



MEDIA INFORMATION

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Tuesday, Sept. 5, 2017

Contact: Megan Englehart
Megan.Englehart@FOX.com

FOX NASCAR QUOTES

McReynolds and Waltrip Break Down Saturday's Regular Season Finale, Championship Scenarios & Upcoming Playoffs

CHARLOTTE, N.C. – Saturday night's MONSTER ENERGY NASCAR CUP SERIES race at Richmond Raceway marks the conclusion of the regular season and will determine the 16 drivers who qualify for the championship playoffs. FS1 offers live, pre-race coverage Saturday on NASCAR RACEDAY beginning at 3:30 PM ET.

Below are quotes from FOX NASCAR analysts **Larry McReynolds** and **Michael Waltrip** (Waltrip from Monday's edition of NASCAR RACE HUB on FS1) regarding Saturday's race and storylines surrounding the countdown to the playoffs:

On Denny Hamlin's sweep at Darlington Raceway:

"One thing that has changed for Denny, besides maturing a little bit, is he was going through crew chiefs pretty rapidly for a few years. He didn't quite have the chemistry he was looking for. However, Denny asked specifically for Mike Wheeler, and this is their second season together. I think they'll be together for a long time because that combination is working."

--Larry McReynolds

On how the addition of playoff points could affect the title run:

"It's like having home field advantage in the NFL. You race hard all season long and grab those playoff points, so you can rely on them if you slip and slide in the first three races. Martin Truex Jr. is just about into round 2 by his playoff points, and Jimmie Johnson needs to fight for every point he can get. If you have a problem in one of the races, you can rely on playoff points to help you advance."

--Michael Waltrip

On whether spring Richmond winner Joey Logano could win this weekend and qualify for the playoffs:

"I think Joey Logano could win Saturday at Richmond and get in the playoffs. They haven't forgotten how to get around Richmond. They are starting to find some speed, and he has a shot at getting to Victory Lane Saturday night."

--Larry McReynolds

On the likelihood Jimmie Johnson and the No. 48 team could "turn up the wick" when the playoffs begin, as they have done in recent years:

"Last year was an eye opener. When I filled my bracket out, I didn't have him going beyond the first round because I based it on his performance during the summer. This year seems to be different, though, because some teams are so on top of their game and because the Hendrick Motorsports camp is off across the board. Johnson has won three races, but those were his only

top-five finishes of the year. You can never count them out, but don't expect to see the No. 48 flip the light switch when the playoffs begin this season."

--Larry McReynolds

On the pressure being off Martin Truex Jr. in the first round of the playoffs, given his large amount of playoff points:

"That points cushion is huge because he won regular season points and still two more possible playoff points on the line at Richmond. He has roughly a full race cushion on everyone else. Truex's playoff points give him a good cushion for at least the first round and maybe the first two."

--Larry McReynolds

On how Kyle Busch is setting himself up for the playoffs in recent weeks:

"Kyle is setting himself up for the playoffs perfectly. We're going to be talking about Kyle deep into the playoffs. He and the No. 18 team are starting to peak at the right time."

--Larry McReynolds

On the recent performance of Erik Jones, who is not locked into the playoffs:

"This kid is hitting his stride. I know how talented he is after watching him come up through the Truck Series. He has a fast car and is putting up numbers that show he not only can get in the playoffs but compete once there."

--Michael Waltrip

On Joe Gibbs Racing closing the gap on Furniture Row Racing:

"For sure, those two teams have shared information. Andy Graves is a genius and he has those teams right where they need to be as they march toward the playoffs. JGR is in great shape. We saw a lot of speed out of Denny Hamlin and Kyle Busch. Those cars will be strong. Kenseth could be a player also in his final year at JGR."

--Michael Waltrip

On the possibility Dale Earnhardt Jr. finishes his final season without making the playoffs:

"Anybody retiring from sports wants to have a really good final season, no matter if they're a football player or a golfer. Everybody wants to go out on top. But when you have a successful career – and Dale Jr. has had a successful, most likely a Hall of Fame career -- one season doesn't take away from it. I'm sure Dale is disappointed, as is everyone involved or watching. But Hendrick Motorsports is a little behind right now across the board."

--Larry McReynolds

On possible scenarios in play at Richmond for drivers trying to make it into the playoffs:

"I like what we have headed into Richmond. There are no scenarios to discuss except that drivers outside the top 16 have to win to make the playoffs. There's no 'have a solid night and someone else has trouble and you get in.' Several drivers could still win and make the playoffs. I like the face there's no math to work on Saturday night. The math is you have to win."

--Larry McReynolds

On his four picks to contend for the championship in the final race at Homestead-Miami Speedway:

"Some teams continue to get stronger, like the Joe Gibbs Racing bunch. It wasn't that long ago we were debating what is wrong with JGR, but they have been on a roll lately. And drivers with substantial playoff points, like Martin Truex Jr., will greatly benefit from those points. But they still have to win races and stages and continue to add playoff points. I'll go with Truex, Kyle Larson, Kyle Busch and Denny Hamlin. I can almost assure you, though, that a driver is lying in the weeds that we're not talking much about. Just look back at the first three years of this championship format."

--Larry McReynolds

About FOX NASCAR:

FOX Sports, broadcasting its 17th consecutive MONSTER ENERGY NASCAR CUP SERIES season, is armed with seven championships' worth of analysis and insight from Hall of Famer and three-time champ Darrell Waltrip alongside four-time champion Jeff Gordon, veteran play-by-play announcer Mike Joy and former crew chief Larry McReynolds with race analysis. Behind the camera, FOX NASCAR has won 18 Sports Emmy Awards since its inaugural year of coverage in 2001, including four for Outstanding Live Sports Series, seven for Live Event Audio/Sound and five for Live Technical Team Remote. For more information on FOX NASCAR, please visit [FOX SPORTS PRESS PASS](#).

---FOX SPORTS--