

Tundra Driver Crafton Is First Back-to-Back Series Champion

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HOMESTEAD, Fla. (Nov. 17, 2014) — Tundra driver Matt Crafton captured the 2014 NASCAR Camping World Truck Series (NCWTS) driver's championship when he finished ninth in Friday evening's season-finale at Homestead-Miami Speedway. Crafton and his ThorSport Racing No. 88 Menards Toyota Tundra captured the title by 21 points over second-place Ryan Blaney — becoming the first driver in Camping World Truck Series history to win back-to-back driver's championships.

En route to this year's title, Crafton won two races — Martinsville (March 30) and Texas (June 6) — and recorded 13 top-five finishes and 17 top-10 results in 22 races. This season, the 38-year-old driver held onto the lead in the series point standings four times for a total of 12 weeks — including since the Chicagoland Speedway race in early September.

In 2013, Crafton earned his inaugural NCWTS driver's title following a season with one race win (Kansas), seven top-five results and 19 top-10 finishes.

“To say I made history is definitely very, very cool, but it's all about the guys at ThorSport Racing that are behind me,” said Crafton, following the race. “Without them, I'm just an average race car driver at best. It's all about the truck that these guys put underneath me each and every week. This Menards Toyota Tundra has been really — it's been unbelievable to drive every week this year.”

Earning his second driver's title enabled Crafton to join Todd Bodine, Ron Hornaday and Jack Sprague as two-time NCWTS champions.

“It's awesome — to say that I've done it back-to-back and no one has done that — it's such a good, good feeling,” added Crafton. “I just remember watching Ron Hornaday race my dad back in the Southwest Tour days. He was an animal then and an unbelievable race car driver. To say I'm in the history books with Ron Hornaday — and all those great race car drivers — it's great being in the NASCAR Camping World Truck Series. I still say it's the best racing in NASCAR.”

This marks the fifth NCWTS driver's championship for Toyota since the manufacturer began competing in the series with the Tundra in 2004. In addition to Crafton's two NCWTS titles (2013 and 2014), Bodine also has a pair of driver's titles (2006 and 2010) and Johnny Benson was the NCWTS champion in 2008.

“It's great to be a part of history as a Tundra driver becomes the first-ever racer in the series to record back-to-back championships,” said Ed Laukes, TMS vice president of marketing, performance and guest experience. “It's a tremendous accomplishment for Matt, team owners Duke and Rhonda Thorson and the entire ThorSport Racing team. This year is what we hoped it would be — a spectacular and record-setting debut for the 2014 Tundra. We're proud of what Matt and all the Tundra teams accomplished in 2014 and we're pleased to call them part of the Toyota family.”

In 2014, Tundra drivers established a series record with 12 consecutive race wins — including the first 10 races this season and the last two events of 2013 (from Phoenix in Nov. 2013 to Eldora in July 2014). Along with the record for consecutive victories, Tundra drivers totaled 18 wins this year — equals the single-season record for wins by one manufacturer in the series. The victories enabled Toyota to secure a seventh NCWTS manufacturer's championship (2006-2010, 2013-2014) in 11 seasons participating in the series (2004-2014).

This year, Tundra drivers held the top spot in the series standings for all but two of 22 races this season. Crafton (12 weeks), Johnny Sauter (six weeks) and Timothy Peters (three weeks) each took a turn holding down the top spot in the championship standings during the 2014 campaign.

In 15 years competing in the NCWTS — all with ThorSport — Crafton has recorded five victories, 76 top-five finishes, 192 top-10 results and seven pole positions. The Tulare, Calif.-native holds the record among active drivers for most consecutive series starts (338), dating back to his first series race in 2000. He also was the 2000 NASCAR Featherlite Southwest Tour Series champion.

Along with Crafton's two wins, Kyle Busch visited victory lane seven times (Daytona, Kansas, Charlotte, Dover, Kentucky, Chicago and Texas). Darrell Wallace Jr. earned four first-place trophies (St. Louis, Eldora, Martinsville and Miami) and his Kyle Busch Motorsports (KBM) teammate Erik Jones earned three wins (Iowa, Las Vegas and Phoenix). Two Tundra drivers — Sauter (Michigan) and Peters (Talladega) — each picked up one victory.

Tundra drivers have earned a total of 130 victories since joining the series in 2004.

The 2015 NCWTS season will begin at Daytona International Speedway, Feb. 20.