

//// TRACK TIME ////

INSIDE: JEFF GORDON'S FAREWELL SEASON

2015 rule changes

Hall of Fame
inductees

Junior chases success

2014 in Review

An action-packed sprint down the stretch in 2014 and the emergence of exciting young talent left many NASCAR fans asking themselves the same question: Can it get any better than this?

NASCAR drivers and team owners sure hope so. Returning Sprint Cup champion Kevin Harvick is poised to defend his hard-fought title as he looks to build from the momentum of his outstanding final month of the 2014 campaign.

Harvick claimed the final two races of the season to win the first year of the revamped Cup series that kept fans and drivers on the edge of their seats. He earned more than \$7 million for his efforts, not to mention a whirlwind media tour that helped build excitement for his chances to repeat in 2015.

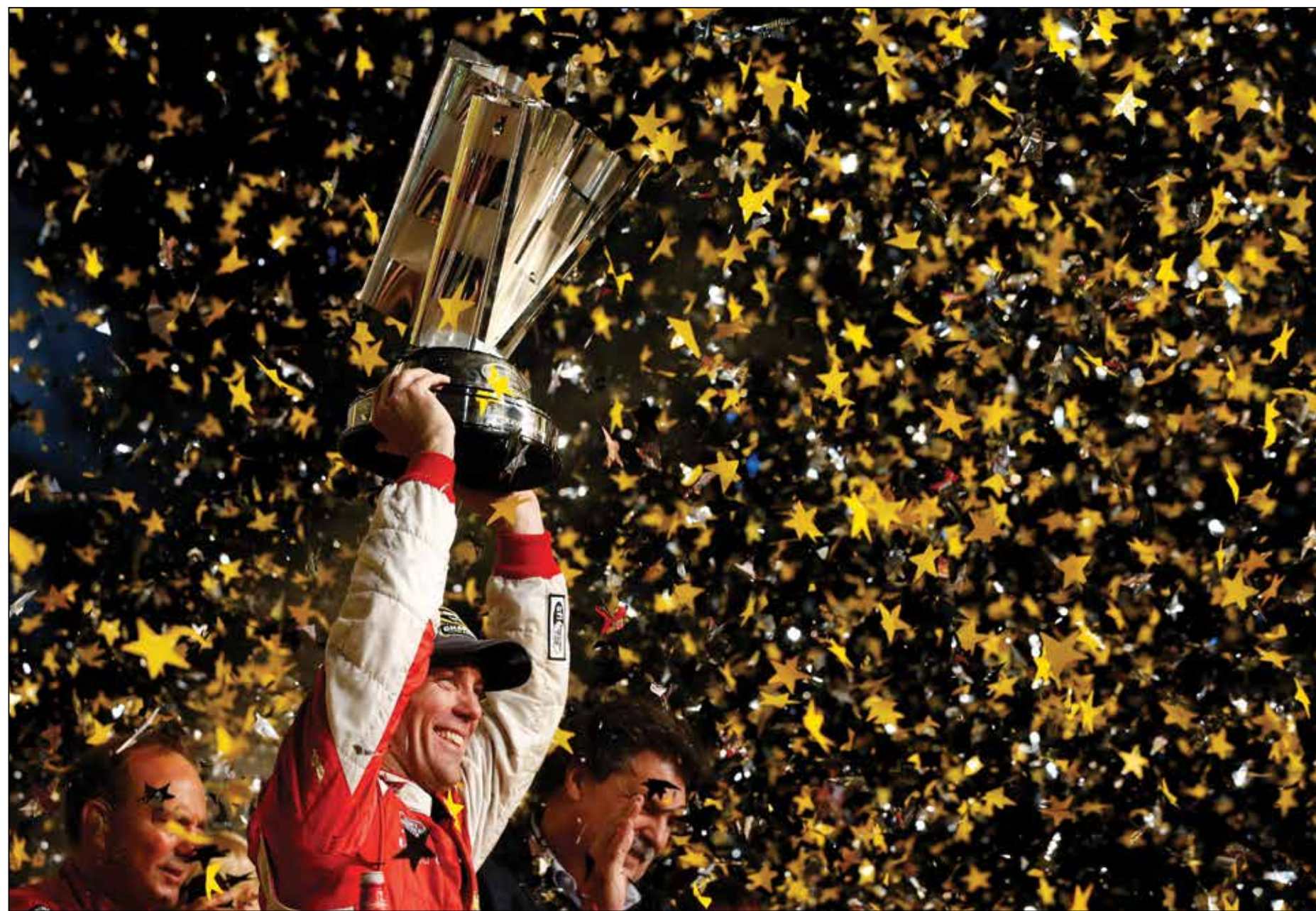
Rounding out the top five behind Harvick and his 5,043 total points in 2014:

