



## BRIAN ICKLER: Driver Biography

**Birthdate:** Sept. 17, 1985  
**Birthplace:** San Diego  
**Hometown:** San Diego  
**Residence:** Mooresville, N.C.  
**Marital Status:** Single

He was born and raised in the San Diego area and cut his racing teeth competing in off-road racing machines on desert courses in California, Arizona, Nevada and Mexico before transitioning to stock cars and, ultimately, NASCAR.

No, we're not talking about four-time and reigning NASCAR Sprint Cup Series champion Jimmie Johnson, whose well-chronicled rise to racing stardom began off the pavement in and around his native Southern California. We're talking about up-and-coming NASCAR driver Brian Ickler, a former off-roader from San Diego who is part of the first-year NASCAR Camping World Series Truck Series operation at Kyle Busch Motorsports (KBM) for 2010.

For Ickler, the comparisons to Johnson with regard to his hometown and racing upbringing are a regular occurrence.

"It all has a really nice ring to it," said the 24-year-old who will share the No. 18 Toyota Tundra with Busch over the course of the 25-race Truck Series season for 2010. "I can only hope to have just a fraction of the racing success Jimmie's had before it's all said and done and I could call it a successful career."

The next major step in his racing future, as has been the case in recent years, is with the help of Busch, who has essentially taken Ickler under his wing and, in 2010, has Ickler in the driver's seat of his very own racetruck on weekends the NASCAR Sprint Cup and Nationwide Series schedules don't allow Busch to drive it himself.

Last season, Busch introduced his protégé to the Billy Ballew Motorsports team for whom he won 16 Truck Series races in 62 starts running a limited schedule from 2005 through 2009. Ickler drove 11 races between Busch's regular No. 51 Toyota Tundra the No. 15 for the Ballew team in 2009 and made the most of his opportunity, earning the pole position en route to a third-place finish at Michigan International Speedway in Brooklyn and adding another top-five result in his very first outing at Kansas Speedway in Kansas City.

Busch also opened the door for Ickler's opportunity to drive Nationwide Series events at Iowa Speedway in Newton and Memphis (Tenn.) Motorsports Park in the No. 32 Braun Racing Toyota in 2009.

"Kyle pretty much had something to do with every big opportunity I've had since I moved from California to North Carolina in 2007," Ickler said. "He lets me drive his Late Models on a regular basis. He got me the ride at Braun. And last year, I got to be his teammate at Billy Ballew Motorsports. It's really unbelievable, all he's done for me."

The relationship with Busch actually came about as a result of Ickler's friendship with KBM Late Model driver Alex Haase, against whom Ickler competed in the NASCAR Camping World West Series in 2007. Haase, a longtime friend of Busch's from Las Vegas, moved to North Carolina to drive for KBM's Late Model team about the same time Ickler loaded up the family trailer and settled in the same area in hopes of launching his own stock car team.

"It was a big step, especially moving away from my family. That was probably the biggest thing," Ickler said. "My dad and I loaded up a goose-neck trailer on the dually and we drove non-stop to North Carolina and pretty much just brought tools – brought all the tools I had. The race shop behind my parents' house that I grew up racing out of, he pretty much let me have it to take. We started building a team from there. We built a couple (NASCAR Camping World) East (Series) cars and started off slowly, then we acquired more cars and eventually some ARCA (RE/MAX Series) cars. With Kyle's help, obviously, and the help of some other people, we've been able to jump in the Truck Series and the Nationwide deal."

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Driving his own Ickler Motorsports equipment, Ickler turned heads in the East Series in 2008 by winning three times, earning two pole positions in track-record time, and bringing home a top-10 finish in the season-ending points. He returned for a limited East Series run in 2009, winning once in three outings and finishing second to Busch at Iowa. Ickler also took his team to the ARCA RE/MAX Series for a limited time in 2009, where he scored four top-five finishes in six races and put his car on the pole at Kentucky Speedway in Sparta and Chicagoland Speedway in Joliet.

“Brian has done a great job in what he’s been able to do,” Busch said. “He’s worked with some great people over the time he raced in the West Series and in the East Series. He kind of came from the same background as Jimmie Johnson with the off-road stuff. He had a family-owned business, which kind of got him started, and he’s been doing a lot with a little. The thing that makes Brian good is he’s fast and he’s smooth and he knows what he likes in a racecar. Sometimes, he’s a little more meticulous and picky than I am, so when I send my Late Model somewhere to test, I send him along because I can’t go all the time. He’s more picky than I am and he’ll make sure that the thing comes back and it’s pretty right. That’s just what makes a guy good, when he can communicate and tell the crew chief or tell everyone what it’s doing and have some input, as well.

“It’s a really good relationship that Brian and I have. Every time he’s out on the racetrack, he’s done a good job. He’s kept his equipment in one piece and he’s been fast everywhere he’s been. I picked him to be my guy for the Truck Series when I couldn’t run races last year. We’re the same size and we fit in the same belts. I might like mine a little tighter than he does, but we’re still able to use all the same equipment, so it makes things a lot easier. He’s a good kid and I really like working with him. We’re about the same age, so it’s fun to have a relationship off the track, as well as on.”

With age, driving style, physical size and even team ownership in common with Busch, Ickler couldn’t feel more at home in his latest career venture with KBM for 2010. He hopes, of course, to learn a thing or two from Busch when it comes to taking his driving to the next level. And even though he calls his own team “nothing compared to what Kyle has taken on,” Ickler also hopes to learn a thing or two from Busch about running a team of NASCAR proportions.

“I’m all eyes and ears, as always,” said Ickler, who was the 2003 Southern California Off-Road Enthusiasts (SCORE) Rookie of the Year after winning five of six events, including the prestigious Baja 1000. “Kyle really helped me get to where I am, and he can really help me get to where I want to go. When I started my own team, he even told me which races and series are better for me and my future. He told me to jumping to ARCA, where they run a different tire, is get out on the bigger racetracks. He even actually spotted for me in the ARCA race last summer at Michigan, which was interesting. I’m kind of the guy who will run 250 laps and take whatever position I can get at the time and keep the fenders on it. Kyle is more of the ‘put it on kill, four-wide first corner, wide-open on the outside’ kind of guy. It was fun. I’ve never laughed so hard on the radio or had so much fun.

“If that was any indication of what we have in store for 2010, I can’t wait to see how it turns out.”

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