

RACING THIS WEEK

XFINITY RECAP

• **Saturday's** BENNETT TRANSPORT. & LOGISTICS 250, Atlanta



WINNER: AUSTIN HILL

Atlanta Motor Speedway is Austin Hill's home track after all – and the Georgia native proved again Saturday night that he absolutely “owns it.”

Hill dominated the Xfinity Series Bennett Transportation and Logistics 250 on the Atlanta high banks – leading 146 of the 163 laps to claim his first victory of the 2025 season driving the No. 21 Richard Childress Racing Chevrolet.

Hill has won four of the last six Atlanta races – the last three consecutively and five in all – including a sweep of both events last year. And although his laps led total is impressive, he really had to work for this trophy, after losing the lead briefly on a restart with three laps to go.

With a timely tap on Hill's Chevrolet's rear bumper from Parker Retzlaff, Hill was able to push forward and take the lead entering the first turn on the final lap. He held on to the win by a slight .216-second having to fend off reigning series champ Justin Allgaier and Aric Almirola – who both previously led on that final restart.

Hill's five Xfinity Series wins at Atlanta ties a record set by former Cup Series champ Kevin Harvick. His eight-win total at drafting tracks ties a series record with a pair of Hall of Famers, Dale Earnhardt Jr. and Tony Stewart.

JR Motorsports' Sammy Smith and Big Machine Racing rookie Nick Sanchez rounded out the top-five. Hill takes a 1-point lead in the standings.

TRUCKS RECAP

• **Saturday's** FR8 208, Atlanta Motor Speedway



WINNER: KYLE BUSCH

With seven previous Trucks Atlanta trophies on his mantle, Kyle Busch was obviously the odds-on favorite for Saturday's Fr8 Racing 208. And the veteran absolutely did not disappoint.

Pulling ahead of Stewart Friesen about 20 yards from the finish line, Busch's No. 7 Spire Motorsports Chevrolet held on for a slight .017-second win as the two passed side-by-side under the checkered flag. It was Busch's record eighth series victory at the track. He led a race high 80 of the 135 laps but, definitely earned his hardware this weekend with a half dozen trucks going door-to-door with the two-time NASCAR Cup Series champion in the closing 20 laps.

With Busch and Friesen the pair fighting for the checkered flag, Tyler Ankrum and Bailey Curry crossed the finish line side-by-side just behind, a mere .001-second separating the two. Chandler Smith finished fifth.

Caden Honeycutt, two-time series champ Ben Rhodes, reigning champ Ty Majeski, Jake Garcia and Grant Enfinger rounded out the top-10.

Of note, championship favorite Corey Heim ran out of gas running third a single lap before the Stage 2 break and finished 23rd. Rookie Connor Mosack led 30 laps but finished 25th.

AMBETTER HEALTH 400

Christopher Bell prevailed in OT at Atlanta – getting the photo nod in a three-wide run. It marked the second year that this race featured a three-wide run to the checkered flag.



Christopher Bell, driver of the #20 DEWALT Toyota, takes the checkered flag under caution ahead of Carson Hocevar, driver of the #77 Delaware Life Chevrolet, and Kyle Larson, driver of the #5 HendrickCars.com Chevrolet, in the Cup Series Ambetter Health 400 at Atlanta Motor Speedway on Sunday. (Jonathan Bachman/Getty Images)

Bell rings up first Cup win at Atlanta with wild OT run

HAMPTON, Ga. – Christopher Bell prevailed in overtime to claim the victory in Sunday's Ambetter Health 400 at Atlanta Motor Speedway – officially leading only the final lap and getting the photo nod in a three-wide run as a caution flag came out on the last lap to end the Cup Series race.

It marks the second year that this race featured a three-wide run to the checkered flag. This time Bell got the nod out front over second-year driver Carson Hocevar and 2021 series champ Kyle Larson as the final caution flag flew. It was the 30-year old Oklahoma native Bell's 10th career series victory and first on a drafting-type track like Atlanta, Daytona or Talladega. It also marked the first victory for Joe Gibbs Racing since June of last year.

“I'll tell you what, that right there is what you dream of,” an elated Bell said afterward. “To be able to re-start on the first or second row on a re-start at a speedway you never know how those things are going to play out.

“But,” he added looking directly into the FOX television cameras with a huge smile, “I'll be the first to tell you, ‘I love superspeedways.’