- Ryan Newman, 5,042 points;
- Denny Hamlin, 5,037 points;
- Joey Logano, 5,028 points; and
- Brad Kesloweski, 2,361 points.

NASCAR fans also saw exciting races in the sport's other two major series, the XFINITY Series and the Camping World Truck Series. Here's how those standings shook out in 2014:

XFINITY SERIES

Chase Elliott and his No. 9 Chevy for JR Motorsports surprised the field in 2014 by



Kevin Harvick, driver of the #4 Budweiser Chevrolet, celebrates with the trophy in Victory Lane after winning the NASCAR Sprint Cup Series Ford EcoBoost 400 at Homestead-Miami Speedway on Nov. 16 in Homestead, Florida.

SEAN GARDNER/GETTY IMAGES

becoming the first driver to win the championship in his rookie season. The son of 1988 premier series champion Bill Elliott, Chase took home three wins during the season

to claim a relatively easy title down the season's home stretch.

Regan Smith, Elliott Sadler, Brian Scott and Ty Dillon comprised the rest of the top five.

TRUCK SERIES

Matt Crafton earned his second straight truck championship in 2014, finishing 21 points ahead of Ryan Blaney.

Crafton won two races and captured 13 top-five finishes on the season.

Darrell Wallace, Jr., finished in third, followed by Johnny Sauter and Timothy Peters.

Thank You, Jeff Gordon

NASCAR will miss Jeff Gordon's driving skills and winning ways, but it may miss his character and charisma even more.

The Hendrick Motorsports mainstay announced in January that this will be his final NASCAR season as a full-time driver, citing a nagging back injury and the pull to spend more time with his family.

Gordon, 43, will be hanging up the keys on one of the most successful careers in motorsports history, and will try to add to his four championships one more time.

THE DECISION

Gordon told The Associated Press that he reached his decision to retire in the summer of 2014. He took some time to announce his plans while he reflected on what turned out to be a near-miss for a chance at his first championship since 2001.

Gordon led the points standings during most of the 26-race regular season, and then entered the Chase for the Sprint Cup as one of the favorites. A turn of fortunes over the next weeks left Gordon out of the running by a single point.

Gordon finished the season with four wins, 14 top-fives, 23 top-10s, three poles and 1,083 laps led, which were his most in a season since 2007.

He also recorded his record-breaking fifth career win at the Brickyard 400, and



ROBERT LABERGE/NASCAR VIA GETTY IMAGES

Jeff Gordon signs autographs at the NASCAR Sprint Cup Series FanFest on the Third Street Stage at the Fremont Street Experience on Dec. 3.

claimed victories at Kansas, Michigan and Dover.

LEGACY

Gordon became one of the

faces of the stock car racing circuit as the sport caught fire in popularity more than a decade ago. Fans remember him as the clean-cut youngster helping lead the charge of

the new breed of NASCAR driver.

It didn't take him long to dominate the sport. His four championships came within the first seven years of his

career, and he tallied 58 victories before he turned 30.

Gordon's 92 career wins trail only Hall of Fame drivers Richard Petty (200) and David Pearson (105).

2015 Hall of Fame Class

Another year, another outstanding NASCAR Hall of Fame Class. For only the sixth time in the hall's history, a five-person group will be celebrated: Bill Elliott, Fred Lorenzen, Wendell Scott, Joe Weatherly and Rex White.

The sport also honors Anne B. France this year with the inaugural Landmark Award for Outstanding Contributions to NASCAR.

Elliott received the largest vote for this year's class (87 percent) while Scott (58 percent) and Weatherly (53 percent) also earned nods from more than half of the voters.

