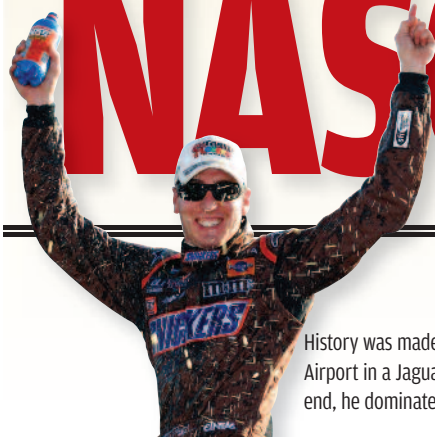


# NASCAR Rundown



## LAST WEEK'S WINNER: KYLE BUSCH

History was made last week when Kyle Busch took Toyota to victory lane. It was the first time since June 13, 1954 – when Al Keller won on a temporary road course at Linden (N.J.) Airport in a Jaguar – that a foreign nameplate won a NASCAR race, and only the second ever victory for a non-American brand. Busch is the hottest driver on the circuit. Last week-end, he dominated all three NASCAR races, and if not for a blown tire in the Nicorette 300, he would have swept the weekend and taken the points lead in NASCAR's Big Three.

### 3 questions

## Kyle Busch

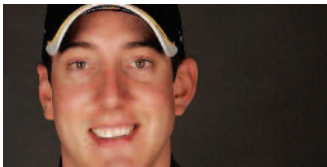
By Jerry Bonkowski  
Yahoo! Sports for GateHouse News Service

BRISTOL, Tenn. – While older brother Kurt is more synonymous with success at Bristol Motor Speedway, younger sibling Kyle comes into the fastest short track in NASCAR with a full head of steam.

Kyle Busch won the first race with NASCAR's new car at Bristol last year and now returns for an encore, riding a huge wave of momentum after Sunday's win at Atlanta, where he gave Toyota its first victory in Cup history.

And, to top it all off, Kyle Busch continues to lead the Sprint Cup and Craftsman Truck Series points standings (and is second in the Nationwide Series), a phenomenal accomplishment for the 22-year-old superstar.

After Sunday's race, Kyle had some observations about where he's at now and where he hopes to be in the future:



NASCAR

**Q You have had an outstanding start to the season in all three major series, and now Sunday's first win for Toyota. How do you explain perhaps one of the greatest overall starts in NASCAR history?**

**A** "I'm just doing my deal. Everybody's always said that I've been the aggressive driver, used to cause wrecks, used to be out of control, this and that. I don't feel I'm driving any different than what I used to. I've sort of tamed my style, per se. Now it looks like I'm a professional at it or something. It seems to be working to my advantage right now, so that's all that matters, and being able to go out there and win races."

**Q Is it humbling to have so many people talking so positively about you this season, especially with the great start you're off to?**

**A** "I'm flattered and fortunate enough to have the abilities that I do, and everybody talk about it the way that they do. All I can do is just go out there and drive my best and do what I'm paid to do, and that's to win races and to contend for championships week in and week out and just be able to drive the way that I drive.."

**Q When you won the first Car of Tomorrow race last spring at Bristol, you said afterward that the car "still sucks." Has your opinion changed, especially since you seem to be doing so well in it this season?**

**A** "Whoever can make it go through the corner the best is going to be the guy that's going to be able to win the race. You know, for me to go out there and win, it doesn't matter what car I'm driving. I'd drive a milk crate, which is pretty much what this thing drives like. We have fun doing it to the best of our ability, making it fast. Whatever it takes to go out there and win is what we need."

# Six-pack to go

## Kurt Busch looks to steal spotlight from little brother at Bristol

By Jerry Bonkowski  
Yahoo! Sports for GateHouse News Service

BRISTOL, Tenn. – Having been born and raised in Las Vegas, Kurt Busch is used to bright lights and glitz.

But when it comes to having a good time, Busch would much rather kick up his heels at a good old-fashioned Tennessee hoedown.

It's the kind of place where there's lots of great people, food, country music and, most importantly, some of the best racin' in all of the good old U.S. of A.

If it's mid-March, that means it's time for NASCAR to once again return to Bristol Motor Speedway, arguably the fastest half-mile track in the world.

And if Busch has anything to say about it, he'll once again add to his outstanding performance record at Bristol in Sunday's Food City 500.

In 14 career starts, Busch has five wins and nine overall top-10 finishes, tying with Jeff Gordon as the winningest active driver at Bristol.

And now that it's been two years since his last win there – who can forget the infamous snow bunnies Busch drew on the track earlier that same day before the weather broke – Busch is ready to earn win No. 6.

"I just absolutely love Bristol," Busch says. "It reminds me a lot of the old bullring back in my hometown of Las Vegas, where I earned most of my racing stripes as a young race car driver."

Busch is off to a strong start in 2008, one that could be further enhanced with a win or top-five finish Sunday at Bristol. He comes into the race ranked 10th, just 187 points out of first place, which just happens to be held by younger brother Kyle Busch.

