

RACING THIS WEEK

HOF BONUS PIC: A look at blue jackets given to Carl Edwards and Ricky Rudd and presented for Ralph Moody prior to the NHOFF Class of 2025 Blue Jacket Ceremony in Charlotte Friday.



Thoughts of the 10 hottest races keep us heated up

By Marco Buscaglia

While winter's grip keeps us bundled up, it's the perfect time to dream of the sizzling summer days when NASCAR races bring the heat—literally and figuratively. Tracks like Daytona and Talladega are no strangers to blazing temperatures, where the sun scorches the asphalt and the competition burns even hotter. Until the seasons change, warm your thoughts with visions of high-speed thrills under the summer sun.

1. Coke Zero Sugar 400 at Daytona International Speedway, Daytona Beach, Florida

Florida's summer heat and humidity can make this July race extremely challenging for drivers and crews.

2. South Point 400 at Las Vegas Motor Speedway, Las Vegas, Nevada

The September desert heat—often above 90 degrees—of Las Vegas can create scorching conditions on the track, making it one of the hottest races of the year.

3. FireKeepers Casino 400 at Michigan International Speedway, Brooklyn, Michigan

The June summer heat—with temperatures often in the mid-80s to 90s—in Michigan can make this race quite demanding, particularly with the long green-flag runs typical of the track.

4. Ally 400 at Nashville Superspeedway, Nashville, Tennessee

The humidity in June in Tennessee adds to the challenge, making it one of the more taxing races on the schedule. And temperatures in the high 80s to 90s only add to the challenge.

5. Quaker State 400 at Atlanta Motor Speedway, Hampton, Georgia

The intense July heat in Georgia is usually in the 90s, making the Quaker State 400 one of the hottest races of the season.

6. Cook Out Southern 500 at Darlington Raceway, Darlington, South Carolina

The September heat, combined with the demanding nature of the Darlington track, makes this race particularly tough.

7. Bass Pro Shops NRA Night Race at Bristol Motor Speedway, Bristol, Tennessee

Even though it's a night race, the August temperatures can remain in the high 80s to low 90s, adding to the physical demands on drivers.

8. Toyota/Save Mart 350 at Sonoma Raceway, Sonoma, California

The June heat and the challenging road course layout make this a grueling race.

9. Hollywood Casino 400 at Kansas Speedway, Kansas City, Kansas

The Midwest heat can be quite intense in late summer, making this September race one of the hotter events of the year.

10. Federated Auto Parts 400 at Richmond Raceway, Richmond, Virginia

The combination of heat—usually the low 90s—and the physical nature of the short track makes this September race particularly demanding.

RUDD, EDWARDS, MOODY NASCAR Hall of Fame welcomes three

CHARLOTTE, N.C. – NASCAR royalty made its way to uptown Charlotte Friday night to welcome and honor the newest class of NASCAR royalty. The sport's heroes and legends gathered at the NASCAR Hall of Fame to formally induct the Hall's esteemed class of 2025 – racing greats Ricky Rudd, Carl Edwards and the late Ralph Moody.

The cheers rang loudly and cell phone cameras flashed rapidly filling the room when Rudd and Edwards arrived on the red carpet.

In a 13-year NASCAR Cup Series career, Edwards won 28 races, including the Southern 500 at Darlington (S.C.) and the Coca-Cola 600 at Charlotte. He was a two-time NASCAR Cup Series championship runner-up losing out on the 2011 title in the closest title race in history – a tiebreaker with fellow Hall of Famer Tony Stewart.

In all, Edwards earned 72 victories in the three national series, including the 2007 Xfinity Series championship. In 2005, he competed fulltime in both the NASCAR Craftsman Truck Series and Xfinity Series.

Nearly two hundred people – Edwards' family, friends and most ardent career supporters – accompanied the 45-year old Missourian to North Carolina for Friday's career-defining big moment. One of his former car owners, fellow Hall of Famer, Joe Gibbs, rented an airplane for Edwards to transport his group from Missouri.

He explained that during his career fans watched him do his signature backflips to celebrate race wins, but that was only momentary snapshot and that he probably did not allow himself the real time to cherish the victories like he should have.

"So, I said, we're going to make sure there is a real celebration," Edwards said, of the massive Hall of Fame honor.

"For many reasons I'm happy to be able to come back and thank everyone," Edwards said. "It's not reality, not for me yet. ... I don't even know what to say. It feels. ... very good."

Asked about his emotions, Edwards conceded it's been more special than he even imagined but that he had received some advice on the momentous week.

"Chad Knaus was a great crew chief to me yesterday and pulled me aside and told me, 'Carl, this is like a roller coaster,'" Edwards shared with a smile, "He said, 'Right now you're going up [the roller coaster] and your nervous and you're going to get on the ride and that's right now and you're going to like it. Then it's going to be over and you're going to want to do it again immediately because it happens so fast.'"