Here is a quick look at this year's class:

BILL ELLIOTT

Elliott raced for 37 years, compiling 44 wins to put him at 16th of all time. He thrived on the biggest stages, winning the Daytona 500 twice and the Southern 500 at Darlington Raceway three times.

His greatest season came in 1988 when he won the NASCAR premier series championship.

FRED LORENZEN

Lorenzen's racing career started in 1960. He won three races in only 15 starts the following season and became known as an expert part-time driver, never running more than 29 of the season's 50-plus races. In 1965, he won two of NASCAR's major events — the Daytona 500 and the World 600.



Four superstars of NASCAR find a great place to relax, leaning against the Mercury of driver Parnelli Jones in the garage area of Daytona International Speedway before the running of the Daytona 500 NASCAR Cup race in February 1963. Left to right: Fred Lorenzen, Glen "Fireball" Roberts, Joe Weatherly and Darel Dieringer. Lorenzen and Weatherly are among this year's NASCAR Hall of Fame Class.

WENDELL SCOTT

Scott was the first African-American to both race full-time in NASCAR's premier series and win a premier series race.

He finished in the top 10 147 times during his 13-year premier series career and was

just as impressive coming up the ranks, winning more than 100 races at local tracks before making his premier series debut.

JOE WEATHERLY

Weatherly was a two-time champion in NASCAR's pre-

mier series (1962-63). He also won 25 races during his premier career, following up on his 101 victories in the NASCAR Modified division. Considered one of the most versatile drivers of his time, he also won 12 races in the sport's short-lived convertible division.

REX WHITE

White finished among the top five in nearly a half of his 233 races and was known as a short-track specialist. Only two of his 28 career wins in NASCAR's premier series came on tracks longer than 1 mile.

Why Change a Good Thing?

Oh, what a difference a season makes. This time last year, NASCAR was undergoing massive change to its Chase for the Sprint Cup playoff system.

Seeing the excitement the new chase created has left NASCAR rule-makers in hands-off mode, letting the system ride out another year or two before implementing any further adjustments.

Can you blame them? NASCAR set attendance records at many of its 2014 races and fan engagement was as strong as it has ever been. While the Chase is being effectively unchanged, there are some minor adjustments being made to the overall rules structure.

IMPROVED VIDEO MONITORING

NASCAR will use its new pit road monitoring system in the Sprint Cup Series, as well as in Xfinity and Camping World Truck Series races that run in conjunction with Cup events.

The system uses a variety of video cameras to help streamline and improve the regulation of pit road activities and penalties.

FLARING SIDE SKIRTS

On of the most noticeable rule changes this year involves the controversial practice of teams intention-



JONATHAN FERREY/GETTY IMAGES

ally flaring the side skirts on their cars. Manipulating the fenders improves a car's aerodynamics, boosting their performance and ease of driving.

The strategy involves pull-

ing away sheet metal located near the wheel well. At the end of last season, teams were seen pulling a large portion of the skirts out and creating a wing that was sometimes blamed for causing cut

tires during the Sprint Cup Series Chase.

Any driver with a flared side skirt in 2015 will be called to pit road to address the infraction with an official.

Teams will not be allowed to regain their lost track position on the restart.

Any additional sanctions associated with the violation have not yet been announced by NASCAR.

2015 Drive for Diversity

NASCAR's Drive for Diversity program is adding four newcomers to its initiative promoting the achievements of female and multicultural drivers and pit crew members.

Rev Racing, the program's competition arm, fields four teams in the NASCAR K&N Pro Series East and two in the NASCAR Whelen All-American Series.

Growth of the program also extends to pit crew members under the NASCAR D4D Crew Member Development Program. More than 30 multicultural athletes were fulltime pit crew members for teams across all three national series in 2014.

Here is a look at this year's Drive for Diversity roster.

DEVON AMOS

Amos is a 23-year-old native of Rio Rancho, N.M., making the jump to the K&N Pro Series. He spent two full seasons in the Whelen All-American Series, finding success and growing his fan base.

JAY BEASLEY

Also 23 years old and finishing sixth in the Sunoco Rookie of the Year field in the K&N Pro Series East last season, Beasley looks to leverage some of the momentum created during his strong rookie season.

