

RACING THIS WEEK

XFINITY RECAP

• **Saturday's** SPORT CLIPS HAIRCUTS VFW HELP A HERO 200, Darlington



WINNER: BRANDON JONES

After diligently working through a 98-race winless streak over the last three Xfinity Series seasons, Joe Gibbs Racing's Brandon Jones reminded his competitors — and his fans — that he's still a race winner and a title contender.

The 28-year-old Atlanta native took the lead on a re-start with 12 laps remaining in Saturday's Sports Clips Haircuts VFW Help A Hero 200 at the historic Darlington (S.C.) Raceway — beating 2020 Cup Series champ Chase Elliott to the finish line by a healthy 1.105-seconds to hoist his first trophy since April, 2022 — a span of 98 races.

The 1.366-mile Darlington track may be nicknamed Too Tough To Tame, but it certainly presented a tamer race than the series produced a week ago on the typically wild Martinsville half-miler. This race featured 14 lead changes among nine drivers — none of the changes up front a result of overly aggressive driving.

Instead, strategy, a fast car and unwavering belief in himself and his team made the difference for Jones.

"It's nice for my confidence, right, but it's also to prove to the haters and people that said I was incapable of doing it, wrong again," said Jones, whose No. 20 Joe Gibbs Racing Toyota led 24 of the races 137 laps.

"This place is freaking awesome man, I love coming to Darlington," he added, "Second win and just huge momentum. I knew we were on a high just didn't know when it was going to happen."

Justin Allgaier, who led the most laps (56) on the afternoon and won Stage 2, finished third in the No. 7 JR Motorsports Chevrolet, followed by teammates Ross Chastain and rookie Carson Kvapil. The team, co-owned by NASCAR Hall of Famer Dale Earnhardt Jr. and his sister Kelley Earnhardt Miller, had all five of its Chevys in the top 10 with rookie Connor Zilisch finishing sixth and Sammy Smith ninth.

Rookies punctuated the top 10 despite it being the first time most of them had ever raced at the famously challenging venue. In addition to Kvapil and Zilisch, rookies Christian Eckes and Nick Sanchez claimed seventh and eighth place with Smith and veteran Sheldon Creed rounding out the top 10.

Harrison Burton's AM Racing team won the opening stage and JGR's Taylor Gray was credited with the Xfinity Fastest Lap (160.706 mph) of the day.

"I am proud of Brandon Jones, I know how hard the kid has worked, he's done a good job and I'm happy to see him get to victory lane" said the reigning series champion Allgaier, who has now tied Hall-of-Famer Mark Martin with nine-consecutive top 10s in Xfinity Series races at Darlington.

The series' Dash 4 Cash incentive program returns with Saturday's SciApps 300 at Bristol (Tenn.) Motor Speedway (5 p.m. ET, The CW Network, MRN, SiriusXM NASCAR Radio).

The highest finisher among Austin Hill, Creed, Allgaier and Brennan Poole will win the Dash 4 Cash \$100,000 bonus check from Xfinity, having earning eligibility based on their results in the Martinsville (Va.) Speedway race.

GOODYEAR 400

Denny Hamlin grabbed his second consecutive victory on the season at Darlington after winning at Martinsville, marking the first time he's won back-to-back races since 2012 (Bristol, Atlanta).



Denny Hamlin, driver of the #11 Sport Clips Haircuts Toyota, takes the checkered flag to win the Cup Series Goodyear 400 at Darlington Raceway on Sunday.
(James Gilbert/Getty Images)

Hamlin and his crew bolt way to win No. 2

DARLINGTON, S.C. — A perfectly executed overtime restart by Denny Hamlin following a clutch final pit stop by his Joe Gibbs Racing crew provided exactly the advantage the veteran needed to claim Sunday's Goodyear 400 at Darlington Raceway.

Hamlin took the race lead out of the pits during the final late race caution then bested the field on the ensuing restart, pulling his No. 11 Joe Gibbs Racing Toyota out front and ultimately to a .597-second victory over the day's most dominant driver, Hendrick Motorsports' William Byron.

It's the second consecutive victory for Hamlin, who won last week at Martinsville, and marks the first time he's won back-to-back races since 2012 when he won at Bristol and then Atlanta.

All smiles as he climbed out the car, Hamlin gave the credit to his pit crew. He was third place at the time of the final caution — the yellow coming out for Byron's Hendrick teammate Kyle Larson's spin. The leaders seized the chance to pit for fresh tires in anticipation of the overtime restart and Hamlin's crew got him out of the pits first — ahead of Tyler Reddick and Byron.

A perfect launch on the ensuing green flag gave Hamlin the victory over Byron, who led a race best 243 of the 297 laps. It is Hamlin's 56th career win, breaking a tie with Hall of Famer Rusty Wallace for 11th place on NASCAR's all-time wins list.

