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Smithfield



ARIC ALMIROLA

New Year, New Team Heading to Daytona

KANNAPOLIS, North Carolina (Feb. 4, 2020) – Aric Almirola, driver of the No. 10 Smithfield Ford Mustang, is more motivated than ever to kick off a new NASCAR Cup series season at Daytona (Fla.) International Speedway and he begins his 2020 campaign with a new crew chief and a new team.

Last Dec. 4, SHR announced the crew chief of the No. 10 team Johnny Klausmeier and crew chief of the No. 14 team Mike Bugarewicz would swap car numbers and their corresponding drivers.

Bugarewicz has led the No. 14 team since 2016, when he was Tony Stewart’s crew chief for his last NASCAR season before Clint Bowyer took over the driving duties in 2017. Bugarewicz helped Stewart secure his 49th and final NASCAR Cup Series victory at Sonoma (Calif.) Raceway and continued winning with Bowyer, who scored 2018 victories at Martinsville (Va.) Speedway and Michigan International Speedway in Brooklyn. Bugarewicz and Bowyer garnered 47 top-10s and two appearances in the NASCAR playoffs during their three-year run together.

“I think it goes back to trying to make the whole organization better,” Almirola said. “Everyone at SHR is trying to make everyone better. I’m really fired up about Mike Bugarewicz and that whole team and getting a chance to work with those guys. I’ve had the chance to work side-by-side with those guys for years now and I’ve seen how methodical and how good ‘Buga’ is. I’ve seen their team and I’ve worked next to them in the garage and the shop. I’m familiar with their team and their work ethic. They are a very talented group of guys and I’m very excited to get to work with them.”

Almirola and the fresh No. 10 team will get to showcase their talents beginning Sunday, when they hit the track for the usually action-packed Busch Clash at Daytona. This will be Almirola’s fifth running of the 75-lap exhibition race, in which he’s scored two top-10s and a best finish of sixth. The field is limited to 2019 Busch Pole Award winners, past Busch Clash winners who competed full-time in 2019, former Daytona 500 champions who competed full-time in 2019, former Daytona 500 pole winners who competed full-time in 2019, and 2019 NASCAR Cup Series playoff drivers.

For the first-time ever, Almirola will be sporting the colors of the newest plant-based protein brand, Pure Farmland, on his No. 10 Ford Mustang for the Clash. The Almirola family expanded their options with a twist on “Taco Tuesday” using the plant-based product, and team co-owner and NASCAR Hall of Fame inductee Tony Stewart had fun with the new meatless option on Stewart-Haas Racing’s social media channels. For more information on Pure Farmland Plant-Based Protein, visit pure-farmland.com.



On Feb. 16, Almirola and his new team will compete in their first Daytona 500 together in hopes of replicating the success the No. 10 Smithfield Ford team has found in the past by visiting victory lane.

In the 2018 Daytona 500, Almirola was a half lap away from becoming a Daytona 500 champion. As he came to the checkered flag, he made an aggressive block on the No. 3 car of Austin Dillon before he was turned into the outside wall, ultimately ending his day. In last year’s Daytona 500, Almirola showed strength by running at the front of the field on occasion, but his day ended when he was caught in a multicar accident on lap 190 – the inevitable “big one.” Almirola gave the field a run for its money in last year’s July race at Daytona while finishing seventh after rain shortened the event on lap 127 of a scheduled 160.

“Racing there is exciting,” he said. “It’s very fast. We do a lot of drafting. We run in these huge, tight packs. You have 40 racecars all going 200 mph and we’re all an inch apart. Front to rear and on each side – its nerve racking for the driver and the fans. They’re cheering for their guy and the unexpected is always evident there. One little bobble or mistake is a 20-car pileup. While this is exciting for the fans with that uncertainty, it stresses the drivers out. Daytona and Talladega are the most stressful tracks we go because the stakes are so high, but that’s what make a victory there so sweet.”

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The Tampa, Florida native has found his way to victory lane at Daytona before, scoring his first career Cup Series win in the rain-shortened July 2014 race, when he led 14 laps. He tasted restrictor-plate-racing success again four years later during his first season with SHR, when he was victorious at Talladega (Ala.) Superspeedway. It put him in the 2018 Cup Series playoffs, where he advanced to the semifinal round, and proved the No. 10 driver has potential to bring home another superspeedway win any time he races on one.

This year's Daytona 500 marks Almirola's 17th points-paying Cup Series start at the 2.5-mile superspeedway. He also has 10 starts in the Xfinity Series at the track located along Florida's Central Coast. In fact, Almirola started on the pole in his first Xfinity Series outing in July 2007, and he captured an Xfinity Series win there while piloting the No. 98 Biagi-Den Beste Ford Mustang in July 2016. Almirola has three Daytona starts in the NASCAR Gander RV & Outdoors Truck Series with a best finish of 12th.

To support Almirola and the No. 10 team's 2020 season and, for the ninth consecutive year, Smithfield Foods will sponsor the majority of its races this season. Headquartered since 1936 in Smithfield, Virginia, Smithfield Foods, Inc. is an American food company with agricultural roots and a global reach. Its 40,000 U.S. employees are dedicated to producing "Good food. Responsibly®" and have made it one of the world's leading vertically integrated protein companies. It has pioneered sustainability standards for more than two decades, including many industry firsts, such as an ambitious commitment to cut carbon impact by 25 percent by 2025. The company believes in the power of protein to end food insecurity has donated hundreds of millions of food servings to neighbors in need. For more information, visit www.smithfieldfoods.com, and connect on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), [LinkedIn](#), and [Instagram](#).