COLLIN CABRE

This 21-year-old also will



TOM WHITMORE/GETTY IMAGES FOR NASCAR

Rev Racing's General Manager Derik Crotts and drivers form a team huddle before going out on their track activities during the NASCAR Drive For Diversity Combine at Langley Speedway on October 17, 2012 in Hampton, Virginia.

compete in the K&N Pro Series East in his first year with Rev Racing.

Cabre put together an impressive D4D combine performance and has spent the past five years getting a start racing asphalt and dirt sprint cars.

NATALIE DECKER

At 17, Decker already boasts an outstanding resume, including Rookie and Sportsman of the Year in the ARCA SCAG Midwest Truck Tour. She will compete in the 2015 NASCAR Whelen All-American Series.

KENZIE RUSTON

Ruston has turned heads as a 22-year-old, entering her third season in the K&N Pro Series East and first with Rev Racing. She also is a member of NASCAR Next, a program that identifies future stars.

DYLAN SMITH

Smith is 22 years old and a member of Stewart-Haas Racing. He has completed 15 races and finished 38th in the Whelen All-American Series Division I national standings.

Can Junior Follow Up 2014?

Dale Earnhardt, Jr., can look back on his 2014 season with both excitement and disappointment. He claimed four race wins and a fourth straight berth in the Chase for the NASCAR Sprint Cup.

Although he failed to advance past the Contender Round, his four season wins were his single-season best since he took home six in 2004.

Time will only tell what's in store for Junior in 2015, but he appears to have plenty of gas left in the tank if last season was any indication.

COMEBACK TO REMEMBER

Junior started his 2014 season with a bang, claiming his second Daytona 500 victory. After an average start, he took charge of the lead with 18 laps to go and held off the competition to win the 56th edition of the Great American Race.

It was an exciting start to the season for Junior, who earned top-five finishes in four of his first six starts and held a top-two spot in points all the way through March before eventually slipping in the standings for an eighth-place finish.

He looks to catapult off his strong showing last season and build upon his 23 Sprint Cup Series wins.

COMMUNITY STEWARD

To complement his out-



CHRIS TROTMAN/GETTY IMAGES

standing comeback season on the track, Earnhardt, Jr., also was honored for his commitment to community in 2014.

He was the 2014 recipient of the NMPA Myers Brothers award, a prestigious honor

recognizing those who have made outstanding contributions to stock car racing. He was celebrated for his career achievements as a champion driver, team owner and philanthropist.

Earnhardt contributes to

next-generation racing, fielding Late Model or Street Stock cars since he founded JR Motorsports.

Earnhardt's work extends into the community, as he has made more than 200 appearances on behalf of the

Make-A-Wish Foundation and has raised more than \$900,000 through his Dale Jr. Foundation.

The money is distributed to more than 70 different charities with various missions and goals.

Changes for Joe Gibbs Racing

Longtime fans of Joe Gibbs Racing will immediately notice one major change to the organization's structure: An extra driver.

Drivers Denny Hamlin, Kyle Busch and Matt Kenseth welcome a fourth team member with Carl Edwards as the driver in 2015. Edwards changes teams from Roush Fenway Racing and is expected to immediately boost JGR back into the thick of a Sprint Series championship.

To make the expansion as seamless as possible, JGR also shuffled its driver-crew chief lineup for three of its four teams. Veteran crew chief Darian Grubb moved over to work with Edwards, Dave Rogers will now lead Hamlin, and Adam Stevens moves up from the Xfinity Series to lead Busch's No. 18 team.

A DISAPPOINTING 2014

Following a 2013 season in which the team won 12 races, JGR struggled out of the gate in 2014 and only went to Victory Lane twice all year.

Despite the struggles, all three JGR drivers made the 16-driver Chase field, with Hamlin advancing to the Championship round.

EDWARDS ADDITION

Edwards joins JGR after 11 years with Roush. His most successful season came in 2011 when he lost the Sprint Cup to Tony Stewart on a tie-breaker.