In speaking to the Hall on stage during his official induction, Edwards called his message one of "gratitude" – thanking his parents, wife, children, longtime fans and Hall of Fame team owners Jack Roush and Gibbs, his competitors and all those that worked on his teams.

"I realized probably the most revelatory thing in my life, that changed everything for me, I realized that all that time in the car, all that time in the shop, all the people that loved and cared about me, helped me, all the people, the friends and family that I wasn't alone, that God was leading, God was beside me," Edwards said.

It was a similarly moving induction experience for Rudd, known as one of the toughest competitors in the sport's history. His first ever NASCAR start of any kind came in the NASCAR Cup Series and he finished 11th in that 1975 debut at Rockingham, N.C. as an 18-year old – earning his first of 374 career top-10s the following week at Bristol, Tenn. In 1983, at age 24 he became the youngest pole-winner in Daytona history.

Rudd, 68, of Chesapeake, Va., would go on to earn 23 career NASCAR Cup Series victories including the 1997 Brickyard 400 as an owner-driver and the 1992 International Race of Champions (IROC) title in his first year in the series.



Hall of Fame inductees Carl Edwards (left) and Ricky Rudd at the NHOFF Class of 2025 Blue Jacket Ceremony Friday. (David Jensen/Getty Images)

He is best-known however for his singular toughness – 16 consecutive years (1983-98) with a victory at the sport's highest level and his string of 788 straight starts was a record that lasted until 2015. His 905 total starts in a career that spanned four decades, is second only to the seven-time NASCAR champion Petty (1,185 starts).

"With the help of a lot of great people I was able to chase a lot of dreams and with tonight's induction, that dream is now complete," said Rudd. "NASCAR allowed me to experience things most people will never do. I got to fly with the Blue Angels. I shook the hands of two presidents, refueled with the Air Force Thunderbirds high above the Nevada desert and play a small role in a movie. ...this is truly the honor of a lifetime."

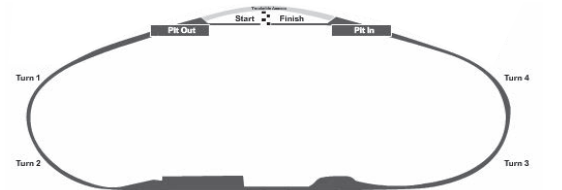
Ralph Moody, who passed away in 2004, served under General George Patton in World War II before becoming a fulltime driver and winning five times in NASCAR's premier division in 1956-57. But his legacy was only beginning. In 1957 he partnered with John Holman to form the iconic Holman-Moody Racing company – building cars and creating innovations that produced 96 Cup wins between 1957-72 and winning the 1968-69 Cup Series championships with driver David Pearson.

"If not for Ralph Moody there probably wouldn't be a Bobby or Donnie Allison, he's just a fantastic man," Donnie Allison said, introducing Moody's son and daughter to the stage for the official Hall of Fame ring presentation.

"It is with great pride and gratitude I stand here tonight to honor my father," the younger Ralph Moody told the crowd of his father's unlikely rise from a Massachusetts farm into NASCAR's most hall of honor.

"For dad it was never just about winning, it was about creating safety not just being faster," Moody said, ending the acceptance speech with an emotion-filled thank you to his father.

NEXT: DAYTONA 500



Daytona International Speedway 2:30 p.m. ET Sunday, Feb. 16, FOX

- **Location:** 1801 West International Speedway Blvd, Daytona Beach, Florida
- **Capacity:** 101,500-167,785 (w/infield, depending on configuration); 123,500 (grandstand capacity)
- **The history of Daytona International Speedway began in 1953** when Bill France Sr. realized the days of racing on the beach were numbered due to spreading land usage of a rapidly growing population and huge race crowds. France put his plans for the future of racing in Daytona Beach in motion on April 4, 1953 with a proposal to construct a permanent speedway facility. On Aug. 16, 1954, France signed a contract with City of Daytona Beach and Volusia County officials to build what would become Daytona International Speedway, the "World Center of Racing." In 1957, land clearing began for the Speedway. The famous 31-degree highbanks were included in the design of the track so higher speeds could be achieved and to make it easier for fans to see the cars race around the 2.5-mile tri-oval. The dirt for the banking was taken from the infield and resulted in a 29-acre space that is known as Lake Lloyd.
- **Racing moved from the beach-road course to Daytona International Speedway in 1959** and the first Daytona 500 took place on Feb. 22 in front of a crowd of over 41,000. Car entries included both hard tops and convertibles (it was the only Daytona 500 that included convertibles). The finish of the inaugural Daytona 500 was too close to call. Johnny Beauchamp went to Victory Lane, but 61 hours later Lee Petty was declared the official winner after a clip of newsreel footage showed that Petty nipped Beauchamp at the line by approximately two feet.
- **On July 5, 2013, ground broke on the \$400 million DAYTONA Rising** frontstretch renovation that would transform the speedway into a state-of-the-art facility. It now has approximately 101,500 permanent, wider and more comfortable seats, 40 escalators, 17 elevators, twice as many restrooms, three times as many concession stands and three concourse levels.



