



CLINT BOWYER: Driver, No. 14 Ford Mustang

Birthdate: May 30, 1979
Birthplace: Emporia, Kansas
Hometown: Emporia, Kansas
Residence: Mocksville, North Carolina
Spouse: Lorra
Children: Cash, Presley Elizabeth
Social Media: Facebook (@ClintBowyer), Twitter (@ClintBowyer) and Instagram (@ClintBowyer)

Clint Bowyer came to Stewart-Haas Racing (SHR) in 2017 and took over one of the most coveted rides in the Monster Energy NASCAR Cup Series – the No. 14 Ford. Bowyer replaced three-time NASCAR Cup Series champion Tony Stewart, who retired as a NASCAR driver at the end of 2016 to focus on his role as co-owner of SHR with industrialist Gene Haas.

Bowyer took advantage of his new opportunity, running up front to score three second-place finishes on his way to a year-end tally of six top-fives and 13 top-10s. His average finish of 15.5 was 11th-best among full-time drivers competing in 2017, and it left him just shy of a spot in the NASCAR Playoffs.

Bowyer was determined to better those numbers in 2018, and the native of Emporia, Kansas, did just that. A breakthrough win March 26 at Martinsville (Va.) Speedway led to a second victory June 10 at Michigan International Speedway in Brooklyn. They were a part of nine top-fives and 16 top-10s – numbers that carried Bowyer into the penultimate round of the NASCAR Playoffs.

Bowyer was back, in terms of performance and notoriety. Emphatic proof came at Martinsville where Bowyer led twice for a race-high 215 laps en route to his first win in 190 races. The pictures and video of Bowyer's young family running down the frontstretch to join him in victory lane, as well as the raucous celebration when they got there – one that carried over to the media center before turning into beer toasts with fans in the stands – were some of the sport's social media highlights of the season.

Michigan marked Bowyer's 10th career NASCAR Cup Series victory, and it came in a wheel-to-wheel duel with SHR teammate Kevin Harvick. Bowyer edged Harvick by a few feet before rain ended the race 67 laps short of its scheduled 200-lap distance. Rain-soaked crew members and a makeshift victory lane couldn't dampen the enthusiasm of another Bowyer win.

It was a remarkable season for Bowyer, but also the entire SHR organization. The four-car team amassed a series-best 12 wins, 42 top-fives and 84 top-10s. Bowyer and his teammates – Harvick, Aric Almirola and Kurt Busch – all contributed to the win total and, as result, qualified for the playoffs. SHR was the only team to place all four of its drivers in the playoffs. Then, even more impressively, sent all four drivers to compete in the Round of 8.

A return to championship contention was the reason why Bowyer came to SHR.

Bowyer finished second in the 2012 NASCAR Cup Series standings and third in the 2007 title chase. He won the 2008 NASCAR Xfinity Series championship after leaving Kansas in 2004 for racing glory. He's NASCAR's everyman, with a collar as blue as his Kansas City Royals hat while wearing a smile as wide as a wheat field.

Rejoining Bowyer is fourth-year crew chief Mike "Buga" Bugarewicz, who as a rookie crew chief in 2016 engineered a victory for Stewart at Sonoma (Calif.) Raceway that put him into the NASCAR Playoffs one final time. Bugarewicz leads a veteran group building and working on Bowyer's Ford Mustangs every weekend.

Bowyer's return to prominence has been a boon to NASCAR. The former dirt racer boasts success on every type of track the series visits. Five of his 10 career NASCAR Cup Series victories have come on short tracks, with a pair of wins on restrictor-plate tracks, a win on an ultra-fast 2-mile track, another on a 1.5-mile track, and a road-course victory. He's won everywhere and he's won in everything. He's twice finished in the top-five in the standings and earned eight victories in the Xfinity Series and three in the NASCAR Truck Series.

There's more to Bowyer than his skills behind the wheel of a racecar. Family, roots and racing are at the heart of all his endeavors. When Bowyer left behind the dirt tracks of the Midwest, he brought the family to his new NASCAR world. His parents Chris "Pops" and Jana Bowyer still live in Kansas, with "Pops" operating the family towing business, yet they are mainstays at the track. "Pops" is often seen on the spotter stand working with his son and other drivers while Jana maintains a presence in the garage shepherding friends and younger family around the racetrack.

Growing up, their three Bowyer boys were never far apart. Andy, 41, Clint, 39 and Casey, 38, were racing dirt bikes in Emporia dreaming of motocross careers. As they grew older, Andy went to California and enjoyed a successful motorcycle racing career before injury sent him to the much safer work of race promoter. Clint moved to NASCAR and Casey started a family in Kansas after running a car dealership at age 20. As Clint's NASCAR success grew, he knew he needed help from people he could trust, so Andy and Casey moved to North Carolina to help their brother's growing career. Casey is president of Clint Bowyer Racing while Andy now works for Feld Entertainment as a digital marketing specialist and host of Supercross Race Day Live.