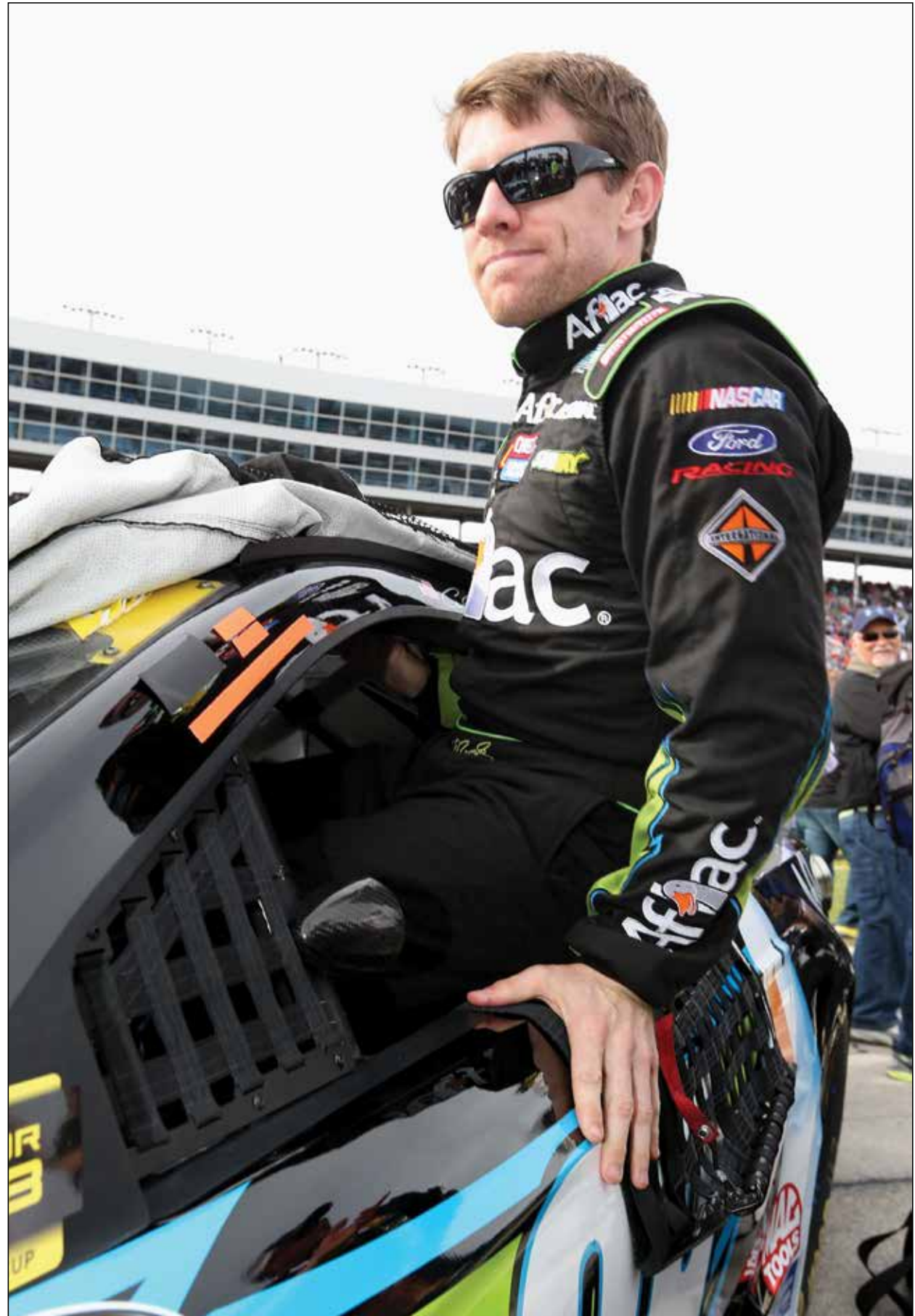
He clinched a spot in the past two Chases but failed to advance far into the playoffs. He finished ninth in the 2014 standings and accepted the offer to join JGR in the middle of the season.

Edwards is hoping to bring his record of 23 career wins and 38 in what is now the Xfinity Series, within which he also won a championship in 2007.

ABOUT JOE GIBBS RACING

Gibbs launched Joe Gibbs Racing in 1992 after completing a successful coaching career in the National Football League, winning three Super Bowls with the Washington Redskins.

His racing organization, which also has won three championships, is based in Huntersville, NC., occupying a 250,000 square-foot-facility, according to the team's official website.



