

Toyota Title Pursuits Continue in NASCAR, NHRA Postseasons

October 25, 2017



NASCAR

The NASCAR Playoffs continue this weekend at Virginia's Martinsville Speedway with the Monster Energy NASCAR Cup Series and NASCAR Camping World Truck Series set to compete on the paperclip-shaped track that has been fortuitous to Toyota drivers.

Camry drivers have six combined wins at Martinsville, including five triumphs by Virginia-native Denny Hamlin and a victory by Kyle Busch, and both Toyota drivers are still in the title hunt as the postseason Round of 8 is set to begin at the track. Martin Truex Jr. ranks first in the series point standings and leads the Toyota title contenders into the third-and-final, three-race elimination round of the Cup Playoffs.

"We have momentum heading into the next round and have to keep on doing what we've been doing so far in the playoffs," said Truex, who has three wins in the Playoffs. "This is crunch time and you're competing against the best of the best. Everyone has to be at the top of their game."

With his most-recent Playoff win last weekend at Kansas, Truex set a pair of NASCAR records – the most wins in one Cup season on a 1.5-mile track (six) and the most-consecutive wins on 1.5-milers (four). And while

Truex is yet to win on the 0.526-mile Virginia short track, he ranks third in average finish at the facility over the last five races (10.6).

The MENCS competes at Martinsville on Sunday, Oct. 29 at 3:00 p.m. ET with the race broadcast live on NBCSN and SiriusXM Radio (Channel 90).

In the Truck Series, Tundra drivers have amassed 14-total victories at Martinsville, including two by two-time NASCAR Camping World Truck Series (NCWTS) champion Matt Crafton.

The veteran Tundra driver ranks third in the Playoff standings entering Martinsville, where he has two Toyota victories since 2014, as well as eight top-10 finishes in his last 10 appearances at the track.

“I’ve won at two out of the three tracks in this Round,” said Crafton. “I’ve got a couple grandfather clocks from Martinsville, and a couple cowboy hats from Texas. One of the tracks I’d really like to win at, and we’ve had some good runs there, is Phoenix. Quite honestly, I don’t want to wait that long, but I’ve always had that track circled on the schedule. Honestly, the next four race tracks have been so good to us.”

Crafton is joined in the NCWTS’ Round of 8 by Tundra drivers Christopher Bell, who leads the series point standings, and Ben Rhodes, in fifth. In three starts at the track, Bell has two top-five finishes, while Rhodes has won a pole position at the Virginia track and has a best finish of eighth.

The NCWTS Martinsville race is set for 1:00 p.m. ET on Saturday, Oct. 28 and will be televised live on FS1 and broadcast on SiriusXM Radio (Channel 90).

NHRA

As the NHRA Mello Yellow Drag Racing Series postseason approaches season’s end, the series moves to The Strip at Las Vegas Motor Speedway for the NHRA Toyota Nationals from Thursday through Sunday.

The Toyota-entitled event is the penultimate contest of the season and a pair of the manufacturer’s Top Fuel drivers likely need strong finishes to continue their title hunt. Doug Kalitta ranks third in the Countdown to the Championship point standings and Antron Brown is fourth as they come to a facility where both drivers have prior wins, including two title-clinching performances by Brown in 2015 and 2016

“The last two years we’ve been fortunate enough to wrap up the championship there,” said Brown. “This year, we’re going to go in there and just try to give ourselves a better chance to be in the running, so we can go to Pomona (California) and try to win another championship. We usually end up in the Finals or Semi-Finals in this race, but now we need to put the Matco Tools Toyota into the winner’s circle.”

Brown also claimed the Top Fuel win in the spring event at Las Vegas.

In Funny Car competition, Toyota’s J.R. Todd is mathematically still eligible to win the championship and is ranked ninth.

NHRA qualifying airs live on Friday, Oct. 27 at 6:00 p.m. ET on FS1 with additional tape delayed qualifying action on Sunday, Oct. 29 at 3:00 p.m. ET on FS1. Final eliminations will air live on Sunday at 4:00 p.m. ET on FS1.