"There's two people I really love right now, my pit crew and Kyle Larson," the 44-year-old Virginian Hamlin said with a grin. "Had a little assist there, so thank you. "The pit crew just did an amazing job. They won it last week [at Martinsville]. They won it this week. It's all about them."

It was obviously a tough ending to a career day for Byron, who rallied to the runner-up finish on the final restart but had absolutely dominated the early race, leading the opening 243 laps and claiming both Stage 1 and Stage 2 victories. It was the most laps Byron has ever led in a single race.

"First off, just really proud of my team to bring that level of effort and preparation and have a car like that and us execute like that, it was looking like we were going to have a perfect race and we were going to lead every lap," the 2025 Daytona winner Byron said.

"So, I was really proud of that. Those



guys could just be aggressive on the other side of the green flag cycle and we just lost control and once we lost control it was too late to get back up there.

"It sucks and I'm sure it will sting tonight, but there are still a lot of positives. It just stings in the moment for sure."

Hamlin's JGR teammate Christopher Bell finished third in the No. 20 Toyota after an amazing rally forward from a 20th place starting position. Reddick finished fourth in the 23XI Racing Toyota, co-owned by Hamlin and NBA legend Michael Jordan.

Team Penske's Ryan Blaney finished fifth. It is the 2023 Cup Series champion's first top-five at the 1.366-mile historic track, but the result still stings as Blaney had just taken the race lead moments before the final caution came out with only three laps of regulation remaining.

"Oh no," Blaney conceded of his thoughts when the yellow flag flew.

"I thought we had the race won. I don't really know I'll have to watch a replay and see how the yellow came out and watch it back. But we did a great job and great strategy call of running long.

"Great call and just really fast but never got to really control the race," he added ... I feel like nothing really went our way. Pit road we've got to work on a little bit. Caution coming out during the cycle set us way back and I feel like we kept making up spots. Really proud of the 12 folks for giving me a fast car. Just wasn't meant to be. I really would have liked to have won here. That would have been really neat. Proud of the effort and we'll keep plugging along."

Roush Fenway Keselowski Racing's Chris Buescher finished sixth, followed by Trackhouse Racing's Ross Chastain, Hendrick's Chase Elliott, JGR's Ty Gibbs and Richard Childress Racing's Kyle Busch. It was a season-best effort for Gibbs.

Byron's runner-up keeps him in Cup lead by 49 points over Hamlin and 52 points over Bell. It's a different look atop the standings, where all four Hendrick Motorsports cars were ranked among the top five.

Hendrick's Chase Elliott finished eighth Sunday and is now fourth in the standings, 59 points back. Larson dropped to sixth place after finishing 37th of the 38 cars Sunday. Bowman is now ranked 10th with a 35th place showing at Darlington.

XFINITY FINISH: HoFer and JR Motorsports team owner Dale Earnhardt Jr., right, congratulates Brandon Jones for winning Saturday's Sport Clips Haircuts VFW Help A Hero 200 at Darlington.
J. Gilbert/Getty



NEXT: FOOD CITY 500



Bristol Motor Speedway

3 p.m. ET Sunday, FS1

• The short track is a (0.533-mile) concrete oval with corner banking ranging from 24 to 28 degrees and a pair of 650-foot straightaways.

• Known as The Last Great Colosseum, Bristol Motor Speedway's stadium-like structure serves as a versatile multi-use venue that hosts major auto races, football games, concerts and many other captivating events.

• Work began on what was then called Bristol International Speedway in 1960 and it took approximately one year to finish. Many of the original ideas facility founders Larry Carrier, Carl Moore and R.G. Pope came up with for the track were sketched on envelopes and paper bags.

• Purchase of the land on which BMS now sits, as well as construction of the track, cost approximately \$600,000. The entire layout for BMS covered a little more than 100 acres.

• The very first NASCAR race at BMS, held on July 30, 1961, was won by Jack Smith with relief help from Johnny Allen.

• The facility was held by several different owners in the early days, but eventually found its way back to Carrier ownership in 1985. On Jan. 22, 1996, Carrier sold the speedway to O. Bruton Smith and Speedway Motorsports, Inc., at a purchase price of \$26 million.

• The sprawling facility has come a long way from its early roots. Today, the Colosseum offers guests a wide range of accommodations, from man cave suites to bar stools in the Busch Banks and Brews Deck to a relaxing environment high atop the track at the Turn One Tavern to a nightclub inside the oval called The Apex.



