



CLINT BOWYER

This Phoenix Race Will Preview November Race

KANNAPOLIS, North Carolina (March 2, 2020) – The NASCAR Cup Series holds its fourth race of the 2020 season Sunday at Phoenix Raceway and, while this race is important, much of the weekend conversation is likely to center around the series' return in November, when it will serve as the championship race.

No. 14 Mobil 1/Haas Automation Ford Mustang driver Clint Bowyer said he loved that Homestead-Miami Speedway hosted the championship race on its 1.5-mile oval since the 2004 inception of the NASCAR playoffs, but moving the title race to a short track in a fast-growing market like Phoenix is a good move for the sport.

"If there ever was a track that we needed to move our championship to it's got to be Phoenix," Bowyer said. "Look at the fan base. It's grown since I've been in the sport. Phoenix is a great opportunity to hold a championship race and I'm looking forward to going to it."

While the Cup Series teams are focused on winning at Phoenix this weekend, lessons learned in March could lead to a championship in November. NASCAR will also use this weekend to make sure its rules package is conducive to putting on a good show for the fans in November.

In January, NASCAR announced a reduced-downforce package designed to enhance competition on road courses and the circuit's shorter oval tracks. The changes include significantly smaller spoilers, splitters and other aerodynamic devices in an effort to place a greater emphasis on handling and driver input with less stabilizing downforce on those tracks. The package draws inspiration from similar rules used in the 2017 and 2018 seasons.

"I believe in the short-track product, but we've got our work to do," Bowyer said. "I think the downforce rule that we've gone back to is definitely going to help put on a better show for the fans. We've got the ability to go there and put on this show in the spring and, if we don't like it, maybe make some adjustments for the championship."

This weekend's race marks the third and final leg of a West Coast swing that followed the rain-delayed, season-opening Daytona 500, then trips the last two weekends to Las Vegas Motor Speedway, and Auto Club Speedway in Fontana, California. Bowyer won his fourth career pole but finished 23rd in Fontana after handling issues and a flat tire plagued his race. He arrives in Arizona 16th in points.

Bowyer knows the mile oval at Phoenix can be as challenging as any track on the circuit.

"There are a couple of tough things about Phoenix," he said. "Finding your stall on pit road is tricky, especially if you are pitted down around the corner. Second is figuring out the restarts now that we start in the dogleg. You have to figure out how to give room to the guy in front of you so you don't get on the brakes and get hit from behind or screw up and let that guy make it three-wide and you lose a lot of spots. Finally, that sun is tough in Phoenix. You can miss the bottom (groove) the first lap or two because of the sun."

Phoenix occupies a special place in Bowyer's heart and history.

The 40-year-old Emporia, Kansas native made his Cup Series debut on the mile oval in the Arizona desert on April 23, 2005, driving for Bill McAnally and Richard Childress. He started 25th and finished 22nd, one lap behind race-winner Kurt Busch.

Busch, Kyle Busch, Ryan Newman, Jimmie Johnson, and Kevin Harvick are the only current drivers who were in the field for Bowyer's debut in 2005.

"There aren't many guys left who were there when I started," said Bowyer, who has gone on to post 10 victories in 508 Cup Series starts. "That's a big turnover. Obviously, our sport has undergone a lot of change over the last 15 or so years."

Bowyer won the NASCAR Xfinity Series race at Phoenix on April 20, 2007, when he took the checkered flag under caution just ahead of Matt Kenseth. He also won the NASCAR Gander RV & Outdoors Truck Series race on Nov. 12, 2010, beating Kyle Busch by 1.038 seconds.

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Bowyer's No. 14 will carry Mobil 1 and Haas Automation decals this weekend in Phoenix. Mobil 1 isn't just the world's leading synthetic motor oil brand, it also provides the entire SHR team with leading lubricant technology, ensuring that all SHR Mustangs have a competitive edge over the competition on the track. In its 17th consecutive season as the "Official Motor Oil of NASCAR," Mobil 1 is used by more than 50 percent of teams throughout NASCAR's top three series.

Haas Automation, owned by SHR co-owner and California native Gene Haas, is America's leading builder of CNC machine tools. Founded by Haas in 1983, Haas Automation manufactures a complete line of vertical and horizontal machining centers, turning centers and rotary tables and indexers. All Haas products are built in the company's 1.1-million-square-foot manufacturing facility in Oxnard, California, and distributed through a worldwide network of Haas Factory Outlets

CLINT BOWYER, Driver of the No. 14 Mobil 1/Haas Automation Ford Mustang for Stewart-Haas Racing:

What do you think of Phoenix?

"I like going to Phoenix. It's a great city and the racetrack there produces some of the best races we've seen the last couple of years. Phoenix has always been kind of unique to itself. I think it always will be. Short-track racing is always a lot of fun. I wish we had five more tracks just like Phoenix. You look out over that desert and there are more campers every single time we go back. They deserve an opportunity to watch a championship go down. Then you start looking about the time of year, the weather, everything else. You know, you can't take that – you can't trust it in a Charlotte or at Atlanta or a Martinsville or something like that. You just – you can't. You can't predict the weather that good. Phoenix, she's the desert, baby."

What has it been like with your new crew chief Johnny Klausmeier?

"I think Johnny's demeanor is just so chill. Mine is not. It is a good counter for me. I am freaking out in the car and he is just like, '10-4' and I am like, 'That's it? 10-4?' It helps me calm down and stay focused on the task at hand. His thorough process and the way he goes about his business is super chill. He has a good group of engineers and everybody underneath him. It is a new opportunity. I always say a new broom always sweeps good. We have to keep together and make sure we are doing the right things and keep our communication down pat."

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Contact Drew Brown with True Speed Communication
(704) 498-7596 or Drew.Brown@TrueSpeedCommunication.com
www.TrueSpeedCommunication.com • Online Media Kit Available at: www.TrueSpeedMedia.com