



KYLE BUSCH

Bringing the ‘Heat’ to Chicagoland

HUNTERSVILLE, North Carolina (Sept. 12, 2017) – As the Monster Energy NASCAR Cup Series playoffs take the green flag Sunday at Chicagoland Speedway in Joliet, Illinois, Kyle Busch plans to bring the “heat” to the first race of the postseason.

Busch, driver of the No. 18 Skittles® Sweet Heat Toyota Camry for Joe Gibbs Racing (JGR), will have a new product and a new scheme to start the 10-race playoffs this weekend. The new sweet, yet spicy, candy will debut on the track this weekend and is available at Walgreens stores with a full, nationwide rollout set for early next year.

In the third year of its current format but with a new name, the NASCAR Playoffs begin this weekend with Busch as the third seed among the 16-drivers taking part in the series of elimination rounds over the next 10 races that will determine the 2017 Cup Series champion.

The championship format breaks the 10-race playoffs into a four-round grid. The first round is a round of 16 and features races at Chicagoland, New Hampshire Motor Speedway in Loudon and Dover (Del.) International Speedway. After Dover, four drivers are eliminated and 12 drivers remain for the second round. The three races of the round of 12 will be run at Charlotte (N.C.) Motor Speedway, Talladega (Ala.) Superspeedway, and Kansas Speedway in Kansas City. After Kansas, just eight drivers will remain for the third round. Races at Martinsville (Va.) Speedway, Texas Motor Speedway in Fort Worth, and Phoenix International Raceway will comprise the round of eight. After Phoenix, just four drivers will remain for the championship race and season finale at Homestead-Miami Speedway. At Homestead, the goal is simple – the highest finisher among the final four drivers will be crowned champion.

With fellow Toyota driver Martin Truex Jr. proving to be the dominant force during the 2017 regular season, Busch and the No. 18 team were not far behind.

Along with setting his sights on advancing throughout the playoffs, the 2015 Cup Series champion is looking to rekindle the magic he showed at Chicagoland in 2008 – when he captured a dramatic win at the track just southwest of Chicago – during Sunday’s Tales of the Turtles 400.

Back in 2008, a late-race caution set up a green-white-checkered finish. Busch lined up behind now seven-time Sprint Cup champion Jimmie Johnson. On the final restart, the Las Vegas native made a bold and surprising move to the outside in turns one and two, passing Johnson and holding him off to bring home the win.

As Busch looks ahead to the kickoff of this year’s playoffs at Chicagoland, he and the Skittles Sweet Heat team hope to bring the “heat,” as a win Sunday could go a long way toward helping him and his team bring home their second Cup Series title.

KYLE BUSCH, Driver of the No. 18 Skittles Sweet Heat Toyota Camry for Joe Gibbs Racing:

How do you feel entering the first round of the playoffs?

“I like it. You know, we’ve been running really solidly at New Hampshire the last few years and Chicago has been good for us. It’s a decent place to run top-10, for sure. And then, Dover, of course, is a really good place for us. I like it. You know, it seems like it’s a good round for us to be able to score some wins. As long as you get one, that moves you on through. Doesn’t matter how many you get after that, but we’ll see how it goes. Just a matter of trying to manage your losses, essentially, and making sure you can come out of races with good finishes. If you look at the playoffs overall, I feel really good about the tracks, with Talladega being the only place where I don’t have a lot of confidence because you never know what can happen there. Texas would be the only other track that might be a bit of wild card since it’s only the second race on the new pavement there but, other than that, there are a lot of good track for us in the final 10 races. We’re looking to start it off right with our Skittles Sweet Heat Camry this weekend.”

Do you feel like you're in a better position this year?

“I kind of feel about the same, actually. I feel like we kind of are right even with where we were last year – kind of doing the same things – but there are other guys who are better than us, so we're just going to have to figure out how to out-race them and out-finish them when we need to. A couple of our 'teammates' – the 78 (Martin Truex Jr.) especially – he's just been stellar fast each and every week. The 78 has been the best all year and I feel like myself and Kyle Larson have been the second-best cars most weeks. We just have to step our game up and see if we can get a little bit better and on the level of what the 78 has been. In the playoffs, something can happen to you and take you out of a round. That's why you've got to be careful and try to minimize your bad days and make it forward.”

How do you feel about how you've run at Chicagoland in recent years?

“At Chicago, we ran really well there in '08 and, unfortunately, '09, '10 and '11 we kind of a struggled. The last several years we ran well there but didn't always get the finishes we deserved for how well we ran. We had a really solid top-five run going the last two years.”

Where does the 2008 Cup win at Chicagoland rank in terms of special wins for you, knowing how you made a spectacular move on the outside to win?

“Winning both (Xfinity Series and Cup) races at Chicago that year, it was just a great weekend. It was special, but there have been several special wins the last few years. Obviously, winning twice at the Brickyard was very special and, of course, winning the championship at Homestead in 2015 was a big highlight, as well. But winning Chicago in 2008 and beating Jimmie (Johnson) was definitely neat. Ultimately, I have a lot of respect for him, Jeff Gordon, Tony Stewart and a lot of guys who have given a lot to this sport over the years, since it's so competitive. To go out and beat guys like that, it's something pretty special and I really cherished that, for sure.”

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