Denny Hamlin won in the regular season last year at Bristol. (Getty)

2025 CUP SERIES STANDINGS

Top 30 as of April 6

| Rank/Driver | Points | Rank/Driver | Points |
|------------------------|--------|-------------------------|--------|
| 1 William Byron #24 | 315 | 16 AJ Allmendinger #16 | 168 |
| 2 Denny Hamlin #11 | 266 | 17 Michael McDowell #71 | 167 |
| 3 Christopher Bell #20 | 263 | 18 Ricky Stenhouse #47 | 158 |
| 4 Chase Elliott #9 | 256 | 19 J.H. Nemechek #42 | 155 |
| 5 Tyler Reddick #45 | 254 | 20 Josh Berry #21 | 154 |
| 6 Kyle Larson #5 | 244 | 21 Austin Cindric #2 | 151 |
| 7 Ryan Blaney #12 | 236 | 22 Zane Smith #38 | 151 |
| 8 Bubba Wallace #23 | 233 | 23 Todd Gilliland #34 | 148 |
| 9 Joey Logano #22 | 232 | 24 Daniel Suárez #99 | 147 |
| 10 Alex Bowman #48 | 227 | 25 Ty Dillon #10 | 141 |
| 11 Chris Buescher #17 | 215 | 26 Ty Gibbs #54 | 131 |
| 12 Ross Chastain #1 | 199 | 27 Austin Dillon #3 | 128 |
| 13 Ryan Preece #60 | 184 | 28 Erik Jones #43 | 128 |
| 14 Chase Briscoe #19 | 178 | 29 Justin Haley #7 | 127 |
| 15 Kyle Busch #8 | 177 | 30 Carson Hocevar #77 | 118 |

2025 XFINITY SERIES STANDINGS

Top 20 as of April 5

| Rank/Driver | Points | Rank/Driver | Points |
|----------------------|--------|-------------------------|--------|
| 1 Justin Allgaier #7 | 346 | 11 Harrison Burton #25 | 198 |
| 2 Sam Mayer #41 | 275 | 12 Jeb Burton #27 | 191 |
| 3 Austin Hill #21 | 267 | 13 Daniel Dye #10 | 188 |
| 4 Sheldon Creed #00 | 251 | 14 Aric Almirola #19 | 186 |
| 5 Jesse Love #2 | 247 | 15 Nicholas Sanchez #48 | 177 |
| 6 Sammy Smith #8 | 243 | 16 Christian Eckes #16 | 176 |
| 7 Connor Zilisch #88 | 224 | 17 Taylor Gray #54 | 171 |
| 8 Brandon Jones #20 | 216 | 18 Brennan Poole #44 | 166 |
| 9 Carson Kvapil #1 | 213 | 19 Dean Thompson #26 | 157 |
| 10 Ryan Sieg #39 | 210 | 20 Jeremy Clements #51 | 143 |

NEXT RACE: SCIAPS 300, Bristol Motor Speedway, 5 p.m. ET Saturday, CW

2025 TRUCK SERIES STANDINGS

Top 20 as of March 28

| Rank/Driver | Points | Rank/Driver | Points |
|-----------------------|--------|--------------------------|--------|
| 1 Corey Heim #11 | 228 | 11 Kaden Honeycutt #45 | 130 |
| 2 Ty Majeski #98 | 209 | 12 Tanner Gray #15 | 123 |
| 3 Chandler Smith #38 | 193 | 13 Giovanni Ruggiero #17 | 119 |
| 4 Daniel Hemric #19 | 175 | 14 Matt Mills #42 | 98 |
| 5 Stewart Friesen #52 | 167 | 15 Rajah Caruth #71 | 97 |
| 6 Tyler Ankrum #18 | 164 | 16 A. Perez De Lara #77 | 97 |
| 7 Grant Enfinger #9 | 157 | 17 Matt Crafton #88 | 97 |
| 8 Layne Riggs #34 | 148 | 18 Jack Wood #91 | 91 |
| 9 Jake Garcia #13 | 137 | 19 Connor Mosack #81 | 90 |
| 10 Ben Rhodes #99 | 131 | 20 Dawson Sutton #26 | 85 |

NEXT RACE: WEATHER GUARD TRUCK RACE, Bristol, 8:30 p.m. ET Friday, FS1

DARLINGTON WINNER QUOTE

"There's two people I really love right now, my pit crew and Kyle Larson. Had a little assist there, so thank you. The pit crew just did an amazing job. They won it last week [at Martinsville]. They won it this week. It's all about them."

- Denny Hamlin, who grabbed his second straight Cup win of the season in Sunday's Goodyear 400



Denny Hamlin has a champagne celebration in Victory Lane Sunday at Darlington.

JARED C. TILTON/GETTY IMAGES

SEAS THE DAY

Reel in your hunger with this fresh catch!
Creamy tuna salad with chopped celery
piled high on a fresh-baked roll.