Ford Performance has won nine Busch Clash races and owns 37 overall wins at Daytona – five of those over the last 11 races. SHR won the 2017 Daytona 500 with Kurt Busch behind the wheel of a Ford machine.

Between Almirola's new team, his July 2014 win at Daytona, his near-Daytona 500 win in 2018, and his confidence after two overall wins at superspeedway's, the 35-year-old heads to Daytona with one goal in mind – hoisting the Harley J. Earl trophy above his head with a Daytona 500 title to kick off a promising year.

ARIC ALMIROLA, Driver of the No. 10 Smithfield Ford Mustang for Stewart-Haas Racing:

Why is the Daytona 500 such an iconic and much anticipated race for you?

"First off, Daytona is always exciting for me. It's my home racetrack growing up just two hours away in Tampa. I have a lot of childhood memories from going there with my family. To top it off, I've won there both in Xfinity and Cup cars. I just have a tremendous amount of fond memories spectating at Daytona, even all the way back to my beginning days. I would go back and go-kart in Daytona. It's always exciting because it brings back all those great memories. Not to mention, it's the world center of racing. It's the greatest place on earth to go race at. It's the biggest race of the year, the one everyone wants to win. Your name is forever etched in history. There's just no other race like it."

Talk about your 2019 season.

"Last year, we had our fair share of cars that were capable of finishing top-10 and top-five. I could have done a better job with finishing where the car was capable of finishing. Sometimes we had a 10th-place car and we finished 10th and sometimes we had a 10th place car and I finished 15th because I pushed it too hard. While switching teams can be beneficial for our organization, it's up to me to grow, do my homework, and step up to do a better job myself. It was obviously disappointing to not make it to victory lane last year. As humans, we all strive for greatness and winning. As racecar drivers, we're all extremely competitive and we want to win every race. It's nothing to hang our heads on, though. We grew as a team and organization and went through adversity together. Sometimes that builds a lot of character, and I had my fair share of character building last year."

Walk us through the final lap of the 2018 Daytona 500 when you were a half lap away from being crowned a Daytona 500 champion.

“I felt so confident. I knew that if I hit all of my gears perfectly, I would have a shot at it and I did. I looked in my mirror and saw everyone racing side by side and figured that I was in control of the race and, if I made the right move, I was going to be the winner of the Daytona 500. About halfway down the back straightaway, they were coming with a run and I pulled over to block it. In your head, you know it’s the Daytona 500 and you’re a mile and a half away from winning, so you’re going to do everything you know to try and win that race. I pulled over to block and put a pretty aggressive block on the No. 3. I knew that if I blocked high, he was going to go low. As soon as I blocked high, I knew I was going to have to immediately block low. When I blocked low, he turned against my back bumper and (I went) into the outside wall. I wrecked a mile away from winning the Daytona 500. I don’t necessarily fault him for what he did but, given the same opportunity this year, you can bet your bottom dollar I would return the favor. You’re going to do whatever it takes.”

How was your offseason?

“We had a great holiday season. I honestly checked out for most of it and tried to relax as much as possible. We took the family to Park City, Utah to do some skiing in January. The rest is nice, but right about now is when the angst to get back in the racecar kicks in.”

How was it to win the July 201 race at Daytona?

“The end goal is not just to make it to the top and be there. The end goal is to be successful at the highest level. To win at Daytona stamped a little bit of validation on the fact that I made it to the top and I won at the highest level of stock car racing in the United States. That win was a career highlight and I hope to add another win.”

ARIC ALMIROLA’S DAYTONA PERFORMANCE PROFILE

Year	Date	Event	Start	Finish	Status/Laps	Laps Led	Earnings
2019	2/17	Daytona 500	8	32	Accident, 190/207	0	N/A
	7/7	*Coke Zero Sugar 400	11	7	Running, 127/127	0	N/A
2018	7/7	Coke Zero Sugar 400	26	27	Accident, 155/168	0	N/A
	2/17	Daytona 500	37	11	Accident, 206/207	1	N/A
2017	2/26	Daytona 500	13	4	Running, 200/200	2	N/A
2016	2/21	Daytona 500	34	12	Running, 200/200	0	N/A
	7/2	◇Coke Zero 400	14	15	Running, 161/161	0	N/A
2015	2/22	Daytona 500	33	15	Running, 203/203	0	\$363,106
	7/5	×Coke Zero 400	36	34	Running, 137/161	0	\$132,146
2014	2/23	Daytona 500	13	39	Accident, 146/200	5	\$317,939
	7/6	*Coke Zero 400	15	1	Running, 112/112	14	\$377,176
2013	2/24	Daytona 500	26	13	Running, 200/200	0	\$356,449
	7/6	×Coke Zero 400	30	38	Accident, 127/161	0	\$124,571
2012	2/27	×Daytona 500	27	33	Accident, 187/202	0	\$320,986
	7/7	Coke Zero 400	17	19	Running, 160/160	0	\$135,966
2009	2/15	*Daytona 500	11	30	Running, 152/152	0	\$286,288

* Race cut short due to weather.

× Race length extended due to green-white-checked finish.

= Qualifying canceled due to weather, starting position set via practice speed

◇ Race length was extended due to overtime finish

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