



CLINT BOWYER

No. 14 Rush Truck Centers/ Mobil 1 Ford Returns to Racing

KANNAPOLIS, North Carolina (May 11, 2020) – In the 60-plus-year history of NASCAR, there will likely never be a more unusual or more welcomed group of races than the next four Cup Series races held over a 10-day span beginning Sunday with a 400-miler at Darlington (S.C.) Raceway.

Clint Bowyer, the driver of the No. 14 Rush Truck Centers/Mobil 1 Ford Mustang for Stewart-Haas Racing (SHR), wishes the race was sooner.

“Tell me where the racetrack is and I’ll be there tonight,” Bowyer said with a laugh when asked about the upcoming schedule.

Bowyer is especially antsy since he hasn’t sat in a racecar since finishing fifth in the March 8 race at Phoenix Raceway. That seems like a lifetime ago before the coronavirus pandemic brought sporting events to a halt in America and made social distancing a way of life.

“It’s been forever since we fired the engines, but I always knew this day would come” Bowyer said. “I hope we can give people something to enjoy as we fight this (pandemic) together. I’ve been going crazy waiting around, so it’s time to go have some fun.”

While Bowyer knows he, himself, will have some fun, it’s not going to be business as usual at Darlington Sunday, or the following Wednesday night when the Cup Series returns for a 310-mile race on the 1.33-mile, egg-shaped oval. Nor will it be standard operating procedure when the series hits Charlotte (N.C.) Motor Speedway for its annual 600-mile race May 24 and a 310-mile race May 27.

NASCAR has implemented a comprehensive health and safety plan with nearly every aspect of how an event is conducted. All upcoming races will be one-day shows without fans in attendance, and the use of personal protective equipment is mandated for series participants and officials throughout the event, as well as health screenings for all individuals prior to entering the facility, while inside the facility and exiting the facility, social distancing protocols throughout the facility, and strict limits on the number of individuals who are granted access.

Bowyer said he supports the steps NASCAR is taking to keep everyone safe, but admits it won’t be the same without full grandstands, especially at Darlington.

“Doing it without the fans sucks,” he said. “No way around it. It’s going to be awkward and it’s going to be difficult. Yes, you will be racing in front of an audience who will be on their couch, but it just won’t be the same. Hopefully it will only be like this for a few races and we’ll be back to normal soon and see everyone at the track.”

The Cup Series drivers will race without practice or qualifying at Darlington – perhaps the toughest track on the circuit. But there’s a precedent. In a September 2018 race, Bowyer started eighth, won Stage 1, led 37 laps and finished fifth at the Indianapolis Motor Speedway when rain kept the Cup Series from any practice or qualifying Saturday and Sunday before finally racing on Monday.

Bowyer’s crew chief Johnny Klausmeier believes the lack of track time won’t be difficult to overcome. In fact, he said his team plans on using the same No. 14 Ford in both Darlington races.

“Obviously, we are ready and, if we have a hiccup, we have a backup plan where we can bring another car,” he said. “To have a race under your belt, then go back and have everything set on the car that you just raced, puts you a little bit further ahead for the second race. That could be a little bit optimistic because, obviously, Darlington isn’t the kindest track with the wall and the ‘Darlington Stripe.’ We’ll have personnel ready to turn it around for the second race if we need to.”

Bowyer’s No. 14 will carry Rush Truck Centers and Mobil 1 decals at Darlington. Rush has been the primary partner for the No. 14 team since Bowyer arrived at SHR in 2017 and has been with the organization since 2010. The Texas-based company has used Bowyer and the team to appeal to NASCAR fans as one way to recruit the technicians it needs to operate the largest network of commercial truck and bus dealerships in the country, with locations in 22 states. According to Rush Truck Centers, the trucking industry is expected to need 200,000 diesel technicians over the next 10 years to keep up with maintenance demands.

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.

No matter what happens at Darlington or Charlotte, Bowyer said he is glad to be back behind the wheel and appreciates what everyone has done during the pandemic.

