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## **CLINT BOWYER**

**A Final Race**

KANNAPOLIS, North Carolina (Nov. 2, 2020) – Clint Bowyer will climb in a NASCAR Cup Series car for the final time Sunday afternoon at Phoenix Raceway – a venue that hosted some of Bowyer’s most memorable moments in his career, including his Cup Series debut on April 23, 2005.

“It’s funny, the way the schedule has worked out, Phoenix will be the place of my first and last start,” said Bowyer, who drove for Bill McAnally and Richard Childress that day he started 25th and finished 22nd, one lap behind race-winner Kurt Busch. “It’s come full circle and it’s been an amazing run with everything in between.”

The Emporia, Kansas native grew up racing motorcycles in the Midwest never dreaming he’d make his living in NASCAR. But he’s entered 540 races, earned 10 Cup Series victories, 82 top-five finishes and 226 top-10s. He finished in the top-five in the season standings three times and is one of the few drivers to enjoy trips to victory lane driving Fords, Toyotas and Chevrolets.

“Hell no, I never thought I would have this success,” said Bowyer, who won an Xfinity Series title in 2008. “I honestly was hoping to make a living racing. I can say that, and I think that’s a fair goal, but did I ever in a million years think that it would lead to all this? No way. Here is how I look at it – for the last few years, I have been representing Ford Motor Company, for crying out loud. For most of my career growing up, I couldn’t afford a Ford engine. I have made some incredible friendships along the way that will last my entire lifetime.”

It’s not just his career that has come full circle. Bowyer was single that day in 2005 at Phoenix when he made his debut. Sunday, he’ll have his wife Lorra and young children Cash and Presley, along with his parents and family on hand for the final race. At most of those 540 races over the years, there has always been family at the track.

“You bring your friends and family to the track because that’s who you want to be around,” he said. “My mom and dad and brothers have always been around my racing. Lorra and the kids used to come every weekend before COVID and, if this year has taught me anything, it is how much fun it is to have all those people around. It’s been lonely and boring sitting in the motorhome without all those people.”

Sunday isn’t just about retirement. Bowyer arrives at Phoenix 12th in points, just 30 behind 10th place, and is very much a threat to win the race. Last weekend at Martinsville (Va.) Speedway, Bowyer finished eighth and, in the previous race at Texas Motor Speedway in Fort Worth, he led 89 laps before an extra fuel stop ruined his chance for victory with 25 laps to go.

So why walk away while still competitive? Bowyer said it was all about the opportunity to join FOX television in the booth in 2021. Bowyer served as a commentator during FOX’s coverage of iRacing events during the earlier days of the pandemic while the Cup Series was on hiatus.

“That was a ton of fun for me and it opened my eyes up in a big way and it was just something that nobody expected that opened the door for this opportunity we took,” he said. “So, FOX means more time with your family and still being a big part of this sport. I love being a part of this sport. I mean, that was so important for me. I didn’t want to just retire. If this opportunity with FOX didn’t come to the table, I was going to be in a car somewhere, somehow. I wasn’t going to just quit and run off into the sunset because I like this sport and I wanted to find my way and a future within it, and luckily this happened.”

New FOX colleague Jeff Gordon played a major role in one of Bowyer’s more memorable career moments at – Phoenix, of course. Bowyer and Gordon tangled in the closing laps of the 2012 race while battling for a championship. The clash led to one of the more famous altercations between race teams in NASCAR history that’s sure to air on television every time the Cup Series returns to Phoenix.

Bowyer and Gordon are now fast friends and laugh when the highlights are replayed. Bowyer said that moment is long forgotten but hopes it won’t be his and Gordon’s last disagreements – albeit good-natured. Instead of NASCAR officials, it will be lead announcer Mike Joy’s job to referee.

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“Here’s one of the funniest things about our rivalry, or lack thereof,” Bowyer said. “People really think there’s more there than there ever was. We had a couple run-ins in a year where it sucked, but I can tell you that we were always having fun off the racetrack at the year-end events at the playoff banquets and things like that. He and I would always kind of naturally just flock to one another and want to go out and have fun, and Jeff is a fun person.

 “It’s a neat situation to overcome everything that we have, and lining up right against one another again in that booth is going to be something that’s pretty special. I think we saw it already. We both got to experience it a little bit. We got our feet wet with the iRacing that we did, and I think that we’re going to enjoy it that much more when we can call these races from our experiences and our perspectives. Jeff does a great job of that. Mike Joy, oh my gosh, he’s going to have his hands full. Can you imagine being up there trying to be a ringleader, trying to keep Jeff and I arguing the whole race because there’s no way in hell he can be right and there’s no way in hell that I can be right all the time, so it’s going to be fun to call these races.”

Bowyer’s No. 14 Mustang will carry the logos of Rush Truck Centers and Haas Automation for the final time this weekend. 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.

Rush Truck Centers will honor Bowyer with a thank you note on the hood of the No. 14 Sunday that includes: “Thank You, Clint! Always A Man Of The People.”

Haas Automation, owned by SHR co-owner and California native Gene Haas, is America’s leading builder of CNC machine tools. Founded by Haas in 1983, Haas Automation manufactures a complete line of vertical and horizontal machining centers, turning centers and rotary tables and indexers. All Haas products are built in the company’s 1.1-million-square-foot manufacturing facility in Oxnard, California, and distributed through a worldwide network of Haas Factory Outlets

Bowyer’s retirement is another indication of the changing of the guard in NASCAR. Kurt Busch, Kyle Busch, Ryan Newman, Jimmie Johnson, and Kevin Harvick are the only drivers who were in the field for Bowyer’s debut in 2005 who will race Sunday at Phoenix. Johnson is also making his final start Sunday.

“Things always change and there’s a new bunch of kids who will come in and take up our places,” Bowyer said. “ We’ve had a great run, now it’s time to turn it over to someone else.”

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

**Would you have retired if the FOX opportunity hadn’t presented itself?**

“Was I ready? I was getting ready. I was getting close to being ready. Was I ready after this pandemic and this COVID year of no fans and a weird way to go out? No, and I don’t think probably Jimmie Johnson was, either, but was I looking for that what’s next moment or opportunity? And that answer is absolutely yes. When FOX – and let’s go back to the pandemic – there are always opportunities and crazy things and it’s usually those wild and crazy things in life that open that opportunity. This pandemic led to that opportunity to get in the studio with Jeff and Mike and have a ton of fun doing those iRacing races that really kind of kept us on the map with our sport and kept our sponsors propped up, kept the business moving, kept it going around in circles.”

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