

Drivers grasping for 5 playoff spots at New Hampshire

BY HOLLY CAIN
NASCAR NewsWire, Special to
Field Level Media

While drivers may not openly admit to any uptick in NASCAR Cup Series competitive intensity, with only seven races remaining to set the 16-driver 2023 playoff field, each upcoming summer race at this point represents a crucial marker in the season.

With his season-best – and single-season career-high – fourth victory last week, Hendrick Motorsports' William Byron leads the NASCAR Cup Series championship standings and will make his 200th career series start Sunday with a decidedly less pressure-filled trip to the Northeast for the Crayon 301 at New Hampshire Motor Speedway (2:30 p.m. ET on USA Network, PRN and SiriusXM NASCAR Radio).

That breathing room is also palpable for 11 other race winners. But the pressure is definitely there for the other drivers still trying to guarantee one of the five remaining secured positions during this Playoff push.

Kevin Harvick, a four-time New Hampshire race winner, is currently tops in the points standings among those who have not won a race in 2023. He holds a healthy 126-point edge over the postseason cutoff. The driver of the Stewart-Haas Racing No. 4 Ford and 2014 NASCAR Cup Series champion has been especially strong at the 1.058-mile oval – hoisting the live lobster that

winners receive at the track more than any other active driver. His four-victory total is tied for most all-time with Jeff Burton, and Harvick would love nothing more than to top the all-time wins chart in this, his final season of competition.

“It’s definitely a race-track that we’re looking forward to going to and I can’t wait to finally, hopefully, get to Victory Lane,” said Harvick, who has had an impressive nine top-five finishes in the last 12 New Hampshire races.

“My guys are doing a great job of putting fast cars on the racetrack,” he continued. “And Loudon is one of those places that checks a lot of boxes for us to go up there and have a good weekend.”

On the other end of the Playoff cutline, Trackhouse Racing’s Daniel Suarez and Front Row Motorsports’ Michael McDowell are 15th and 16th in the standings, tied in points – a slight three-points to the good.

23XI Racing’s Bubba Wallace trails them by three points. Kaulig Racing veteran A.J. Allmendinger is 13 points back. Joe Gibbs Racing rookie Ty Gibbs is only 26 points back trying to earn a Playoff position in his first full-time NASCAR Cup Series season and join his three JGR teammates: Martin Truex Jr., Denny Hamlin and defending New Hampshire winner Christopher Bell, who already have secured their Playoff run with a win. Gibbs won the 2019 ARCA Menards Series West race at “The Magic Mile,” as New Hampshire is known.

Among drivers with a

previous New Hampshire victory – Harvick, Brad Keselowski (a two-time winner in both the NASCAR Cup Series and Xfinity Series) and 2021 winner Aric Almirola are still racing for their first victories of this season.

Like Harvick, the RFK Racing driver Keselowski has a solid lead (plus-100 points) inside the Playoff standings, but the Stewart-Haas Racing driver Almirola is 90 points back and ranked 27th heading into Sunday’s race. He will need a win to race for the championship.

Also in an unusually precarious situation is 2020 series champion Chase Elliott, who is ranked 23rd in the standings (60 points behind the cutoff mark) after missing seven races – six because of injury and the other to serve a suspension. His Hendrick Motorsports teammate and perennial Playoff competitor Alex Bowman is similarly in unfamiliar ground coming into New Hampshire, ranked 22nd (44 points back) having missed three races with injury. Neither have won at New Hampshire before.

Stewart-Haas Racing driver Ryan Preece is another who has had this New Hampshire weekend circled on his calendar. The Connecticut native goes into the race ranked 25th – 81 points out of Playoff contention – and is hoping to score a dramatic, season-defining win for his hometown crowd. Five drivers have scored their first career win at New Hampshire, including another Connecticut na-



MARVIN GENTRY USA TODAY NETWORK

NASCAR Cup Series driver William Byron has won four races this season.

tive, reigning series champion Joey Logano.

“I always say it’s my favorite race weekend of the year,” Preece said. “I grew up going to the track with my father and grandfather. I had a lot of success here in the modifieds, and it’s just a place I’m comfortable at. Driving in and out of the track each day still brings back a lot of memories. It’s a racer’s track, there’s really no place like it. Someone like me, I’ve had to fight to get where I am, and I don’t take any of it for granted and this is a place that helped me achieve my goals.”

Defending race winner Bell must be considered a favorite to earn back-to-back race trophies to join four of the sport’s greats (Jimmie Johnson, Kurt Busch, Matt Kenseth and Harvick) to accomplish the feat at New Hampshire. Bell and Kyle Busch are the only two drivers to have won in every NASCAR national series at the track. Bell has a NASCAR Craftsman Truck Series win in 2017 and joins Busch as the only drivers to win three consecutive NASCAR Xfinity Series races for a grand total of five New Hampshire victories.

