

Hamlin hoping for some hometown advantage

By HANK KURZ JR.
Associated Press

RICHMOND, Va. — Denny Hamlin would love to think he has an advantage when it comes to racing at Richmond Raceway.

The Joe Gibbs Racing star has won three times on the 0.75-mile, D-shaped oval and has been coming to the track for much of his life, even long before the Virginia native became a driver in the Monster Energy NASCAR Cup Series.

"I don't know if there's any advantage for sure, but I certainly feel like I know what I need out of the car to be successful here," Hamlin said Friday. "Certainly this is kind of our wheelhouse for tracks you could say."

The Daytona 500 winner has plenty of reason to feel good heading into the weekend. He's already won twice this year, but his last victory at Richmond came in the fall of 2016. Teammate Kyle Busch swept both races last season, has already won three times this season and is trying to follow up a victory last weekend at Bristol.

Hamlin hopes familiarity can keep his solid start going.

"I've always loved coming to this race track. It is home. It's one that I've been to many, many times when I wasn't racing," he said. "It is certainly the home track for me but it's just exciting because I know that I could very well have a great weekend ahead of us, really focus a lot of my efforts on how can we go out there and dominate the race, not just win, but dominate. Really, that's been the focus for the last five days."

Teammate Martin Truex Jr. has been close to winning with second-place finishes at Atlanta and Phoe-



Fans watch the team of Joey Logano as they work on the car in the garage at Richmond International Raceway in Richmond, Va., on Friday.

nix, and said Busch is on the kind of role that makes him seem invincible. Besides his success in the Cup series, Busch has started four races in the Truck series and won them all, and won three of four Xfinity races.

"You look at a couple of races like last week. He even said he wasn't going to win the race and the next thing you know he's leading. They stay out and he's leading and he drives off into the sunset," Truex said.

"This sport is kind of cyclical. There's a lot of highs and lows, but once you get on a roll — I've been on teams where you just get on a roll and you can't do anything wrong. Then there's other times like for us this year, it doesn't seem like you can do anything right. It's just the way it goes sometimes and you just have to work through it all and

keep pushing to try to find more speed all the time."

Busch admits that luck has been on his side at times this season, as well as momentum. If he can keep it going on Saturday night, he'd join three Hall of Famers — David Pearson (three, 1965-66), Richard Petty (seven, 1970-1973) and Bobby Allison (three, 1982-83) — as the only drivers to win three consecutive races on the track.

Such achievements, he said, are not his focus, but nonetheless special.

"If we can win three in a row here at Richmond and match names like that — the Godfathers of our sport that built our sport to what it is today — would be pretty cool," he said.

So would keeping the momentum going. Busch has finished in the top 10 in each of his last 10 races.

"There's no question there's momentum. Absolutely," he said. "You can go through the whole beginning stretch of the season — we've had a really good stretch to the beginning of this season and unfortunately we're coming up to one of my most favorite race tracks in the world, Talladega, in a couple weeks, that can certainly end that momentum at any particular moment and knock you down off your pedestal or whatever you want to call it."

"Then you have to figure out how to rebound and get back. I think that's where our strength is and we've had some moments in some of these races that we've kind of been knocked off that we've been able to rebound and come back up through. Just treat it like anything else and focus forward," he said.



AP Photo/Ng Han Guan

Ferrari driver Sebastian Vettel of Germany prepares for the first practice session of the Chinese Formula One Grand Prix at the Shanghai International Circuit in Shanghai on Friday.

Bottas, Vettel lead Chinese GP practice sessions

By STEPHEN WADE
Associated Press

SHANGHAI — Mercedes driver Valtteri Bottas and Ferrari rival Sebastian Vettel led Friday's practice sessions ahead of the Chinese Grand Prix.

Off the track, Formula One prepared to celebrate its 1,000th race on Sunday. The first F1 race took place in 1950 at Silverstone, a converted World War II airfield in southern England. It was won by Giuseppe Farina driving an Alfa Romeo.

Vettel was quickest in the morning session, and Bottas was slightly faster in the afternoon with Vettel right behind. The afternoon session was quicker overall with Bottas clocking 1 minute, 33.330 seconds on the track located about 25 miles from downtown Shanghai.

Vettel was timed in 1:33.357 in the afternoon, followed by Red Bull driver Max Verstappen (1:33.551) and Lewis Hamilton (1:34.037) in his Mercedes.