“I don't know,” he conceded, “but this style of racing has always been a little bit of a struggle for me. Throughout the beginning of the day, obviously today we were just stuck way in the back. But [crew chief] Adam [Stevens] and these boys just did an incredible job of getting this thing fixed up so I could just hold my foot down and you've got to be able to just stay in the throttle and that last half of the race we ran our best.”

Despite his near-miss third-place showing, Larson was pleased with the finish. He's 0-for-48 in speedway-type races, including 16 previous DNFs. So all said, it was a successful, if eventful, day. He had contact with one of the race's strongest cars, Austin Cindric's No. 2 Team Penske with three laps remaining to make the overtime finish necessary, but led 12 laps.

Hocevar's runner-up finish was a career high mark for the 22-year old driver of the No. 77 Spire Motorsports Chevrolet.

However, shortly after the young Californian climbed out of his car, he was confronted post-race by both Ross Chastain and former series champ Ryan Blaney in separate discussions. Although Chastain refused to share what was said, Blaney confirmed he suggested to Hocevar to work on his decision making.

“I just said, ‘Hey, you got to calm down. I told him a couple moves he made earlier in the race that were really, really sketchy,” said Blaney, who rallied to a fourth-place



finish after being spun out after contact with Hocevar with 27 laps remaining.

“Obviously, me getting spun. He should know better than to hit me in that spot. He can't just run into my bumper as I'm turning into a corner. I'm going to wreck. So, I just told him you got to calm down.

Hocevar, who also said he preferred to keep the two conversations with his veteran competitors to himself, but immediately offered an apology for any contact with Larson on the final lap.

“I didn't realize we weren't racing back to the line,” he said of the last lap fender-rub with Larson, adding, “Some stuff I've got to learn and clean up a little bit, but I feel like we put ourselves in a perfect opportunity to win a race and I've never really had that opportunity before, especially on super speedways. So, thanks to everybody at Spire Motorsports.”

Certainly, the early portion of the race was dominated by the Ford contingent, which included 10 of the top 11 qualifiers including Blaney's pole position in the No. 12 Team Penske Ford. Blaney's teammate, reigning series champion Joey Logano led a race best 83 laps – the second time in as many races this season he out-paced the field, but finished 12th.

Fords led all but one of the first 140 laps. Ultimately, however, pit strategy and manufacturer alliances – at least early in the race – gave way to late race push and better handle on the cars for the rest of the competition.

The final yellow flag flew to end the race when Josh Berry – who won Stage 1 – Justin Haley and Ryan Preece collided on the backstretch during overtime.

HYAK Motorsports' Ricky Stenhouse Jr. finished fifth, followed by Denny Hamlin, a strong showing for the veteran who like his JGR teammates all started 25th or worse.

Richard Childress Racing's Kyle Busch was the only one of three cars (also Blaney and defending race winner Daniel Suarez) in last year's three-wide photo finish not to be collected in an accident. The two-time series champion finished seventh, followed by Trackhouse Racing's Ross Chastain, 23XI Racing's Bubba Wallace, and Legacy Motor Club's John Hunter Nemechek, who scored his second top-10 finish in as many races this year – already half of his single season high in two previous fulltime seasons at the NASCAR Cup Series level.

With his fourth place showing Sunday, Blaney now leads the championship by 12 points over Daytona 500 winner, Hendrick Motorsports' William Byron. Kaulig Racing's A.J. Allmendinger set the fastest lap of the race.

TRUCKS FINISH:
Kyle Busch, driver of the #7 Gainbridge Chevrolet, takes the checkered flag to win Saturday's Fr8 208 at Atlanta.
Chris Graythen/Getty



NEXT: ECHOPARK AUTOMOTIVE GRAND PRIX



Circuit of the Americas, Austin, TX
3:30 p.m. ET Sunday, FOX

• Sunday's EchoPark Automotive Grand Prix will mark only the fifth time NASCAR has visited the 3.41 mile road course.
• Circuit of the Americas opened in 2012, and has been the host of the United States Grand Prix for the last 10 years. The course features 20 turns and over 130 feet of elevation changes throughout the course, with each corner designed to resemble sections of famous tracks around the world.

DETAILS ON COTA

• On Dec. 11, 2020, it was announced that NASCAR would run the full 3.426 miles (5.514 km) course. EchoPark Automotive assumed naming rights for the Cup race, which dubbed it the EchoPark Texas Grand Prix. The Xfinity and Truck races were respectively named the Pit Boss 250 and Toyota Tundra 225 with title sponsorship from Pit Boss Grills and Toyota.

