

TUESDAY

October 2, 2012

SHELBY, N.C.

75¢

Shelby man wins big money
in Texas fishing tournament

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**Dale Earnhardt's daughter
to compete at county fair**

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THE STAR

Published for Shelby's Michael Costner and all our devoted Cleveland County area readers for 119 years.

Pedal pitstop

Cyclists visit county
on statewide ride

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SHELBY — Tents popped up around the golf course at Shelby City Park on Monday. Mist moved swiftly through the air as thin tires circled across the uneven pavement.

Cyclists created make-shift clothes lines to dry out their shirts, shorts and socks. Some leaned back on their air mattresses, resting shortly after noon.

Inside

■ An editorial on the cycling ride's financial benefit to the county Page 5A

They had a 70-plus mile ride ahead of them for Tuesday.

Hundreds of cyclists camped in Shelby during the



Speed in her genes

NASCAR legend Earnhardt's daughter racing horses at fair

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Taylor Earnhardt Putnam settles into the saddle.

In the next 14-16 seconds, she'll race 300 to 500 feet in a cloverleaf pattern.

She and her partner take off.

One right turn, two left turns around three barrels.

"It's all about speed — a lot of speed," Putnam said. "I tell people 'you think NASCAR's hard, you come try to do what I do.' In a car you can blow an engine or a tire. A horse has a mind of its own and can hurt you."

Speed has always been a part of Putnam's life.

The youngest daughter of the late stock car racing legend Dale Earnhardt fell in love with horses when she was 3 years old.

Putnam, 23, now competes on horseback in barrel racing. This week, she's performing at the rodeo at the Cleveland County Fair.

Putnam's husband, Brandon, also participates in rodeos. He'll be roping calves



Submitted photo

Taylor Earnhardt Putnam, daughter of the late NASCAR legend Dale Earnhardt, is barrel racing on horseback at the Cleveland County Fair this week.

this week at the fair.

"The ground is probably going to be pretty slick with the rain and all the puddles," she said. "Me and my horse are going to have to work really, really hard. But we've run in pouring rain before. We've run in solid dirt and in soup, where the horse's belly was dragging

in the mud. We'll be OK."

Hooked on horses

Putnam started trail riding on her family's North Carolina farm when she was a young girl.

"I'd try to get out of everything I could to go ride horses," she said. "Dad got one I could

WANT TO WATCH?

The Cleveland County Fair rodeo returns to the fairgrounds grandstand at 7 p.m. Wednesday.

Meet Taylor Earnhardt Putnam

■ Youngest daughter of the late NASCAR legend and seven-time series champion Dale Earnhardt.

■ She hunts with rifle, shotgun and bow and enjoys photography.

■ In 2002, she earned the title of N.C. National Barrel Horse Association



Putnam

met her husband, Brandon, during a rodeo event. Brandon also competes in rodeo in calf-roping.

■ She competed in 2009 in the Ross Nye Stables equestrian training program in London.

champion, and in 2003 she earned honors as champion of the Southern Rodeo Association.

■ She

ride by myself."

In early 2002, a barrel-racing friend's family encouraged her to give the sport a try.

She did the next day and was hooked.

Putnam said it's important to develop a trusting relationship with a horse to succeed in barrel racing.

"Barrel horses are real

smart," she said. "A lot of people are scared to ride them because they're so high-strung. They are tough to handle."

Channeling dad's determination

Putnam handles a busy schedule of racing — she has four rodeos this weekend and two every weekend the next

several weeks — working on her family's farm and working with the Dale Earnhardt Foundation. Her father founded the organization on the principles of helping education, the environment and children, she said.

She's on the road most of the time, participating in one of those activities.

Putnam said she manages the busy schedule through a principle her famous father taught her: hard work.

"You've got to work hard to keep up what you've got," she said. "I'd watch dad go from loading up bulls to jumping in a tractor to go bush-hogging to jumping in the shop to work on a car. That determination he had with going the fastest, I think that's something that's big with me. I'm out there practicing five days a week and then the rodeos on Friday and Saturday.

"Barrel racing is a different way of going fast and doing something I always loved to do."

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