

14



CLINT BOWYER

A Final Race Back Home

KANNAPOLIS, North Carolina (Oct. 12, 2020) – Clint Bowyer returns Sunday to Kansas Speedway in Kansas City no longer a playoff contender when the NASCAR Cup Series Round of 8 begins this weekend, but he’s still on a mission as important as any to the Emporia, Kansas native.

He wants to visit victory lane in his home state.

“I have said many times that I think after a Daytona 500 victory, the race I would most like to win is back home at Kansas Speedway,” said Bowyer, whose lone NASCAR victory at the 1.5-mile oval came June 4, 2011 when he led Johnny Sauter by 1.695 seconds in a Gander RV & Outdoors Truck Series race. “That place is home. I grew up around here and was standing in the infield watching when NASCAR first came here. Everyone who helped me early in my career lives here.”

Bowyer’s desire to win at Kansas takes on new significance Sunday because it will be his last appearance at the track as a driver.

Bowyer announced on social media last week that he will trade his firesuit for a suit and tie and join Mike Joy and Jeff Gordon in the FOX television booth in 2021. In a letter to fans, media and the NASCAR industry, Bowyer offered his appreciation to those who played a role in his career.

“I want to thank every owner who has paid a bill on my behalf, every crew member who has turned a bolt on my cars and every media member who has covered my racing career,” he said. “Thank you to every sponsor that has invested in me, and thank you to every fan who has cheered me along the way!”

Bowyer will have an audience at Kansas Speedway this weekend. COVID-19 postponed the track’s May race until July and fans were not allowed. A limited number of fans will attend this weekend’s race.

Bowyer arrives at Kansas after leading nine laps and finishing 10th Sunday on the oval at Charlotte (N.C.) Motor Speedway despite no power steering for the last 35 laps of the race. The finish ended his playoff run, leaving him 46 points short of transferring to the Round of 8. Although he fell out of the playoffs and knows this season is his last behind the wheel, Bowyer still has a lot of racing left at the final four stops of the 2020 Cup Series tour.

NASCAR resets the points for the non-playoff drivers so Bowyer arrives at Kansas 13th in the standings but just 33 markers behind ninth place with four races remaining in the season and his driving career. Even outside the playoffs, Bowyer said winning a race is enough motivation for any driver the rest of this season.

“We are still racing for a trophy,” Bowyer said. “A top-10 in points and a victory would make for a pretty good season and a good way to go out.”

There’s a reason Bowyer wants to celebrate in Kansas. The Kansas dirt is where he came from. He began racing motocross in 1985, collecting more than 200 wins and several championships. After moving from motorcycles to cars, Bowyer gained a reputation for success at Lakeside and I-70 Speedways in Kansas City. Scott Traylor and some local Kansas City businessmen built and put Bowyer in an ARCA car at Nashville (Tenn.) Speedway in August 2003, and Bowyer led 47 laps before finishing second. He got a call from NASCAR Hall of Famer Richard Childress to come south and the rest, they say, is history.

Bowyer’s current home is in North Carolina, but he hasn’t turned his back on Kansas, especially the 25,000 residents of Emporia. He returns often to deer hunt, visit friends or just be part of the community. In March 2013, he bought the Clint Bowyer Autoplex car dealership on U.S. Highway 50, where he once worked as a lot attendant, dent specialist and detailer.

Across the street sits the Clint Bowyer Community Building, constructed in 2012 thanks to a \$1.5 million donation from his foundation. Inside are 25 new computers at the public library. There is a scoreboard at the aquatic center, a video camera at the auditorium, shoes for the Big Brothers-Big Sisters program, backpacks for kids, Christmas trees for needy families. And, in nearby towns, playground equipment and the reconstruction of a tornado-ravaged community center – all of it and more paid for by Bowyer’s foundation, or out of the driver’s own pocket.

-more-

Bowyer even brought country music star Blake Shelton to Emporia for a concert. Emporia appreciates its native son, having renamed the street on which the family towing business resides as “Hon. Clint Bowyer Boulevard.” He’s even re-created a little bit of Kansas at his 650-acre farm near Mocksville, North Carolina. It’s everything one would expect at a Bowyer farm: vintage cars, trucks, racecars, cows, eagles, donkeys and goats.

“In Kansas, you might have two trees and the rest pastures but, in North Carolina, everything is woods, so you can’t see anything,” Bowyer said. “When I drove down the long driveway for the first time, you could see everything – the pasture, the lakes. This was the Promised Land for me. There’s literally something to do from sunup to sundown.”

It’s fitting on his return to Kansas, Bowyer will debut the national Future Farmers of America (FFA) organization and DEKALB brand corn paint scheme on his No. 14 Ford Mustang featuring, dual historical wings for both the FFA emblem and DEKALB winged ear of corn. The special wing-designed car represents iconic roots in agriculture with a tradition of leadership, personal growth and success.

With a legacy of performance, the FFA and DEKALB are focused on improving the future of agriculture and together will offer students the opportunity to qualify for the Winning Has Roots scholarship.

“My roots are not only in Kansas, but also in agriculture,” Bowyer said. “It’s a privilege to partner with DEKALB and FFA to bring ag students this scholarship.”

The Winning Has Roots scholarship will help one qualified student fund his or her continued education. The scholarship amount will be determined by the number of laps Bowyer completes Sunday in Kansas. A base amount of \$6,400 is to be awarded to the Winning Has Roots recipient with an increase of \$14 for every lap Clint completes. If all 267 laps are completed, the scholarship will increase to \$10,138. If he wins the race, the scholarship will be increased to \$14,000. This is the second annual scholarship program for the DEKALB brand.

Final scholarship amount, details and next steps will be announced following the race. For more information about the Winning Has Roots scholarship, visit DEKALB.com/Scholarship and follow the conversation with #WinningHasRoots and #GoClintGo.

Bowyer would like nothing better than to raise the dollar value of that scholarship, as well carry a trophy from the Jayhawk State back to the Tar Heel State. It would be a stellar way to close out a long career.

CLINT BOWYER, Driver of the No. 14 DEKALB Ford Mustang for Stewart-Haas Racing:

How did you arrive at the decision to hang up the helmet and move to television?

“I have had a hell of a ride and this was a good time to do it. Ultimately, I found the opportunity that kept me doing everything that I love and that’s selling the story of NASCAR with a great team at an organization like FOX. It’s a perfect fit for me. I’m a fit guy. When I took over the No. 14, I said it was the perfect fit for me, and I think joining FOX is same way. They have made me feel like I fit in and they have a ton of fun.”

Has the decision sunk in yet?

“Until you hit send on that announcement, it doesn’t hit you. But, when you hit send, you instantly felt a huge relief. Then you think ‘Oh my gosh, what have I done?’ But then you start reminiscing about what you have done and where you have come from. It wasn’t the wins or things like that that mean the most, it’s the relationships. It’s walking into the garage and picking on someone or being picked on by someone else. That’s what I am proud of. The timing was right for me. I’m proud of my career and very appreciative to everyone who has played a role.”

What does it mean to friends and family at Kansas this weekend?

“Being able to have your family and friends there is everything. It’s not fun to do without people who make your life what it is, and forever it’s always been that way. I’m tired of COVID. I think we all are. We’re all doing what we have to do, whether it’s attached to racing, sports or life in general, you’re doing what you’ve got to do to survive. I’m looking forward to going back home. It’s such a special place for me with family and friends there and fans to watch us do what we do. Our sport is not what it is without fans. I mean, obviously television does a phenomenal job covering our sport, but fans at the track in real life in front of you are what this sport was founded on and ultimately what’s going to continue it on through the ages.”

-TSC-