Busch, a three-time 2023 race winner in the No. 8

Richard Childress Racing Chevrolet, has three NASCAR Cup Series victories at New Hampshire, a record six NASCAR Xfinity Series wins, and three Truck Series wins – a consecutive streak from 2009-11.

Of note, Ryan Newman – a three-race winner who

holds the pole position record (seven) at New Hampshire – will be making his second start of the season, driving for Rick Ware Racing this weekend. He will team with Xfinity Series championship contender Cole Custer this weekend.

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TOWN OF BLUFFTON PUBLIC NOTICE
NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that the Town of Bluffton Board of Zoning Appeals (BZA) will hold a Hearing on August 1, 2023, at 6:00PM for the following:

ZONE-07-23-018221 – The Applicant, Daniel Keefer, on behalf of the property owner, Ed Goetas/ERB Enterprises, LLC, requests a variance from UDO Section 5.3.7.B.2.b to encroach 35' into the 50' Highway Corridor Overlay District buffer. The property is identified by tax map number R610 039 000 0114 0000 and is located at 1203 May River Road in the Neighborhood Core Zoning District.

*Public Comments may be submitted electronically via the Town's website at (<https://bit.ly/TOBPublicComment>). Comments will be accepted up to 2 hours prior to the scheduled meeting start time. All comments will be read aloud for the record and will be provided to the Board of Zoning Appeals.

Documents related to the above are available for public inspection, persons with comments or questions should contact the Town of Bluffton Planning and Community Development Department at (843) 706-4500.
IPL0131281
Jul 16 2023

Public Notice
Mary Peebles has applied for a permit from SC DHEC to build a private dock at 8 Sheffield Ave. Beaufort, SC 29907. Comments regarding this application must be received the department by July 28, 2023 At 104 Parker Drive, Beaufort, SC 29906.
IPL0131402
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Real Estate

Commercial



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843-617-4431 \$312,000 / \$342,000 / \$646,000 for Both



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DANIELLE PARHIZKARAN USA TODAY NETWORK

Christian Pulisic acknowledges fans after the United States' match against Wales during the 2022 FIFA World Cup on Nov. 21, 2022, in Al Rayyan, Qatar. Pulisic has finalized a four-year contract with AC Milan, which acquired him from Chelsea for a transfer fee of about \$22 million.

American star Pulisic gets a fresh start with AC Milan

BY STEVEN GOFF
Washington Post

Two years removed from reaching the heights of European soccer with an English club, U.S. national team star Christian Pulisic is taking his stalled career to Italy.

On Thursday, the 24-year-old forward finalized a four-year contract with AC Milan, which acquired him from Chelsea for a transfer fee of about \$22 million.

It's a far cry from the U.S.-record \$73 million he commanded in 2019, when Chelsea lured him from Germany's Borussia Dortmund.

However, it does provide a fresh start after he

fell out of favor with the London-based Blues and allows him to set a new course as he and the U.S. national team look ahead to the 2026 World Cup, which will be staged in the United States, Mexico and Canada.

“I haven’t gotten the opportunities that I’ve wanted in recent years [at Chelsea] and haven’t reached the level that I want to be at,” Pulisic said in a conference call with reporters. “This is a great opportunity for me to do that. There’s positions that are open to me to be filled, and I want to go in and stake my claim and hopefully be a main part in this team.”

Pulisic’s Chelsea tenure began brilliantly with a

career-high 11 goals across all competitions in 2019-20 and, a year later, an instrumental role in the team winning the UEFA Champions League, UEFA Super Cup and FIFA Club World Cup.

The past two seasons, amid several coaching changes, he grew frustrated with dwindling playing time. In 2022-23, with 12th-place Chelsea suffering its worst Premier League campaign in 29 years, Pulisic started just eight of the 38 matches, entered as a sub 16 times and scored once. He also played a bit part in the Champions League.

“I know it’s the right time in my career” to change clubs, he said. “I had some great memories

at Chelsea, ones I would take with me for the rest of my life. But now I’m really excited to create new ones.”

AC Milan is one of the biggest names in Italian soccer, having won the most recent of its 19 Serie A titles in 2021-22. It’s also a seven-time European champion; this past season, it reached the Champions League semifinals.

“It just all became very clear in the recent weeks this was the spot for me,” Pulisic said. “I’m going to have a great opportunity to play and hopefully make an impact. It was really a no-brainer.”

Before agreeing to the move, Pulisic said he spoke with former Chelsea teammates Olivier Giroud and Fikayo Tomori, who joined AC Milan two years ago. Ruben Loftus-Cheek is also jumping to Milan from Chelsea this summer.