Bottas and Hamilton have each won one of the first two races this season. Mercedes, Ferrari and Red Bull dominate and are expected to do the same in qualifying on Saturday and in Sunday's race.

Shanghai is far from Formula One's most tradition-steeped venues. That honor would go Monaco, Monza, Spa or Silverstone. But the Chinese circuit will do the honors on Sunday.

"We've said many times that one of the great

est parts of Formula One is its rich history," Formula One CEO Chase Carey said. "And nothing accentuates that rich history more than celebrating our 1,000th race."

Liberty Media took over Formula One two years ago for \$4.6 billion, taking control of a sport long run by British billionaire Bernie Ecclestone. Liberty is in the middle of negotiating a new, difficult contract with its 10 teams that would go into effect with the 2021 season.

It would include redistributing prize money, which now favors big teams like Ferrari, Mercedes and Red Bull.

Carey tipped his hat to China, which is a likely target for as second race as Formula One looks to expand in Asia. It is scheduled to add a new race next year in Hanoi, Vietnam.

"It's great to be able to celebrate here in Shanghai because Shanghai is in many ways one of the most exciting parts of the future," Carey said. "An incredible opportunity to marry our rich history with our exciting future."

Damon Hill, the 1996 F1 champion, drove into the circuit on Friday in a 1968 Lotus, which his father Graham Hill drove in winning the Monaco Grand Prix in 1968. The elder Hill won the season title twice — in 1962 and 1968.

"I calculate that we have won 3.7% of the 1,000 races," Damon Hill said. "The Hill family. There's a history, there's a tradition and it's just great."

Jarrett Andretti to fulfill father's wish to race at Indy

By JENNA FRYER
AP Auto Racing Writer

LONG BEACH, Calif. — Jarrett Andretti will fulfill his father's wish to see him race at Indianapolis Motor Speedway when he becomes the seventh Andretti to race at the venerable track in his Indy Lights debut next month.

Andretti is a third-generation racer from one of the most famous racing families in the world. His father, John, is Mario Andretti's nephew and Aldo Andretti's son. John Andretti and Michael Andretti are first cousins, and Jarrett Andretti will race at Indy

for Andretti Autosport.

He will be the third Andretti entry in the Freedom 100, scheduled for "Carb Day," two days before the Indianapolis 500 on May 26. It is traditionally one of the most exciting events at the historic speedway.

"It's very important for me, personally; me and John are very, very close, we've been close our whole lives, growing up together," said team owner Michael Andretti, who is Jarrett's godfather. "To help bring one of his dreams come true is very satisfying. He's always had a dream to see his son drive for Indy and I am glad we are making it a

reality this year."

Jarrett Andretti, at 26, is the youngest current racer in the family dynasty. He has won championships in karts, a USAC midget series and was an Indiana Sprint Car Series champion.

His father announced last month that his Stage 4 colon cancer had returned. The former NASCAR and IndyCar driver was first diagnosed in April 2017 and launched an awareness campaign urging colonoscopies.

Jarrett Andretti said his father has remained heavily involved in his racing — Michael Andretti joked John is at the team shop more than the team owner — and

traveled with him to sprint car races last weekend.

"He's doing pretty well right now ... he's up until 3 in the morning and I can't get him to stop," Jarrett Andretti said. "He's obviously going to go through chemo again and treatment, but I've never seen him let it affect him. We built our sprint car team together, hand in hand, and just us going to races together and him working on the car and me racing them. He lived with me in the summers for four or five months and we did everything together."

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Susan Bower is the owner of Eastern Oregon Business Source. She is a professional in organizational leadership, management and development.



George Murdock is a Umatilla County Commissioner, rancher and former K12 administrator. He was named Pendleton's Man of the Year in January 2019 for his commitment to community volunteerism and civic engagement. He is a 40-year Rotarian, member of the Oregon Cattlemen's Association, a member of the Board of Trustees of the WSU Foundation, and a member of the First Christian Church in Pendleton.



Selene Torres-Medrano is a former city councilor for the city of Umatilla, and is now a substitute teacher for the Umatilla School District. Selene is passionate about advocating for her community, and has organized events like immigration forums and a mental health awareness fair.



Casey White-Zollman is the Vice President of Public Relations for Blue Mountain Community College. In addition to serving in leadership roles for several professional organizations, Casey also currently serves on the Board of Directors for the Pendleton Round-Up & Happy Canyon Hall of Fame, and is Co-Chair of the Pendleton Round-Up Tough Enough To Wear Pink breast cancer campaign.

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