TODD WARSHAW/GETTY IMAGES FOR TEXAS MOTOR SPEEDWAY

Carl Edwards will be the fourth driver on the Joe Gibbs Racing team after 11 years with Roush Fenway Racing.

NASCAR SPRINT CUP SERIES CAR



1. Radiator Air Intake: Directs outside air into the radiator to cool engine fluids.

2. Brake Air Intakes: Direct outside air to brake discs and rotors for additional cooling.

3. Hood Pins: Four, quick-release metal pins with wire tethers that keep the hood closed.

4. Cowl Induction: Housing for the air cleaner that connects the air intake at the base of the windshield to the throttle body.

5. Body Panels: Fabricated from 24-gauge/0.0247-inch (minimum) cold-rolled sheet metal.

6. Roll Cage: A cage of steel tubing inside the car that protects the driver during impacts and rollovers.

7. Jack Post: Where the jackman places the jack to lift the car during pit stops.

8. Double Frame Rail and Energy Absorbing Material: A combination of steel plating and energy absorbing materials installed in between the roll cage door bars and door panels that attenuate energy upon impact.

9. Window Net: Safety device located in the driver-side window that keeps the driver's head and arms inside the car during an accident.

10. Roof Strips: Two three-quarter-inch-tall aluminum strips which run lengthwise on the roof to help prevent the car from flipping when turned sideways during a spin or accident.

11. TV Camera: Allows NASCAR fans to view the racing from the driver's perspective.

12. Roof Flaps: Help prevent the car from becoming airborne when it is turned sideways or backwards during a spin or accident.

13. Jacking Bolts: Area where the crew uses a tool to adjust the handling of the car by altering the load on the rear springs.

14. Cooling Vents: Help remove warm air from the cockpit and help cool critical components inside and at the rear of the car.

15. Goodyear Eagle Racing Tires: Treadless radial tires designed specifically for racing.

16. Rear Deck Fin: At 3.5 inches tall, it can be the full length of the deck lid (25 inches) but must be a minimum of 17 inches, starting at the front of the deck. This tuning tool adjusts rear sideforce and is made of clear polycarbonate beginning with the 2013 NASCAR Sprint Cup Series season.

17. Rear Spoiler: Directs air flowing over the rear of the car, providing down force to improve the handling.

NASCAR BASICS RACING TIRES 101

RACE TIRE VS. STREET TIRE

On a typical race weekend, a NASCAR Sprint Cup Series team will use between nine and 14 sets of tires depending upon the length of the race and type of track – short track, speedway, superspeedway or road course. By comparison, an average set of street tires gets replaced approximately every three years. NASCAR Sprint Cup Series racing tire specifications also differ from race to race depending upon the degree of track banking and type of racing surface (asphalt, concrete, or mixture of both). Goodyear uses about 18 different tire codes to cover the needs of the NASCAR Sprint Cup Series during the course of a racing season.



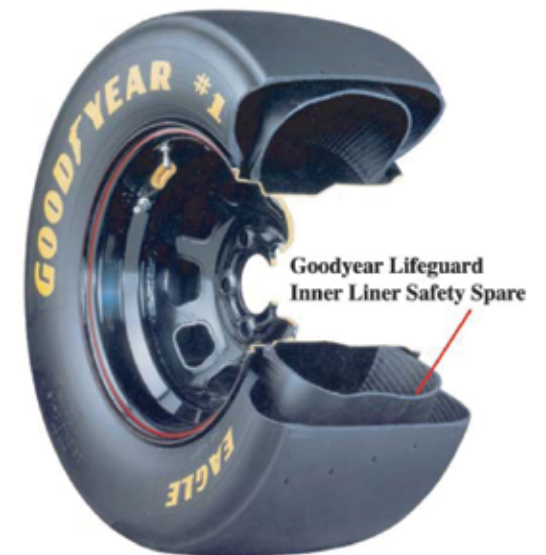
Goodyear Eagle Radial Race Tire
Tread Width: 11.5 inches

Goodyear Eagle High-Performance Street Tire
Tread Width: 9 inches

	Goodyear Eagle Radial Race Tire	Goodyear Eagle High-Performance Street Tire
Estimated Cost	\$389 each	\$150-200 each
Average Life	150 miles	50,000 miles
Air Pressure (cold psi)	30 psi, left/45 psi, right	35 psi, all
Inflated with	Dry air or nitrogen	Air
Weight	24 pounds	30 pounds
Tread Thickness	1/8 inch	3/8 inch

RACE TIRE SAFETY

Introduced in 1966, the Goodyear Lifeguard Inner Liner Safety Spare allows the car to return to the pits in the event of an air loss. Based on a tire-within-a-tire concept, it features a separate valve system that eliminates air equalization and prevents the tire and wheel assembly from becoming unbalanced.