"Look, we wouldn't be here without the doctors and nurses on the frontlines doing what they are doing," Bowyer said. "That goes the same for the farmers growing our food, the auto workers making safety equipment and everybody doing their jobs. They are the real heroes and I hope these races can give those folks a few hours of fun. They deserve it."

Bowyer and Rush Truck Centers are joining in a nationwide campaign to call out a special group of heroes – truck drivers. Bowyer's Ford will carry the Twitter hashtag #ThankATrucker during the first round of races. Many of the No. 14 partners like Rush Truck Centers, Mobil 1, PEAK Antifreeze and Coolant, and Cummins all have ties to the trucking industry.

According to the American Trucking Associations, there are more than 700,000 trucking businesses in the country employing 7.8 million people, including 3.5 million truck drivers. More than 36 million trucks log 297 billion miles per year moving 71 percent of the nation's freight.

"Anything that we've needed during the quarantine, whether its medical supplies, food at the grocery stores or whatever the case may be has been delivered by a truck driver who's away from his family doing the job to make sure our country still works," Bowyer said. "If you see one of those truckers going down the road, give him a thumbs-up. They deserve it."

Hopefully, race fans can thank a trucker on their way to the racetrack in the near future. Until then, NASCAR will take the lead in the coming days as sports slowly restart in America.

Like Bowyer, a lot of fans can't wait.

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

How has your time away from racing been?

"We are quarantined crazy around the Bowyer residence and it sucks, just like it does for everybody. I am over hearing the words COVID-19 and I am over hearing the word pandemic, as is everybody else. My wife asked me, 'What is wrong with you?' I told her what is wrong with me is, for 17 years of my life, two weeks is about as long as I have ever been home, even during the holidays. So it's been rough. I'm ready to go have some fun."

What's been the toughest part of the pandemic?

"Trying to keep two kids entertained is the toughest thing. You feel so bad for them. My wife thinks my attention span is shorter than theirs. But, that being said, it's been tough. We have a farm and we've been building fences and I think we've caught every fish I know of in the pond."

How was home-schooling your kids during the time away from racing?

"It's the same for everyone, I think. It makes you feel really dumb, trying to help your 5-year-old and navigate through that. Let me tell you I have a new appreciation for teachers. I can promise you that."

Did iRacing bridge the gap during the time away?

"Yes, we had a blast. Who'd ever thought that we could have that much fun and be that competitive and have so many people watching us as we did with those iRacing races each weekend? I have a whole new respect for people who put in the time and get really good at that. I sucked when I started but kept getting better. No way can I compete with some of those guys, but I got good enough to where I could really enjoy what I was doing. Those guys have won 800 races and I haven't even run 800 laps."

JOHNNY KLAUSMEIER, Crew Chief of the No. 14 Rush Truck Centers/Mobil 1 Ford Mustang for Stewart-Haas Racing:

Will it be like starting a new season once we go back to racing at Darlington?

"Yes, I think it will. Anytime you take some time off, it will take an adjustment time to get back in the swing of things, but everyone is programmed to race. They are all thinking about going faster and putting speed in the cars. That's what racers think about all the time. This isn't going to take a lot of time to get back in the swing of things."

Has this time away changed your view of racing?

“It makes you appreciate what you have in life. You look at how everyone globally is fighting with this virus. The fact that we get to do something we love every day makes you appreciate it. When you are not doing it, it makes you appreciate it even more. You are always thinking about it and it gives you time to reflect on your career and how you can work harder to be even better at it. Just being away from anything you love gives you time to think about it and come back and do it better.”

How would you describe the first few races of the 2020 season before the break?

“I think they were good. We showed some potential. The races we have known we’d need work, like the 550 tracks, we have some good ideas. I really wanted to run Atlanta and Homestead. I think we will be able to adapt. I was happy with the 750 package and the speedways. We have had some good things to build on. We are improving with our communication with Clint, learning what he needs and wants in the car. If we do that, we’ll continue to improve. You want to win every week, but so far it’s been a good starting point for us.”

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