

Championship Hunt Heats Up

September 24, 2018



It was déjà vu in Virginia as Toyota NASCAR drivers Kyle Busch and Christopher Bell swept both of this year's race weekends at Richmond Raceway. Camry driver Tyler Ankrum clinched the NASCAR K&N Pro Series East (NKNPSE) championship and Logan Seavey extended his USAC points lead. Toyota NHRA drivers are also within striking distance of the championship.

NASCAR

Camry driver Busch came from the rear of the field in Saturday night's Monster Energy NASCAR Cup Series (MENCS) race to lead 92 laps (of 400) en route to victory lane. The win – which was his 50th career (and 46th in a Toyota) – automatically advances him to the Round of 12 set to commence at Dover International Speedway in two weeks.

“Yeah, I'm not going to qualify here anymore,” Busch joked of starting deep in the field for both of this year's Richmond races. “It's a waste of time for us. I don't know why, I just cannot qualify here, but we've got a really good race car when it comes time to have a race and especially the later it gets. This M&M's Toyota Camry was awesome tonight. I can't thank Adam Stevens (crew chief) and all my guys enough. Great job at working on this thing and getting it put back together today and being able to get it ready for tonight to be a great race car.”

Toyota driver Martin Truex Jr. finished third Saturday – his 17th top-10 this season – and also advances to the

next round. Playoff contenders Erik Jones (11th) and Denny Hamlin (16th) earned top-20 finishes at Richmond, but are on the bubble as the series heads to this weekend's cutoff race at Charlotte's new Roval track.

Bell went two for two at Richmond this season, winning Friday night's NASCAR Xfinity Series (NXS) race. He started from the pole position and led 67 laps (of 250) before taking the checkered flag – a victory that propels him to the second playoff round, which begins at Kansas next month.

“I’ll tell you what, that’s pretty cool,” Bell said. “It’s not very often that you get to win with a car that’s not a winning car, so we’ll take it. Just thank you to my pit crew for the awesome pit stops tonight. Jason Ratcliff (crew chief) did a great job making this thing better each and every time we hit pit road. Man, I’m just pumped. To be able to sweep Richmond and to get five wins on top of that just couldn’t be happier.”

Toyota driver Ankrum clinched the NASCAR East championship with a 13th-place finish at New Hampshire Motor Speedway Saturday. The 17-year-old, California-native clinched the championship behind the strength of four victories and 12 top-10 finishes in 13 races so far this season.

NHRA

J.R. Todd extended his consecutive round win streak to 10 before eventually falling to Tim Wilkerson in the semifinals at Gateway Motorsports Park. Todd sits second in the Countdown to the Championship playoffs after two of six races, just 30 points out of the lead.

In Top Fuel, Antron Brown advanced to the second round and remains fifth in the point standings.

USAC

Logan Seavey charged from 13th to third to lead Toyota at the USAC P1 Insurance National Midget series' event at Ohio's Eldora Speedway. Seavey extended his USAC championship lead to 118 points over fellow Toyota driver Brady Bacon with just three races remaining.

What's Next

NASCAR takes on the new road course at Charlotte Motor Speedway where the Monster Energy NASCAR Cup Series championship field will be cut from 16 to 12 on Sunday, September 30 at 2:00 p.m. ET on NBC. NASCAR Xfinity Series also races on the Roval on September 29 at 3:00 p.m. ET on NBCSN.

NASCAR K&N Pro Series West heads to Idaho's Meridian Speedway Saturday, with the race broadcast on October 5 at 1:00 p.m. ET.