William Byron celebrated after winning last year's Daytona 500. (Getty)

2024 CUP SERIES FINAL STANDINGS

Top 30 (w/ Champion in bold) as of Nov. 10, 2024

Rank/Driver	Points	Rank/Driver	Points
1 J. Logano Ford	5040	16 H. Burton Ford	2122
2 R. Blaney Ford	5035	17 C. Buescher Ford	930
3 W. Byron Chevrolet	5034	18 D. Wallace Jr. Toyota	878
4 T. Reddick Toyota	5031	19 R. Chastain Chevrolet	852
5 C. Bell Toyota	2413	20 Ky. Busch Chevrolet	766
6 K. Larson Chevrolet	2378	21 C. Hocevar Chevrolet	686
7 C. Elliott Chevrolet	2343	22 T. Gilliland Ford	630
8 D. Hamlin Toyota	2329	23 M. McDowell Ford	624
9 A. Bowman Chevrolet	2319	24 N. Gragson Ford	612
10 M. Truex Jr. Toyota	2258	25 R. Stenhouse Chevy	590
11 A. Cindric Ford	2248	26 R. Preece Ford	584
12 D. Suárez Chevrolet	2226	27 J. Berry Ford	579
13 B. Keselowski Ford	2209	28 E. Jones Toyota	516
14 C. Briscoe Ford	2184	29 D. Hemric Chevrolet	515
15 T. Gibbs Toyota	2169	30 Z. Smith Chevrolet	505

2024 XFINITY SERIES FINAL STANDINGS

Top 20 (w/ Champion in bold) as of Nov. 9, 2024

Rank/Driver	Points	Rank/Driver	Points
1 Justin Allgaier #7	4035	11 Sammy Smith #8	2185
2 Cole Custer #00	4029	12 Shane v Gisbergen #97	2157
3 AJ Allmendinger #16	4028	13 Ryan Sieg #28	856
4 Austin Hill #21	4027	14 Brandon Jones #9	696
5 Chandler Smith #81	2314	15 Anthony Alfredo #5	641
6 Sheldon Creed #18	2264	16 Brennan Poole #44	572
7 Riley Herbst #98	2254	17 Aric Almirola #20	560
8 Jesse Love #2	2247	18 Josh Williams #11	515
9 Sam Mayer #1	2205	19 Jeb Burton #22	512
10 Parker Kligerman #48	2190	20 Jeremy Clements #51	477

NEXT RACE: UNITED RENTALS 300, Daytona International, Saturday, Feb. 15, CW

2024 TRUCK SERIES FINAL STANDINGS

Top 20 (w/ Champion in bold) as of Nov. 8, 2024

Rank/Driver	Points	Rank/Driver	Points
1 Ty Majeski #98	4065	11 Layne Riggs #38	605
2 Corey Heim #11	4055	12 Stewart Friesen #52	557
3 Christian Eckes #19	4048	13 Tanner Gray #15	550
4 Grant Enfinger #9	4042	14 Matt Crafton #88	524
5 Nicholas Sanchez #2	2280	15 Chase Purdy #77	513
6 Taylor Gray #17	2247	16 Dean Thompson #5	469
7 Rajah Caruth #71	2213	17 Jake Garcia #13	459
8 Tyler Ankrum #18	2183	18 Bayley Currey #41	392
9 Ben Rhodes #99	2150	19 Kaden Honeycutt #45	384
10 Daniel Dye #43	2141	20 Bret Holmes #32	360

NEXT RACE: FRESH FROM FLORIDA 250, Daytona International, Friday, Feb. 14, FS1

HOF BONUS NOTES

At Friday's Hall of Fame Induction in Charlotte, long-time Associated Press racing journalist **Mike Harris** was awarded the Squier-Hall Award for NASCAR Media Excellence for his four-decades work as the lead motorsports writer for the AP before retiring in 2009.

"Mike was always a gentlemen journalist," said longtime NASCAR executive Mike Helton, one of a more than a dozen racing insiders who offered their congratulations and praise for Harris.

"He truly was a gentleman and respectful of everybody else who was doing what he was inside the sport. While covering heroes of the sport and the characters and team owners and crew members, he himself became a well-known name that people would migrate to follow the sport because of his abilities to do it so well."



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