



# KYLE BUSCH

## Trip Down Memory Lane

HUNTERSVILLE, North Carolina (Aug. 28, 2018) – After first signing on as a team sponsor with the No. 8 Stavola Brothers entry in 1990 with its SNICKERS brand, Mars Wrigley Confectionary U.S. has had an impressive and longstanding relationship with NASCAR racing.

As the sport prepares to celebrate its history with the annual “Throwback Weekend” at Darlington (S.C.) Raceway, Mars is proud to bring back one of its most memorable schemes from its early days – Ernie Irvan’s 1998 Skittles racecar – that will adorn Kyle Busch’s No. 18 Skittles Toyota during Sunday’s Bojangles’ Southern 500 Monster Energy NASCAR Cup Series race.

After a successful introduction, Mars expanded the presence of its SKITTLES® brand within the sport by joining MB2 Motorsports and driver Derrike Cope as sponsor of the No. 36 entry for the 1997 season for one season. With Irvan taking over the driving duties of the SKITTLES® car in 1998, he brought Mars its first pole position by clinching the top starting spot at the Brickyard 400 at the Indianapolis Motor Speedway. Later that season, Irvan and MB2 helped launch Wild Berry SKITTLES®, in addition to the now memorable paint scheme that will be brought back this weekend at Darlington.

Fast forward 20 years later to this weekend’s event, Mars Wrigley and its associated brands are having an exceptional year with Busch and his No. 18 Skittles Toyota for JGR during a season that thus far has yielded six wins and features Busch with a 43-point lead atop the driver standings with just two races remaining in the regular season.

The Skittles driver has conquered Darlington before, having brought home a Cup Series win at “The Track Too Tough to Tame” in May 2008. His first victory at Darlington earned him the distinction of being the youngest Cup Series winner – at 23 years of age – in the track’s storied history. Busch also has two Xfinity Series wins at Darlington, coming in May 2011 and 2013.

Starting in 1950, the traditional Southern 500 at Darlington was held every Labor Day weekend. In 2004, the race was moved to the penultimate race of the season during the first year of NASCAR’s playoffs before it was eventually moved in 2009 to the Saturday of Mother’s Day weekend, when the Southern 500 name was brought back. In 2015, the race returned to its rightful and traditional spot on the calendar after a 12-year hiatus. Sunday night’s race will mark the 58<sup>th</sup> time NASCAR’s top series will race in Darlington on Labor Day weekend.

So, as Busch returns to “The Lady in Black” to compete in Sunday’s traditional Southern 500, he and the Skittles team look to bring home their second win in what many consider to be one of NASCAR’s crown jewel races, as Busch and the Skittles team look to take a trip down memory lane and end up in victory lane before all is said and done.

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

### **How did your throwback scheme for Darlington come about?**

“We just talked with our partners at M&Ms and Skittles and Snickers and tried to decide who wanted to take the Darlington race knowing that it’s always the throwback scheme. We knew as soon as we could get Skittles on board, we knew which one – it was pretty simple which one to go back to since it’s a scheme everyone who was around the sport back then remembers it well. Having Ernie (Irvan) being involved in the whole unveil – it was pretty special having him being there and being able to talk with him and kind of reminisce some of the stories of that car and what they were able to do in that year. I think it was the year before he ended up retiring that he ran that scheme, so it was pretty late in his career. It’ll be nice to have him there and have the opportunity to have his name on the car and to be able to go out there and hopefully put it in victory lane.”

### **What makes Joe Gibbs Racing so strong at Darlington?**

“I like going to Darlington – it’s a fun place although it’s bit me a lot of times. I should have won probably twice as many races as I’ve won there, which is frustrating. I was glad to win there in 2008 and get my Southern 500 win – that was pretty cool. Why we’re good there? I don’t know, but it’s a place that a lot of the driver comes into play and I feel like all the JGR drivers, obviously, are really, really good. Of course, our equipment is good, too, and we can run fast there – run well there – and, if you can keep air in the tires, you might win.”

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**Have you put any more emphasis on winning the regular-season championship?**

“Yeah, the last couple of weeks, certainly. We’re trying to make sure that we can close the regular season with that championship and get those bonus points. That’s what’s most meaningful is those bonus points to carry you on through each round of the playoffs. You get those for every segment, so that’s going to be important. As far as what we can do to make sure that we still achieve that is just run strong. Points are going to take care of themselves if you’re running up front and doing all the right things. Certainly (Kevin) Harvick and I have been running so close to each other near or at the front each and every week. He’s the closest competitor even though they’re still kind of a ways back but, if you have a bad week here in the next couple of weeks and erase that deficit, it’s going to be a close battle all the way to the finish of the regular season.”

**What do drivers mean when they say you have to “race the track” at Darlington?**

“It’s tough to pass there, for sure. It’s so difficult. So you run your laps until you get to a pit stop and try to get your guys to have a good stop for you so you can jump a couple of guys. Pit stops become really important there, as is track position and trying to stay up front.”

**What makes Darlington a track that is too tough to tame?**

“It’s a very narrow and challenging racetrack, especially for the speeds that we carry around there, now. We’re looking forward to the challenge with our Skittles Camry this weekend. You’ve really got to be able to get as close as you can to the wall in order to carry your momentum through the corners because you’ve got to make the straightaways as long as you can. The track is very narrow on entries and exits, so you’re always trying to round the place as much as you can. It’s very one-groovish. You can’t really run side-by-side there. Any time you get alongside somebody, you basically have to let them go. It’s a very big give-and-take-type track. It’s a lot harder to pass now, with the fresh asphalt, than it used to be. It’s really aero-sensitive now, to where it used to be more about mechanical grip and getting your car to handle well and handle over the bumps well and keep the tires on it. Now you’re restricted off the car in front of you and are trying to find some air, basically.”

**Can you describe the “Darlington Stripe” and what it’s like to get one?**

“A Darlington Stripe is pretty easy to receive. Running at Darlington is so tough and we are carrying so much speed there nowadays that you have to run right up there against the wall in order to get your car pointed correctly for the next corner, the next apex you have to make. So, running next to the wall in (turn) one and (turn) two and turning down coming off of two and carrying big momentum and big speed down the backstretch in order to set yourself up for turn three is important. Running high in three and four all the way through the corner, trying to keep the momentum going, because it’s such a tighter corner that the radius difference between each end of the track, you try to spread that radius as wide as you can and that’s right up against the wall. So, at any moment that car can slip and, during a run when the tires fall off, you have to be aware of one to two seconds of tire fall-off and your car is slowing down and at any moment you might slip a little bit and tag that wall. It can be very easy to do.”

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