Confederate flags.

"I don't think there's a place for it in NASCAR, to be honest with you," he said. "That doesn't sit well with all the good ol' boys, but it is what it is."

Monday's race, which will start at 3 p.m. ET, will be the first amid the coronavirus pandemic in which NASCAR has opened the gates for up to 5,000 fans.

While some fans might be pushing back on the sport's new direction, at least one sponsor has gone a step further in backing civil rights.

Denny Hamlin's longtime sponsor FedEx replaced its logos for the race to instead feature the National Civil Rights Museum.

The company also donated \$500,000 "in support of the museum's mission," which chronicles the history of the civil rights movement in America. FedEx is headquartered in Memphis, Tennessee, where the museum is located.

FedEx is one of the few true full-time primary sponsors remaining in NASCAR, meaning the company backs Hamlin in nearly every race. In 519 races, a FedEx paint scheme has been on his Joe Gibbs Racing entry all but 17 times, and Sport Clips was featured in 14 of those events.

Hamlin visited the museum Thursday and revealed before Sunday's race that FedEx had swapped its logos for the race in Alabama.

FedEx released a letter earlier this month that said the "recent killings of George Floyd, Ahmaud Arbery, Breonna Taylor and many others are devastating. The unrest across the nation and the grieving in our local communities are a reminder that we all must keep doing more to create meaningful change and healing."

The company has been a frequent supporter of the NCRM.