

# RACING THIS WEEK

**SNEAK PEEK:**  
LLumar will sport a new look on Chase Elliott's No. 9 Hendrick Motorsports Chevrolet in 2025. Here's a look at what the scheme will look like before the 2025 Cup Series season begins.



## And here's a gift for ...

Here are a few more lesser-known awards gifted to drivers for 2024 accomplishments:

**Dale Earnhardt Award** (Best on restrictor-plate tracks): **William Byron**, Hendrick Motorsports  
• We tend to think of guys like Ricky Stenhouse Jr., Brad Keselowski, the Penske boys (Joey Logano, Ryan Blaney, Austin Cindric), Kyle Busch and three-

time Daytona 500 winner Denny Hamlin as the kings of restrictor-plate racing in the modern sport. But Byron belonged squarely atop that list in 2024,

winning the Daytona 500 to open the season to go with two other top 10s on plate tracks — and, crucially, finishing a not-too-terrible-for-superspeedways 27th in his worst race at the track type, the Coke Zero Sugar 400. Byron's Adjusted Points+ index of 198 on plate tracks was the best of any regular driver, beating out Christopher Bell (188), Kyle Busch (177), Alex Bowman (173) and, of course, Stenhouse Jr. (171).

**Marcos Ambrose Award** (Best on road/street courses): **Chris Buescher**, RFK Racing

• The state of road racing at the Cup level is interesting right now.

After a few down years, the classic road-course ringer

has made a comeback with the phenomenon of Shane van Gisbergen, Joey Hand nearly winning at Chicago and A.J. Allmendinger continuing to vie for road wins as a part-timer. The best Adjusted Points+ index on road courses this season belonged to Buescher, who outdueled SVG for the win at Watkins Glen, grabbed two additional top 10s at Sonoma and COTA and never finished lower than 20th at any road/street course all year.

**Darrell Waltrip Award** (Best on short tracks): **Denny Hamlin**, Joe Gibbs Racing

• Hamlin is no stranger to success on short tracks during his two decades on the Cup Series scene. He has 14 career wins under the

tight conditions of Bristol, Richmond, Martinsville and the like, tied with Jimmie Johnson for

eighth-most in NASCAR's modern era (since 1972). But the 2024 season was particularly good to Denny in that regard: He co-led the Cup Series in wins (2) and top fives (5) on short tracks, with an Adjusted Points+ index (250) that only narrowly trailed Elliott (254). It was one of the best short-track campaigns of Hamlin's entire career — the only time he'd won multiple races at those venues in a year since he took three in 2010.

In a year full of chatter surrounding the safety of his employment at Hendrick Motorsports, **Alex Bowman** responded with a career year. Bowman, winner of the Chicago Street Race in July in the No. 48 Ally Chevrolet, netted eight top-five finishes in 2024 to match a career-high, collected a career-best 17 top 10s and notched a career-tops 28 lead-lap finishes. To boot, half

of the 10 playoff races resulted in top 10s for the veteran racer, ending the campaign on a much-needed upswing. "Hopefully, we can start there as a baseline, right?" Bowman said. "I think that's the biggest thing is trying to operate at that



## GIFT OF RECOGNITION Honoring a few 2024 superlatives

Another NASCAR season will soon be upon us. 2024 is long in the books, with all the big shiny trophies handed out — culminating in Joey Logano receiving the Bill France Cup for winning his third career Cup Series championship. Now, in the holiday spirit, we thought it would be fun to create some lesser-known awards for some Cup drivers and teams whose accomplishments might not have gotten enough attention during the 2024 season:

**Ricky Rudd Award** (Best journeyman driver): **Ricky Stenhouse Jr.** (pictured above), JTG-Daugherty Racing

• Stenhouse was an amazing underdog Daytona 500 winner in 2023, ending a winless streak that stretched back to 2017. But that performance also looked a little bit like a plate-track special by a driver who (admittedly) does better at superspeedways than most. That's what made it special for the 37-year-old veteran to do it again this season, taking the checkered flag at Talladega in October to become a race winner in back-to-back seasons for the first time in his career. Yes, it was another restrictor-plate win for Stenhouse Jr., but with four career victories at plate tracks in his career, he is now tied for 10th on the all-time list, and is third among active drivers.

