



18



STEVE ADDINGTON: Crew Chief Biography

Birthdate: July 4, 1964
Birthplace: Spartanburg, S.C.
Hometown: Spartanburg, S.C.
Residence: Huntersville, N.C.
Marital Status: Single
Children: Cole, Ashlyn

If a director were looking to cast a crew chief for a movie about NASCAR, Steve Addington would be the right fit for the role.

Addington, crew chief of Kyle Busch and the No. 18 M&M's/Interstate Batteries Toyota Camry for Joe Gibbs Racing (JGR) in the NASCAR Sprint Cup Series, stands at 6-feet, 4-inches with a 205-pound frame. That, coupled with his laid-back attitude and his low-key demeanor makes him someone who fits the crew chief role perfectly.

It's appropriate then that Addington is one of the best and most respected crew chiefs in the Sprint Cup garage, seeing as how he already has the look.

Busch and Addington are coming off a phenomenal year in 2008 which saw the No. 18 car return to victory lane for the first time since 2003 and also produce a series-high eight victories. Perhaps more impressive was that the duo won at nearly all types of tracks – superspeedways: Talladega (Ala.) Superspeedway on April 27 and Daytona (Fla.) International Speedway on July 5; road courses: Infineon Raceway in Sonoma Calif., on June 22 and Watkins Glen (N.Y.) International on Aug. 10; and intermediates: Atlanta Motor Speedway on March 9, Darlington (S.C.) Raceway on May 10, Dover (Del.) International Speedway on June 1 and Chicagoland Speedway in Joliet, Ill., on July 12.

So how did Addington get from his hometown of Spartanburg, S.C., to the top form of motorsports in the United States? Like most in the Sprint Cup garage, he started early.

“When I was a kid, I went to a lot of dirt track races,” Addington said. “It’s just a deal where I stayed involved. When I was 14 my mom remarried and we moved to Batesville, Ark., because my stepfather went to work for Mark Martin.”

Despite his step-father working for a then up-and-coming Martin, Addington wasn't totally hooked on racing just yet.

“Looking back, I really wish I would've paid more attention and been more involved,” Addington said. “I was still busy running around and playing football and doing other stuff.”

Soon though, he stopped playing football, and after a brief two-year stop in Beaumont, Texas, where he graduated from Central High School, Addington moved back to Spartanburg.

“I started out helping friends in dirt cars before Jason Keller hired me to work full-time for his team,” Addington said. “It just kind of progressed from there.”

It began a long association with the Keller family that lasted through much of the 1990s. From 1989 through 1996, Addington and Keller worked together at Keller's own KEL Racing, starting first in dirt cars before moving to the NASCAR Nationwide Series in 1991.

“Jason and I were at the same age and we kind of went through everything together,” Addington said. “We took our lumps and bumps together. The one thing I took from that experience working with him and his family on their team was what I learned from Jason's dad, Joe. He taught me how to treat people and that you treat people the way you want to be treated. It opened my eyes to stuff like that and I've tried to carry that into the way I lead our race team. I try to be fair and let people explain themselves.”

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At KEL Racing, Addington helped Keller to a fourth-place finish in the Nationwide Series point standings in 1995, followed by a sixth-place finish in 1996.

After leaving KEL Racing following the 1996 season, Addington worked in several forms of motorsports before returning to the Nationwide Series with Keller in 1999.

“Jason’s dad sold the team to Greg Pollex,” Addington said. “It was PPC Racing and they were a two-car team with Jason as one of the drivers. Greg asked Jason who he wanted as his crew chief and he said he’d like to have me. So we started working together again.”

While working with Keller at PPC Racing, Addington helped his fellow South Carolinian to runner-up finishes in the Nationwide Series championship in 2000 and 2002, as well as a third-place finish in 2001 and a fifth-place finish in 2003.

“We had some pretty good years there at PPC Racing,” Addington said. “Our cars finished 1-2 in the points, we won some races and we sat on some poles. We were constantly in the top-three or four in the points every year.”

All told in 11 years with Keller, Addington won 10 races, 11 poles and scored 69 top-five finishes and 122 top-10 finishes.

It was at the end of the 2003 season that Addington got an offer from JGR to serve as crew chief for the team’s No. 20 Nationwide Series effort in 2004. With driver Mike Bliss, Addington oversaw a fifth-place finish in the championship point standings and 14 top-10 finishes, which included Bliss’ first career Nationwide Series win in October at Lowe’s Motor Speedway near Charlotte, N.C.

In December 2004, Addington was named crew chief for JGR’s No. 18 Sprint Cup team and spent the 2005 season with veteran JGR driver Bobby Labonte, who left amicably from JGR following that season. During their one year together, Addington and Labonte scored seven top-10 finishes, including a runner-up effort in the prestigious Coca-Cola 600 in May 2005 at Lowe’s Motor Speedway.

Addington stayed with the No. 18 team, and when J.J. Yeley was named as the driver, Addington took on the role of mentor, for unlike Labonte with his 13 years of Sprint Cup experience, Yeley was in his first full season of Sprint Cup racing in 2006.

With Yeley, Addington helped the young driver score 19 top-15 and five top-10 finishes during the 2006-2007 seasons. Together, they earned a best finish of second in the 2007 Coca-Cola 600 at Charlotte.

When it was announced in August 2007, that Busch had signed with JGR, Addington was asked to stay on to serve as crew chief with goal No. 1 being to get the No. 18 car back into victory lane.

“We went down to Atlanta for the test in the fall of 2007 while Kyle was still driving for Hendrick,” Addington said. “It was a CoT (Car of Tomorrow) test where everyone swapped rides and tested the car they’d be driving in 2008. We unloaded down there and it just all fell into place.”

Ironically, it was at Atlanta Motor Speedway in March 2008 when Busch led 173 laps en route his first victory for JGR, which was also Addington’s first Sprint Cup victory and the first win for the No. 18 car since Labonte won in November 2003 at Homestead-Miami Speedway.

The duo added seven more victories throughout the year and served notice that they would be a force to be reckoned with for years to come.

“Kyle and I have an understanding with each other that we both want to win races and we’ll both do whatever it takes to win races,” Addington said. “We’ll push each other, and I think that’s what we were both looking for. Everyone on this race team has stepped up to the plate.”

Addington resides in Huntersville, N.C., and has two children, Cole and Ashlyn.