The elder Busch finished a close second to Penske Racing teammate Ryan Newman in the season-opening Daytona 500, was 13th the following week in the rain-delayed race at California, crashed and finished a disappointing 39th at his home track in Las Vegas and bounced back to a strong 11th place showing this past Sunday in Atlanta.

"With the way this car ran in practice, qualifying and the first part of (Sunday's) race, we have to be pretty pleased with that finish," Busch said after Atlanta. "The most promising thing is that we continuously adjusted on the car and had it running the best it did all day long at the end of the race. Maybe it's an indication that we're making some headway in getting a grasp for this new car."

With Newman shining at Daytona and Kyle winning the first Sprint Cup race ever for Toyota at Atlanta, it could very well be time for the older Busch brother to make some noise of his own.

"For us to come out of (Atlanta) with an 11th-place finish and to be the highest-finishing Dodge was pretty impressive I'd say," said crew chief Pat Tryson. "Heck yeah, we'll take it, be pleased with it and go on and get ready to go to



Kurt Busch celebrates his Bristol win in 2006. NASCAR

## THE KURT CHRONICLES

- Kurt won the inaugural Chase for the Nextel Cup in 2004, earning the title by eight points over Jimmie Johnson, the closest championship finish in Cup history.

- Busch also figured in the closest single-race finish in Cup history, losing by 0.0002 of a second to Ricky Craven at Darlington, S.C., on March 16, 2003.

- What fellow driver punched Busch in the nose after a run-in during a Cup race? Jimmy Spencer at Michigan in 2003.

Kurt's favorite track."

Indeed, nothing seems to get Kurt's blood flowing more than to return to Bristol. Even during the dead of winter, several weeks before the Cup season was due to start, he was already looking forward to going back to his most suc-

cessful track.

"How can you not love all of the elements that Bristol has: the close racing, the high banks, the big crowd, the strategy it takes to win races there, just everything about the place," he said back in January. "It's by far my most favorite race track and where we've had some of the biggest successes of our career thus far."

So, don't be surprised to see the famous Blue Deuce, otherwise known as Busch's No. 2 Dodge Charger, in victory lane at Bristol on Sunday.

"There's just something about that place that makes you want to go out and win every time you step onto the race track there," Busch said. "We'd love to get another one there this year – and that's what we're going to try to do."

Jerry Bonkowski is National NASCAR Columnist for Yahoo! Sports and a featured contributor to Gatehouse News Service. Jerry can be reached at [NASCARColumnist@yahoo.com](mailto:NASCARColumnist@yahoo.com).



Top 12

## Who will win the FOOD CITY 500?

Here are the top 12 drivers in the standings and how they've fared at Bristol.

### 1 Kyle Busch

Busch won this race last year in the debut of the new body style, and immediately lashed out about how bad it drove. After winning in the COT again last week, his opinions have probably softened.



### 2 Greg Biffle

Biffle is off to a great start in 2008 with a sweep of the top-15. At Bristol, he's finished that well in eight of 10 races, with a worst result of only 22nd.



### 3 Kevin Harvick

Harvick cleared the biggest hurdles of his season with three consecutive top-10s on unrestricted, intermediate speedways. He's the only driver not named "Busch" to win a spring Bristol race in six years.



### 4 Ryan Newman

A former sprint car star, Newman is a much better short track racer than he's credited, but he's finished outside the top 10 as often as in it on courses less than a mile.



### 5 Jeff Burton

Burton is finally getting close to matching his record from the beginning of last year. In 2007, he started and ended with long top-15 streaks. Dating back to Lowe's last fall, he hasn't finished worse than 13th.



### 6 Dale Earnhardt Jr.

If not for an accident at California, Earnhardt would be battling for the points' lead. He could have it after Sunday's race, because at 6.5, he has the best three-year average finish at Bristol.



### 7 Kasey Kahne

Except for a brief stint during green flag pit stops, Kahne was never lower than third in last fall's Bristol race. To be exact, he spent 492 of 500 laps in the top-three.



### 8 Tony Stewart

Stewart seemed destined to win this race last year, leading 257 of the first 282 laps. At that point, however, he broke a fuel pump and finished well off the pace.



### 9 Brian Vickers

Red Bull Racing should be looking into the cost of seeding the clouds this week to rain out time trials. Vickers has one more qualification to sweat out, and he'll get locked into the top 35.



### 10 Kurt Busch

Busch has won four of the last six spring races at Bristol, but with a 35th in 2005 and a 29th last year, he is far from a sure thing on the concrete canyons this week.



### 11 Martin Truex Jr.

Truex's hold on the top 12 in points is tenuous. In four career starts at Bristol, he has yet to crack the top 10 and has the worst recent record of all the drivers at the top of the standings.



### 12 Matt Kenseth

Kenseth entered last fall's Sharpie 500 with an 11-race streak of finishes 16th or better at Bristol, and he was destined for another strong showing until Ricky Rudd spun out and collected him on lap 451. —Dan Beaver, DBA Media