• COTA would host a Cup Series event for the first time on May 23, 2021. Xfinity and Truck Series were also added. The inaugural race weekend was marred by rain, with the Truck race in wet conditions; Xfinity later in the day was drier. The Cup race, won by Chase Elliott, was shortened as the weather worsened and caused low driver visibility.



William Byron parted with Grand Marshal Giancarlo Esposito last year in Victory Lane at COTA. (Getty)

2025 CUP SERIES STANDINGS

Top 30 as of Feb. 23

Rank/Driver	Points	Rank/Driver	Points
1 Ryan Blaney #12	87	16 Chris Buescher #17	47
2 William Byron #24	75	17 Erik Jones #43	46
3 Tyler Reddick #45	72	18 Riley Herbst #35	40
4 Austin Cindric #2	68	19 Ty Dillon #10	39
5 Bubba Wallace #23	64	20 Austin Dillon #3	39
6 Kyle Larson #5	61	21 Ross Chastain #1	37
7 John H. Nemechek #42	61	22 Todd Gilliland #34	36
8 Ricky Stenhouse Jr #47	61	23 Kyle Busch #8	35
9 Alex Bowman #48	59	24 Jimmie Johnson #84	34
10 Chase Elliott #9	56	25 Daniel Suárez #99	33
11 Joey Logano #22	55	26 Justin Haley #7	31
12 Christopher Bell #20	53	27 AJ Allmendinger #16	29
13 Denny Hamlin #11	51	28 Zane Smith #38	27
14 Michael McDowell #71	51	29 Ty Gibbs #54	26
15 Carson Hocevar #77	48	30 Ryan Preece #60	24

2025 XFINITY SERIES STANDINGS

Top 20 as of Feb. 22

Rank/Driver	Points	Rank/Driver	Points
1 Austin Hill #21	84	11 Sammy Smith #8	50
2 Sheldon Creed #00	83	12 Leland Honeyman #70	50
3 Jesse Love #2	78	13 Taylor Gray #54	45
4 Justin Allgaier #7	76	14 Ryan Sieg #39	44
5 Jeb Burton #27	66	15 Nicholas Sanchez #48	42
6 Harrison Burton #25	61	16 Dean Thompson #26	40
7 Jeremy Clements #51	55	17 William Sawalich #18	40
8 Sam Mayer #41	53	18 Aric Almirola #19	39
9 Carson Kvapil #1	53	19 Josh Williams #11	39
10 Matt DiBenedetto #99	51	20 Christian Eckes #16	38

NEXT RACE: FOCUSED HEALTH 250, Circuits of the Americas (TX), 2:30 p.m. ET Saturday, CW

2025 TRUCK SERIES STANDINGS

Top 20 as of Feb. 22

Rank/Driver	Points	Rank/Driver	Points
1 Grant Enfinger #9	85	11 Bayley Currey #44	49
2 Ty Majeski #98	84	12 Tanner Gray #15	43
3 Chandler Smith #38	79	13 Layne Riggs #34	42
4 Corey Heim #11	69	14 Tyler Ankrum #18	41
5 Ben Rhodes #99	66	15 Kaden Honeycutt #45	39
6 Giovanni Ruggiero #17	62	16 Frankie Muniz #33	38
7 Stewart Friesen #52	62	17 Josh Reaume #22	38
8 Daniel Hemric #19	62	18 Spencer Boyd #76	36
9 Jake Garcia #13	53	19 Andres P. De Lara #77	35
10 Jack Wood #91	50	20 Matt Crafton #88	35

NEXT RACE: VICTORIA'S VOICE FOUNDATION 200, Las Vegas, 9 p.m. ET Friday, March 14, FS1

ATLANTA WINNER QUOTE

“I'll tell you what, that right there (OT win) is what you dream of. To be able to re-start on the first or second row on a re-start at a speedway you never know how those things are going to play out. But, I'll be the first to tell you, ‘I love superspeedways.’”

- Christopher Bell, who emerged from OT to take Sunday's Ambetter Health 400



Christopher Bell and crew in Victory Lane Sunday at Atlanta.

JONATHAN BACHMAN/GETTY IMAGES

COUNTRY CLUB

It's back, Baby!



PIZZA

SUB

MELT

Country Fair FRESH & LOCAL