

# Toyota Drivers Advance in Playoffs, Manufacturer Titles Within Reach Following Phoenix

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AVONDALE, Ariz., Nov. 13, 2017 – Toyota is within reach of two manufacturer titles going into the NASCAR season finale at Homestead-Miami Speedway where four Toyota drivers are set to compete for their respective championships following racing action in Phoenix over the weekend. Toyota NHRA drivers also closed out their season over the weekend at Auto Club Speedway in Pomona, California.

## **NASCAR**

Camry driver Matt Kenseth was victorious in Sunday's Monster Energy NASCAR Cup Series (MENCs) event at Phoenix Raceway in his penultimate race competing in a Camry for Joe Gibbs Racing. Kenseth led the last 10 laps en route to his 39th-career victory and his 15th win behind the wheel of a Camry.

"It's just been quite a journey," Kenseth said, following the victory. "Today was a really special day for me, to know that next week is almost for sure my last week behind the wheel. What a storybook ending — there's no way you could write it any better than this."

Martin Truex Jr. (third) and Erik Jones (fourth) also earned top-five finishes for Toyota Sunday at the one-mile Arizona track.

Following Phoenix, Truex Jr. and Kyle Busch have secured spots in the Championship 4 and will compete for the MENCs driver's championship for Toyota in Sunday's final race in Miami.

Denny Hamlin, who was just one spot shy of the top four drivers in the point standings coming into Sunday's race at Phoenix, led a race-high 193 laps (of 312), however an accident late in the race resulted in a 35th-place finish for Hamlin's No. 11 Camry and he missed the final transfer spot to compete for a title at Homestead.

With Kenseth's win and four total top-10 results at Phoenix, Toyota currently holds a 31-point advantage in the MENCs manufacturer point standings and will look to clinch its second consecutive title at Homestead on Sunday, Nov. 19.

In NASCAR XFINITY Series (NXS) action at Phoenix, Erik Jones (third) and Christopher Bell (fourth) earned top-five results for Toyota. Jones started Saturday's race from the pole position and led 36 laps (of 200) going on to earn his ninth top-five finish in 18 NXS starts this season.

Camry driver Matt Tifft finished in 11th-place and did not advance to the final round to compete for the NXS title this weekend in Miami.

"We had such a strong Playoff run," Tifft said. "We struggled in practice on long runs and our one lap speed was good all weekend, but we never got a hold of it. I thought that last run was a little bit better, and that was the first time all weekend that I thought something was decent. It's too bad. Certainly gave it everything I had and that's all you can do."

Tifft had tallied six straight top-10 finishes coming into Saturday's race at Phoenix.

Tundra drivers Christopher Bell and Matt Crafton both advanced to the Championship 4 following Friday night's NASCAR Camping World Truck Series (NCWTS) race at Phoenix Raceway and are set to compete for the series title this Friday at Homestead.

"It stinks not to win (tonight), but it's awesome to be able to run for a championship and I'm going to go out there and race my heart out," Bell added."

Toyota currently holds a 36-point lead in the Truck Series manufacturer point standings heading into Friday's

season finale and will look to earn its 10th title in 14 seasons competing in the series.

Cody Coughlin was the top-Tundra finisher in Friday's race, tallying a career-best third-place result, while NASCAR K&N Pro Series West champion Todd Gilliland (seventh) and Bell (eighth) also earned top-10 finishes for Toyota.

## **NHRA**

Shawn Langdon advanced to his second Top Fuel final in the last three races before falling to Brittany Force to lead Toyota in the season finale at Auto Club Raceway in Pomona, California.

"I'm disappointed only for the fact that I really wanted that win for these Global Electronic Toyota guys," Langdon said, who will make the transition to Funny Cars next season. "All in all, it's a great way to end the season. We got to the final round. We just didn't have it in the final. We lost to a good car. We lost to the champ."

Langdon used spectacular reaction times on the way to beating Tony Schumacher, Leah Pritchett and teammate Doug Kalitta in the first three rounds with the victories over Schumacher and Kalitta both coming on hole-shots. In the finals, Langdon turned in the top reaction time of the day with an .032 light compared to Force's .065, but the car smoked the tires early to end any hope of winning his final Top Fuel event.

In Funny Car, both Alexis DeJoria and Del Worsham advanced to the second round. It marked DeJoria's final run as she previously announced her retirement at season's end.

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