

Four Camry Drivers Set for Cup Playoffs, Bayston Wins in POWRi

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NASCAR

Four Toyota Camry drivers will compete for the MENCS driver's championship in the 10-race Playoffs with the field set following Saturday night's regular season finale at Richmond Raceway – Martin Truex Jr. (ranked first in Playoff points entering the postseason), Kyle Busch (third), Denny Hamlin (seventh) and Matt Kenseth (15th).

Hamlin finished fifth with the top-Toyota entry in the race won by Kyle Larson, while Camry drivers Erik Jones (sixth) Daniel Suarez (seventh) and Busch (ninth) also tallied top-10 results.

Following the event, Martin Truex Jr. was awarded the regular season championship and the Camry driver will carry 53 Playoff bonus points into each three-race elimination round of the postseason, a favorable point advantage going into each trio of Playoff races.

"I think it's a good thing that we have them and I think we could have used them last year," Truex said from the pit road following the race. "I think for us, just focus on running as strong as we possibly can and keep the momentum going that we've had here lately. We've got a few little things we've got to work on, but all in all, I feel like we're definitely one of the strongest teams and hopefully we can just continue to perform at the level we're capable of and hopefully we don't need those bonus points, but it's going to be nice to have them for sure."

Truex led a race-high 198 laps (of 404), but finished 20th after being collected in a late-race accident. Busch led 38 circuits.

For Jones, his sixth-place finish marked the sixth-consecutive top-10 result for the MENCS rookie.

Camry driver Busch claimed a runner-up finish with the top Toyota in Friday night's NASCAR XFINITY Series (NXS) race on the 0.75-mile Richmond track.

Busch led the field for a race-high 182 laps (of 250) from the pole, but had a stronger Camry on the short run than long runs. With the race ending under a long green flag run of 89 circuits, eventual winner Brad Keselowski was able to catch Busch and pass the Camry driver in traffic with just 16 laps remaining.

"He just had a better long run car every time," Busch said. "Every run we had, he was able to get by us there after about 45, 50 laps or whatever it was, so I was just trying to get out there a little bit and we were working each other pretty hard there early in the run. I thought I beat his tires up and he was just able to come back through. NOS Energy Drink Camry was good – just not good enough and need a little bit more."

Christopher Bell made his fourth NXS start and finished sixth, marking the 22-year-old driver's second-career top-10 result in the series.

The MENCS, NXS and NASCAR Camping World Truck Series next race at Chicagoland Speedway on Friday to Sunday, Sept. 15-17 where both the NXS and NCWTS Playoff fields will be set.

Formula Drift

Toyota Corolla iM driver Fredric Aasbø advanced to the 'Final 4,' where he finished fourth in Formula Drift action at Texas Motor Speedway on Saturday night.

The 'Norwegian Hammer' won his first three matches before he fell to points leader James Deane in their semi-final battle. Deane went on to win the event, while Aasbø continues to rank second in points.

In addition to Aasbø's finish, Toyota 86 drivers Ken Gushi and Ryan Tuerck also tallied top-10 finishes of

seventh and 10th, respectively. Gushi defeated Tuerck in the round of 16 to advance to the 'Great 8.'

The 2017 Formula Drift season concludes at California's Irwindale Speedway with Round 8: Title Fight on Friday and Saturday, Oct. 13-14.

POWRi

Spencer Bayston won Saturday night's Lucas Oil National Midget League race at Spoon River Speedway as Toyota-powered drivers captured four podium finishes in two weekend POWRi events in Illinois.

Toyota drivers continue to hold down the top three spots in the championship with Zach Daum leading the way.

In Friday night's contest, Logan Seavey had the highest-finishing Toyota entry in second.

POWRi next races at Southern Illinois Speedway on Saturday, Sept. 16.