GOODYEAR LIFEGUARD INNER LINER SAFETY SPARE

As a rule, the Goodyear Lifeguard Inner Liner Safety Spare is used on oval tracks one mile or more in length. It's also used on the right-side tires at Bristol Motor Speedway. The inner liner can be reused up to a dozen times if not damaged. It weighs 10 pounds and is generally inflated 12 to 25 pounds higher than the outer Goodyear Eagle race tire. The original version of this tire was first tested by drivers Richard Petty and Darel Dieringer, and was used until 1992 before it was replaced by the current tubeless model.



RACING FLAGS

NASCAR officials help signal messages to drivers during races by waving an assortment of colored flags. The flagman, who is always located on a stand high above the start/finish line, plays an important role during an event.



GREEN FLAG – Displayed at the start of the race and also for restarts during the race. Cars must maintain position until they have crossed the start/finish line. The polesitter at the race start – and race leader on restarts – controls the pace and cannot be passed prior to the green flag waving.

YELLOW FLAG – Signifies caution and is given to the first car passing the starter immediately following the incident that caused the display of the flag. All cars must slow down immediately to a pre-determined pace and hold their position behind the pace car.

RED FLAG – Signifies the race must be stopped immediately, regardless of the position of the cars on the track. The red flag shall be used if NASCAR officials decide the race should be stopped, usually for safety and/or competition-related reasons. Cars will be brought to a stop in an area design-

nated by NASCAR officials. Repairs or service of any nature or refueling, whether on pit road or the garage, will not be permitted when the race is halted due to a red flag, unless the car has withdrawn from the event.

BLUE FLAG WITH DIAGONAL YELLOW STRIPE – Although this flag is displayed regularly during most during races, it is probably the least recognized. This flag is displayed to drivers, who are a lap down or significantly slower, that are about to be passed by lead-lap cars. Drivers who are shown this flag must yield to the faster lead-lap cars.

BLACK FLAG – Display of this flag requests that the car go immediately to the pits and report to the NASCAR official at the car's pit area. The car can receive a black flag for a variety of reasons, including a driver/team infraction, or a potential problem with the car reported by NASCAR officials that

warrants a closer inspection in the pits. It does not mean automatic disqualification.

BLACK FLAG WITH DIAGONAL WHITE STRIPE – At the discretion of NASCAR officials, if the driver does not obey the black-flag directive, the driver may then be given the black flag with a white cross at the start/finish line to inform the driver that any additional scoring of the car will be discontinued until further notice.

WHITE FLAG – Waves when the driver in the lead begins the final lap of the race.

CHECKERED FLAG – The most famous of all flags, the black and white checkered flag is displayed when the winner has crossed the finish line. All cars on the track will take the checkered flag once.

Source: NASCAR

NASCAR BASICS

DRAFTING



Aerodynamics

Study of airflow in regard to a stock car.

Downforce

Downforce can be altered to improve the car's grip or traction by adjusting the spoiler as well as other aerodynamic changes to the car and its setup. As downforce is increased, the grip/traction is increased as well as tire wear. Increasing downforce comes at the expense of creating more drag, which will reduce fuel efficiency.

Draft

The aerodynamic effect that allows two or more cars traveling nose to tail to run faster than a single car. When one car follows another closely, the one in front punches through the air and provides a cleaner, less resistant path for the trailing cars.

Drag

The resistance a car experiences when passing through air at high speeds.

Drafting

The practice of two or more cars running nose to tail to create more speed for the group. The lead car displaces the air in front of it, creates a vacuum effect between its rear end and the nose of the second car and pulls the trailing cars along with it with less overall resistance. Two or more cars drafting will travel faster than a single car.

Source: NASCAR