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## CLINT BOWYER

### NASCAR Playoffs: The Pay Window Is Open

KANNAPOLIS, North Carolina (Sept. 1, 2020) – As Clint Bowyer is fond of saying, the pay window in the NASCAR Cup Series is now officially open with the start of its 10-race, 16-driver playoffs Sunday night at historic Darlington (S.C.) Raceway during the 71st annual Southern 500.

“Now is the time to make your money,” Bowyer said when asked about Darlington’s first-ever playoff race.

“This is when it all starts in our sport. As a driver, no matter what’s happened up until now in 2020, and good lord there has been so much going on both on and off the track, the thing you are going to remember about this season, competition-wise, is what happens beginning Sunday and goes until we race in Phoenix in 10 weeks.”

Bowyer arrives at Darlington carrying a special PEAK Antifreeze Throwback paint scheme on his No. 14 Stewart-Haas Racing (SHR) Ford Mustang. Bowyer’s paint scheme will celebrate PEAK’s first NASCAR victory when Kyle Petty and crew chief Gary Nelson dominated the 1990 race at Rockingham (N.C.) Speedway. Petty led 433 of 492 laps on his way to victory in one of the more memorable races in the sport’s history.

“Ol’ Kyle had it going on that day,” Bowyer said with a laugh, adding that he joined Petty and Nelson earlier this summer to watch a replay of the race. “He put a whuppin’ on them. I’d love to do something like that in Darlington this weekend. I love watching those old races, and it was fun to hear Kyle and Gary talk about it. Kyle will be part of the NBC television coverage this weekend, so we want to make him proud.”

Sunday night’s race will mark Bowyer’s fifth of six primary partner races planned for Old World Industries, the parent company of the PEAK Coolant & Antifreeze and BlueDEF® brands. The company’s legacy in motorsports spans 40 years and includes leading drivers such as Dale Earnhardt, Michael Waltrip and Petty. Besides Bowyer’s No. 14 team, PEAK is a partner with the Haas F1 team with drivers Romain Grosjean and Kevin Magnussen, the NASCAR PEAK Mexico Series and drag racing’s winningest driver John Force.

This weekend’s scheme is in keeping with “The Official Throwback Weekend of NASCAR,” during which the industry honors the sport’s history. Nearly all the Cup Series teams will sport throwback paint schemes in the Southern 500.

Last year, Bowyer’s Ford carried a nearly identical paint scheme to his car owner and 2020 NASCAR Hall of Fame inductee Tony Stewart’s 2011 championship-winning car at SHR. Bowyer has also raced throwback paint schemes honoring Mark Martin and Ned Jarrett at Darlington during his SHR tenure.

As part of the Darlington weekend, PEAK will donate up to \$5,000 to Petty’s Victory Junction Camp that enriches the lives of children with serious illnesses by providing life-changing camping experiences at no cost to children or their families. Beginning Tuesday, PEAK will donate \$1 to the 84-acre Victory Junction camp in Randleman, North Carolina, for each of the first 5,000 new followers added to the PEAK Twitter page [@PeakAuto](#).

“This is one of the best weekends of the year,” Bowyer said. “You get to see so much of this sport’s history come alive. You see the old paint scheme, the old style hats. The sponsors like PEAK really get into it and make it special. Now with this year being the first time the playoffs start in Darlington, it will be extra special.”

Bowyer begins the playoffs 13th in the reset standings with 2,004 points thanks to a 19th-place finish last Saturday night at Daytona (Fla.) International Speedway. Bowyer battled for the victory on the final lap before contact sent him into the wall, leaving him with a 19th-place finish. Despite the disappointing result at Daytona, the recent run of solid results continued for Bowyer, who has scored the sixth-most points of any driver in the last six races.

Sunday marks Bowyer’s ninth career playoff appearance, as well as third consecutive appearance with SHR. To advance to Round 2 of the playoffs, Bowyer needs to remain in the top-12 in points through Round 1. That makes running well Sunday at Darlington, Sept. 12 at Richmond (Va.) Raceway, and Sept. 19 at Bristol (Tenn.) Motor Speedway imperative to a chance for the title.

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“I’ve always thought the first round is the toughest,” he said. “You have to be ready to go right out of the box. You can’t have any mistakes. You sure as heck can’t afford to get behind.”

Bowyer might not have had the regular season he wanted in terms of victories, but it wasn’t a bad year. He earned two top-five finishes and seven top-10s in 26 regular-season races. He earned the 10th-most bonus points of any driver. But the regular season is over and he is ready for the playoffs.

He’ll join a four-Mustang contingent of SHR drivers in the playoffs as he joins teammates Kevin Harvick, Aric Almirola and Cole Custer. SHR is the only organization to place four cars in the playoffs. Then-SHR driver Daniel Suarez fell just four points shy of earning a playoff berth in 2019. It would have marked the third consecutive year SHR placed all four of its drivers in the playoffs.

Darlington hasn’t always been kind to Bowyer over the years, where he has two top-10 finishes and a pole in 16 starts. But, the 41-year-old Emporia, Kansas native flashed real speed in the two 400-mile Darlington races held in a three-day period earlier this year when NASCAR returned from a 10-week hiatus due to the onset of the coronavirus pandemic in March.

On Sunday May 17, Bowyer finished fifth in the second stage and appeared ready to battle for a top-five finish but a loose car dropped him back in the field, leaving him with a 17th-place finish. On Wednesday May 20, Bowyer won the first two stages and led 71 laps in a dominating first half of the night race. An untimely caution dropped him off the lead lap in the final stage and contact with the wall and a cut tire left him with a 22nd-place finish.

Showing that speed again on Sunday should make Bowyer one of the favorites in a race that will be held in front of 8,000 to 10,000 fans in the 47,000-seat facility, nicknamed the “Track Too Tough To Tame,” received state approval earlier this month. All fans are required to wear face coverings or masks and temperature checks will be given while entering.

Bowyer knows he has some big shoes to fill Sunday if his Mustang is to duplicate Petty’s PEAK performance 30 years ago at Rockingham, but he also knows the stakes have never been higher with Darlington as the playoff opener during one of the sport’s biggest weekends of the season.

### ***CLINT BOWYER, Driver of the No. 14 PEAK Antifreeze Throwback Ford Mustang for Stewart-Haas Racing:***

#### **What is your strategy Sunday?**

“That’s easy – our strategy is to win, simple as that. What a great time it would be for a win! We did that in 2010, won the first race in the playoffs. It’s a great way to set the tone for the whole playoff run. We ran really well the last time we were in Darlington, plus these first tracks coming up are in my wheelhouse. We feel very confident.”

#### **What are your thoughts on Darlington?**

“I like the uniqueness of the track. I’ve struggled to have good finishes there but we’ve always raced well. We just can’t seem to seal the deal at the end. Something always goes haywire in the end but, sooner or later, we are going to overcome that and have a good weekend. Doing that this weekend would be perfect.”

#### **What do you think of the older cars racing at Darlington?**

“I always thought it would be neat, if you could, to be able to put those cars back on the track and have us be able to race them – or even today’s technology, just make the rules mandate those old cars and see. The crazy thing is, you can’t unlearn the evolution of racing and everything that we’ve learned over the years. These engineers and guys, they could make those guys so much faster than they were back then, but it’s not fair. It’s not fair to the guys back then. They didn’t have the tools and simulation and all the things they have today, so I can tell you it’s because of those cars that racing is where it is. Those guys taught these kids and these guys who are building chassis and making these cars go fast today learned from those guys, and they learn pretty fast. But it would be cool to be able to go back and put those old jalopies back on the track and see what would happen.”

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