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Smithfield



ARIC ALMIROLA

Heading to Bristol Seven Points Ahead of Playoff Cutoff Line

KANNAPOLIS, North Carolina (Sept. 15, 2020) – Aric Almirola, driver of the No. 10 Smithfield Ford for Stewart-Haas Racing (SHR) in the NASCAR Cup Series, will compete in the final race of the Round of 16 of this year’s playoffs in hopes of advancing to the Round of 12.



In order to advance to the next round, Almirola needs to remain inside the top-12 in the playoff standings. He sits in 10th place with a seven-point cushion ahead of the playoff cutoff line.

“We’re seven points ahead, which is good, but not good enough to race without pressure to advance to the next round,” Almirola said. “We have to run a smooth race, earn some stage points, and hope to not get involved in any wrecks.”

Almirola’s closest competitors for top-12 playoff positions and their points differentials are ninth-place Kyle Busch (+18), 11th-place Kurt Busch (+7), 12th-place Clint Bowyer (+3), 13th-place William Byron (-3) and 14th-place Cole Custer (-8).

A look at the finishing order of this year’s May race at Bristol shows Almirola in 29th and his cutoff-line competitors in the top-10. In the first stage of that race, Almirola raced inside the top-five and gained seven bonus points until a loose wheel forced him to the pits. Even after that incident, Almirola was able to climb back to third before another loose wheel demoted him yet again. Finally, he was involved in an accident on lap 470.

“I have all the confidence we will have a fast Smithfield Ford at Bristol,” he said. “We have every time we’ve shown up. We have yet to finish a clean race after running top-five there every time. I’m excited knowing what we can do there.”

Almirola finished eighth last weekend at Richmond (Va.) Raceway to advance two spots in the playoff standings.

“What has really killed us is small mistakes and not being up front at the end of each stage,” he said. “We’re two-for-two on top-10 finishes so far in the playoffs, but that only has us seven points to the good. It goes to show how important stage points are when you’re in this position. A good run in the first stage could set us up to just need a decent finish, but no stage points at all could really hurt us, and it also depends on the guys we’re competing against. It’s going to be a thriller for the fans.”

Almirola has one top-five and three top-10s in 20 starts at Bristol since 2007. His best finish there was third in the Food City 500 on March 16, 2004. In addition to his Cup Series experience at Bristol, Almirola has seven NASCAR Xfinity Series starts with four of those resulting in top-10 finishes.

This is Almirola’s third playoff appearance in a row since joining SHR. He advanced to the Round of 12 in both of his previous playoff runs with SHR.

The No. 10 Ford driver enjoyed a career-best regular season with five top-five finishes, 16 top-10s and 287 laps led. In his last 17 races, he has 12 top-10s and five top-fives.

Smithfield Foods, Inc., who sponsors Almirola’s No. 41 Mustang for a majority of the races this season and will again this weekend, is an American food company with agricultural roots and a global reach. Its 40,000 U.S. employees are dedicated to producing “Good food. Responsibly®” and have made it one of the world’s leading vertically integrated protein companies. It has pioneered sustainability standards for more than two decades, including many industry firsts, such as an ambitious commitment to cut carbon impact by 25 percent by 2025. The company believes in the power of protein to end food insecurity and has donated hundreds of millions of food servings to neighbors in need. For more information, visit www.smithfieldfoods.com, and connect on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), [LinkedIn](#), and [Instagram](#).

Almirola is back with season two of his documentary series Beyond the 10, where fans can get VIP, behind-the-scenes access by subscribing to his YouTube channel. Episodes showcase never-before-seen footage of Almirola at the racetrack, on family trips, and “A Day in the Life” during the week, as well as all that goes into a NASCAR Cup Series driver’s season. Click [here](#) to subscribe on YouTube and watch the latest episode.

Almirola is no stranger to pressure when it comes to the playoff cutoff line. In 2018, he advanced to the Round of 12 by one point at the Charlotte (N.C.) Motor Speedway roval. He went on to advance to the Round of 8 after winning at Talladega (Ala.) Motor Speedway and finished fifth in the season standings.

ARIC ALMIROLA, Driver of the No. 10 Smithfield Ford Mustang for Stewart-Haas Racing:

How demanding is Bristol?

“Bristol is the ultimate test of physical stamina mixed with finesse of how you position your racecar. You’re on the edge of your seat every lap and the slightest mistake can set you back. It helps to be in great shape for races like Bristol when you get toward the end of the long, green-flag run. During the break, I stayed busy with my workout regimen to prepare for races like this with heat training and cycling.”

Do you enjoy racing at Bristol?

“Bristol is a track I always look forward to going to. We just haven’t had luck on our side the last few races there. I feel confident there, too. We just need some things to go our way to actually finish a solid race.”

How does Bristol’s track surface change during the race?

“Bristol is one of those places where the track changes throughout the run, especially in the last couple of years, when they put the (traction) compound down on the bottom groove. That has tended to get rubbered up and get really slick as the run moves on and the cars migrate to the top of the racetrack. The top of the racetrack is not very good when it’s clean but, when it starts to rubber up, it actually gains momentum and gets faster, so the groove moves around a lot from run to run and throughout the run, and that makes it fun and it makes it exciting. As a driver, it gives you the option to search around and look for speed.”

ARIC ALMIROLA’S BRISTOL PERFORMANCE PROFILE:

Year	Date	Event	Start	Finish	Status/Laps	Laps Led	Earnings
2020	5/31	Food City 500	2	29	Running, 470/500	0	N/A
2019	4/7	Food City 500	6	37	Accident, 3/500	0	N/A
	8/17	Bass Pro Shops NRA Night Race	5	29	Accident/482/500	0	N/A
2018	4/16	Food City 500	19	6	Running, 500/500	0	N/A
	8/18	Bass Pro Shops NRA Night Race	8	31	Running, 428/500	0	N/A
2017	4/24	†Food City 500	18	22	Running, 497/500	0	N/A
	8/19	Bass Pro Shops NRA Night Race	28	37	Accident, 390/500	0	N/A
2016	4/17	Food City 500	22	34	Running, 479/500	0	N/A
	8/21	Bass Pro Shops NRA Night Race	17	14	Running, 500/500	0	N/A
2015	4/19	×Food City 500	30	13	Running, 511/511	0	\$134,176
	8/22	Irwin Tools Night Race	31	17	Running, 497/500	0	\$150,171

2014	3/16	×Food City 500	23	3	Running, 503/503	0	\$160,161
	8/23	Irwin Tools Night Race	42	41	Accident, 123/500	0	\$116,101
2013	3/17	Food City 500	20	37	Accident, 245/500	0	\$125,439
	8/24	Irwin Tools Night Race	10	15	Running, 499/500	0	\$146,041
2012	3/18	Food City 500	7	19	Running, 498/500	0	\$127,446
	8/25	=Irwin Tools Night Race	5	35	Accident, 235/500	0	\$127,116
2010	3/21	Food City 500	27	39	Brakes, 59/500	0	\$80,650
2009	3/22	×Food City 500	18	35	Running, 494/503	0	\$91,825
2008	3/16	×†Food City 500	16	8	Running, 506/506	0	\$126,483
	8/23	Sharpie 500	23	13	Running, 500/500	0	\$136,733
2007	8/25	Sharpie 500	35	36	Running, 485/500	0	\$91,890

* Race cut short due to weather.

× Race length extended due to green-white-checkered finish.

= Qualifying canceled due to weather, starting position set via practice speed.

◇ Race length was extended due to overtime finish

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