

14



CLINT BOWYER

All on the Line at Bristol

KANNAPOLIS, North Carolina (Sept. 14, 2020) – Here we go again.

For the third consecutive year, Clint Bowyer's chances of advancing to the Round of 12 in the NASCAR Cup Series playoffs comes down to his performance in the third and final Round of 16 race, when four drivers will be eliminated from 2020 championship contention.

Unlike the last two seasons, when the final race of the opening round took place on the 17-turn "roval" at Charlotte (N.C.) Motor Speedway, Saturday night's race will be on the treacherous half-mile, high banks of Bristol (Tenn.) Motor Speedway.

Bristol is chaotic during the regular season. Now that it's a playoff transfer race for the first time in NASCAR history, it's obvious why drivers are nervous and fans are excited for short-track racing with so much at stake.

"This is what the playoffs are all about and supposed to be all about," said Bowyer, who has scored 10th-place finishes in the Round of 16's first two races at Darlington (S.C.) and Richmond (Va.) Raceway. "You want the nerve-wracking, nervous, pressure-packed races. I'm a fan and that's what I would want if I was sitting in the grandstands or watching on television."

Bowyer arrives at Bristol 12th in the 16-driver playoff standings, just three points ahead of 13th-place driver William Byron in the battle for the final transfer position.

"We've got to go to Bristol and perform," he said. "I like the track. We've got some top-10s going and we're definitely better, but we've got to be great this week. We can do it. That's a good track for us and a lot of fun and a track that I feel like I can win at some day, so there's nothing to be scared about going to a track like that. You've just got to go there and have fun with it like you always do on a short track and race your asses off and hopefully that will be enough."

While he owns a three-point cushion for the final transfer spot, Bowyer is just 15 points out of ninth. This playoff pressure is becoming old hat to Bowyer.

Last year, Bowyer entered the final race in the Round of 16 on the Charlotte roval four points shy of the final transfer position. He racked up 16 bonus points in the first two stages of the race while surviving three- and four-wide racing before finishing fourth. It boosted him to ninth in the final Round of 16 points and easily advanced him to the next playoff round.

In 2018, Bowyer entered the opening round's final race 13th in points, just four markers outside the top-12 cutoff. A third-place finish was enough to propel Bowyer to the Round of 12.

"For me, yeah, it's nerve-wracking or whatever, but it's also fun," he said. "It's fun to feel that way. It keeps you alive. That's what racing is all about. That's what competition is all about. You go into a weekend and if it's just no big deal, hell, that ain't any fun."

Bowyer couldn't pick a much better track to stage the Round of 16 finale in 2020 than the iconic Tennessee short track. He owns eight top-five finishes and 16 top-10s in 29 starts there, including five consecutive top-eight finishes. In this year's May race there, he staged a late run that saw him move from ninth to second in the last 30 laps to post his best finish of the season.

PLAYOFF STANDINGS
ENTERING BRISTOL (RACE 3 IN ROUND OF 16)

Rank	Driver	Points	Rank	Driver	Points
1.	4 KEVIN HARVICK	1 WIN	9.	18 KYLE BUSCH	+18
2.	2 BRAD KESELOWSKI	1 WIN	10.	10 ARIC ALMIROLA	+7
3.	11 DENNY HAMLIN	+64	11.	1 KURT BUSCH	+7
4.	22 JOEY LOGANO	+51	12.	14 CLINT BOWYER	+3
5.	19 MARTIN TRUEX JR.	+38	13.	24 WILLIAM BYRON	-3
6.	3 AUSTIN DILLON	+36	14.	41 COLE CUSTER	-8
7.	9 CHASE ELLIOTT	+28	15.	21 MATT DIBENEDETTO	-25
8.	88 ALEX BOWMAN	+27	16.	12 RYAN BLANEY	-27

▶ ADVANCED TO ROUND OF 12

Bowyer's No. 14 Ford will carry a Rush Truck Centers/Cummins paint scheme for the most important race of the season Saturday night.

Rush Truck Centers 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. With Bowyer's background working in his dad's towing service in Emporia, Kansas, Bowyer understands the importance of keeping trucks up and running. That is why Rush is proud to partner with Bowyer and support the trucks that haul the racecars, as well as customers across the country with its total service management package, RushCare Complete. This all-inclusive solution provides dedicated concierge service, vehicle telematics, mobile service, express routine maintenance, real-time service updates and a comprehensive source for all-makes parts.

Cummins makes its third appearance of the 2020 season with Bowyer. The Indiana-based company from car owner Tony Stewart's hometown of Columbus is no stranger to victory lane with its racing lineage dating back to the inaugural Indianapolis 500 in 1911, when company founder Clessie Cummins was on the pit crew of the race-winning Marmon Wasp of driver Ray Harroun. Since its founding in 1919, the company now employs approximately 61,600 people and serves customers in about 190 countries and territories through a network of some 8,000 wholly owned and independent dealer and distributor locations. While Cummins is a corporation of complementary business segments that design, manufacture, distribute and service a broad portfolio of power solutions, it is best known for its diesel truck engines.

For Bowyer the strategy Saturday night is clear-cut.

"We have to get some bonus points the first two stages and be there at the end," he said. "We can't make any mistakes and have to avoid getting taken out by somebody else's mistakes. That all sounds easy, but 40 other maniacs are thinking the same thing. It's going to be a pretty wild Saturday night."

Hopefully for Bowyer, it will be a third consecutive year of turning in a great performance when it's most needed and advancing to the Round of 12.

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

What will Bristol be like as a cutoff race?

"It's going to be insane. It's like they were just wanting to make the end of the regular season and these playoffs as nerve-wracking as possible. I mean, we're talking, like, ulcer-level, nerve-wracking situations and they found it. The roval, Bristol, Daytona – I mean, it can't get any more nerve-wracking than that."

What are your thoughts on Bristol Motor Speedway?

"Anybody who hates Bristol shouldn't be in racing because this is the mecca of all racetracks. This is the granddaddy of them all. There's no question. Look at this place. Look at the grandstands. I mean, there's nothing like this place, and tracks like this we need all across the country. A fan, if they want to be a fan of this sport, they need to learn short-track racing and they need to learn about Bristol Motor Speedway. There's not a fan, a family member, a friend, anybody I know who I wouldn't point in the direction of Bristol Motor Speedway. So, as a racer on the racetrack, it's no different."

What makes Bristol so special?

"Just the unknown, being able to go for it, being able to not worry about an aero push or horsepower deficit or whatever the case may be – get ahold of the steering wheel, get ahold of the gas pedal and make something happen and this is a track where you can do that."

-TSC-

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