**Mr. Consistency Award** (Best average finish): **Chase Elliott**, Hendrick Motorsports.

• After a 2023 season marred by injury and suspension, Elliott was ready to return to the form that saw him earn three straight Championship 4 appearances from 2020-2022. But while he didn't quite make it that far in 2024, seeing his title bid end in the Round of 8, Elliott can claim he was the most reliable driver in the Cup Series on a week-to-week basis. The No. 9 NAPA Auto Parts Chevy finished outside the Top 30 just twice in 36 races — at Daytona in August and Las Vegas in October — while running Top 16 or better 28 times and scoring 19 Top 10s. It all added up to an average finish of 11.7, tops among all regular drivers this season and second-best (behind William Byron's 11.0 last year) in the Next Gen Car era.



**Jerry Nadeau Award** (Best in qualifying relative to races): **Michael McDowell**, Front Row Motorsports

• McDowell didn't have as strong a season as he'd enjoyed in either 2022 or 2023, falling back to his worst average finish (21.3) since 2019. However, one area where McDowell was as good as just about anybody was in qualifying. Not only did he post an average start of 14.6, by far the best of his 17-year Cup career, but he also led all drivers by starting up front six times, edging out Kyle Larson's five pole positions. McDowell couldn't really convert that Saturday speed into Sunday money, ranking 23rd in the points due in no small part to finishing only 80.6% of his races — tied for the second-lowest rate among regular drivers (behind Josh Berry at 72.2%). But you can't say he didn't drive the wheels off the car in qualifying.



**Dale Jarrett Award** (Most improved driver): **Noah Gragson**, Stewart-Haas Racing

• It's hard to imagine a season going worse — on the track or off — than Noah Gragson's 2023 campaign, the lasting image of which was probably the No. 42 Wendy's car stuck spinning its wheels under a pile of tires at the Chicago Street Course. But with another chance driving full-time in Cup, this time for SHR, Gragson vastly improved his performance in 2024. He scored seven top 10s, compared with zero the year prior, and lowered his average finish by nearly 10 places (from 28.2 to 19.6). And no driver with 20 or more races in both seasons raised their Adjusted Points+ index — a measure of per-race performance where average is 100 and higher is better — from 2023 to 2024 more than Gragson, who rose 55 points from a miserable 31 to a respectable 86.



## Remembering Fred Lorenzen

**Fred Lorenzen**, a thinking man's racer who became one of NASCAR's biggest money winners during the sport's rise in the 1960s, has died. The NASCAR Hall of Famer (Class of 2015) was 89.

Lorenzen's passing was confirmed by his family. The former driver had battled dementia in his later years.

Lorenzen won 26 times in his premier-series career, vaulting to stardom after connecting with the powerful Holman-Moody Ford factory team in the early part of the decade. Many of those victories arrived as both speedways and purses grew in size, and he became the first driver in NASCAR to earn more than \$100,000 in a single season in 1963. Among those prized wins were the Daytona 500 in 1965 and two victories in the Coca-Cola 600 at Charlotte Motor Speedway.



"Fred Lorenzen was one of NASCAR's first true superstars. A fan favorite, he helped NASCAR expand from its original roots," NASCAR Chairman & CEO Jim France said. "Fred was the picture-perfect NASCAR star, helping to bring the sport to the silver screen — which further grew NASCAR's popularity during its early years. For many years, NASCAR's 'Golden Boy' was also its gold standard, a fact that eventually led him to the sport's pinnacle, a rightful place in the NASCAR Hall of Fame. On behalf of the France family and all of NASCAR, I want to offer our condolences to the friends and family of Fred Lorenzen."

Lorenzen went by many nicknames, known as NASCAR's "Golden Boy" for his dashing looks. His charm, combined with his racing success, led him to win the series' Most Popular Driver Award on two occasions.

He was also called the "Elmhurst Express" in a nod to his Illinois hometown, in addition to the alliterative "Fast Freddie" or "Fearless Freddie." But those nicknames belied a smooth, measured approach that was in sharp contrast to go-for-broke predecessors, such as Junior Johnson and Curtis Turner.

Frederick Lorenzen Jr. was born Dec. 30, 1934, growing up in the suburban Illinois town of Elmhurst, about 20 miles west of the Chicago Loop. His first competitive driving experience came in drag racing at age 19. When not racing, carpentry was his trade.

### 2024 CUP SERIES FINAL STANDINGS

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

Rank/Driver	Points	Rank/Driver	Points
1 <b>J. Logano Ford</b>	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 Chev	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. Hemic 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

Rank/Driver	Points	Rank/Driver	Points
1 <b>Justin Allgaier #7</b>	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, 2025, CW

### 2024 TRUCK SERIES FINAL STANDINGS

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

Rank/Driver	Points	Rank/Driver	Points
1 <b>Ty Majeski #98</b>	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, 2025, FS1

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