There's a new generation of post-Kansas Bowyers, as well. Clint and wife Lorra welcomed Cash Aaron Bowyer to the world in October 2014, and joining Cash was little sister Presley Elizabeth in December 2016. A weekend doesn't go by inside the driver motorhome lot at racetracks when Clint or Lorra aren't supervising Cash's laps around the makeshift neighborhood in his battery-powered Ford Mustang.

Bowyer's current home is in North Carolina but he hasn't turned his back on Kansas, especially the 25,000 residents of Emporia. He returns often to deer hunt, visit friends and just be part of the community. In March 2013, he bought the Clint Bowyer Autoplex on U.S. Highway 50, where he once worked as a lot attendant, dent specialist and detailer.

Across the street sits the Clint Bowyer Community Building, constructed in 2012 thanks to a \$1.5 million donation from his foundation. Inside are 25 new computers at the public library, a scoreboard at the aquatic center, a video camera at the auditorium, shoes for the Big Brothers-Big Sisters program, backpacks for kids, Christmas trees for needy families, and in nearby towns, playground equipment and the reconstruction of a tornado-ravaged community center – all of it and more paid for by Bowyer's foundation or out of the driver's own pocket.

Bowyer even brought country music star Blake Shelton to Emporia for a concert. Emporia appreciates its native son, having renamed the street on which the family tow business resides as "Hon. Clint Bowyer Boulevard." He's even recreated a little bit of Kansas at his 650-acre farm near Mocksville, North Carolina. It's everything you would expect at a Bowyer farm: vintage cars, trucks, racecars, cows, eagles, donkeys and goats.

"In Kansas, you might have two trees and the rest pastures but, in North Carolina, everything is woods, so you can't see anything," Bowyer said. "When I drove down the long driveway for the first time, you could see everything – the pasture, the lakes. This was the promised land for me. There's literally something to do from sunup to sundown."

Bowyer's loyal to the short-track, grassroots racing that is prevalent across the country. It gave him his start and he paid it forward by starting Bowyer Dirt Motorsports (BDM) in 2008 after he built cars fielded in Tony Stewart's Prelude to the Dream charity dirt Late Model race at Eldora Speedway in Rossburg, Ohio. Bowyer finished second and Jimmie Johnson 10th in that 2008 edition of the Prelude in Bowyer-built cars. In 2010, Johnson won the Prelude and Bowyer finished second in BDM cars. Since its inception, the two-car BDM team has won scores of dirt races and captured the 2014 championship in the Late Model dirt series with driver Don O'Neal.

Dirt is where Bowyer came from. He began racing motocross in 1985, collecting more than 200 wins and several championships. After moving from motorcycles to cars with success, Bowyer was gaining a reputation with success at Lakeside and I-70 Speedways in Kansas City. Scott Traylor and some local Kansas City businessmen built an ARCA car for Bowyer to run at Nashville (Tenn.) Super Speedway in August 2003, whereupon Bowyer led 47 laps before finishing second.

Watching on television that night was Richard Childress, who liked what he saw and later called Bowyer, offering him a chance in NASCAR with his Richard Childress Racing (RCR) team. Childress' call to Bowyer, who was working in the body shop at the car dealership in Emporia, is now legendary. A woman with a Southern accent asked if he would take a call from Richard Childress.

"I thought it was a prank call," Bowyer said. "I'm like, 'Yeah, right, who the hell is this.' Ya know? I all but hung up."

The woman, who turned out to be Childress' secretary, said, "No, no, no. I'm serious." The next voice on the phone was Childress, who laughingly asked Bowyer if he really was about to hang up.

"No, sir, no, sir," Bowyer replied on the other end of the line.

Bowyer ended up competing in 17 Xfinity Series races for RCR in 2004, then full-time in 2005 and 2006. He won three times, finishing second and third in the standings those years. RCR realized Bowyer's talent and added full-time NASCAR Cup Series racing in 2006. The following season, Bowyer earned his first career victory on Sept. 16, 2007 at New Hampshire Motor Speedway in Loudon on his way to a third-place finish in the championship standings.

After reducing Bowyer's Xfinity Series schedule so he could concentrate on the NASCAR Cup Series in 2007, RCR returned him to full-time work in both series in 2008 with even better-than-expected results. Bowyer won the Xfinity Series title in 2008, plus the NASCAR Cup Series race at Richmond (Va.) Raceway in May. In his time with RCR from 2004 to 2011, Bowyer won eight Xfinity Series and five NASCAR Cup Series races.

In 2011, Bowyer was in demand and moved to Michael Waltrip Racing (MWR), where he rewrote the performance expectations for first-year drivers and their teams. Bowyer won the road-course race at Sonoma in June and then won at Richmond and Charlotte (N.C.) Motor Speedway in the fall. Bowyer finished second in points that season. In 2013 at MWR, he posted 10 top-five results on his way to a seventh-place finish in the standings. The 2014 season saw the team and organization struggle, but Bowyer put up five top-fives and 15-top-10s.

Bowyer's 2015 season began with promise, but MWR co-owner Rob Kauffman announced in August he was closing the team at the end of the season. That left Bowyer looking for a place to race in 2016, ending up at HScott Racing for an interim season before coming to SHR.

"It was like one door was closing and, as you were getting over the shock, another opened to probably the best opportunity of my life," Bowyer said.