



Tyler Hoskins, Debbie Hoskins and Richard Hoskins



Alexandria Salazar, Stefanie Salazar and Danny Salazar



Garrett Pike, Angela Pike and Timothy Pike



Joshua Hurley, James and Sandy Bridgeman



Maggie Hart, Clint and Carla Hart



Tessa Grant, Tangela Grant

# RCHS Band Seniors continued

*The Times Journal wishes the best to all Laker band seniors following their graduation this spring!*



Dana Lawless, escorted by Joann Lawless

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## NASCAR News

### One Last Green Flag

Going into Sunday's race at Phoenix only one spot remained to fill the four-driver field that now advances to the final race at Homestead-Miami with the opportunity to run for the title. Kyle Busch, Martin Truex Jr. and Kevin Harvick had already punched their ticket into the final race by their performances during the Round of 8 races at Martinsville and Texas but for the remaining five drivers there was still a chance for each to advance.

Brad Keselowski entered the race in the fourth spot to advance because of his position in the points but a poor qualifying effort had him starting 16th which was the lowest of any of the five remaining drivers still in the playoff hunt. His point lead was enough above the cutoff line that unless one of the remaining four drivers won the race that he could put together an average finish and still have a great shot at advancing.

It seemed that his average finish would not be good enough on Sunday as Ryan Blaney sat on the pole with Denny Hamlin starting second followed by Chase Elliott in fourth. Seven-time champion Jimmie Johnson started twelfth but like Blaney and Elliott, he was so far back in the points that it would take a victory by any of these three drivers in order to advance.

Just before the end of stage two, Johnson cut a tire and hit the wall which took away any chance he had of winning. Hamlin backed up his second starting spot by winning the second stage and becoming the dominate car on the day as he led 193 laps on the day. Blaney was falling back through the field by this time and Elliott was still running strong while Keselowski stayed in the middle of the pack but more importantly for him was staying out of trouble.

On lap 270, Elliott and Hamlin replayed their now famous contact from Martinsville only this time it was Elliott on the bumper of Hamlin. Elliott used his bumper to move Hamlin up the track and the two eventually got together with Hamlin making enough contact with the outside wall that he had to take his Toyota to the garage. Elliott looked like he was on cruise control for the win but was passed by Matt Kenseth in the closing laps who went on to win in his next to the last start for Joe Gibbs Racing. Hamlin's exit from the race combined with Kenseth's win gave Keselowski who finished 16th the final remaining spot in the Championship Four.

Keselowski joins one of the strongest fields ever to go to Homestead with a chance to win the title. Keselowski, Harvick and Busch are all former champions and they will be joined by the season's hottest driver in Truex Jr. who leads all drivers this season with seven wins.

The rules now change from what has been used in the opening three rounds of the 10-race playoffs. All four drivers will have their points reset to 5,000 as bonus points no longer carry over into the next round. Unlike every race this season no stage points will be awarded to any driver.

The simplification of the rules makes it easy to determine this year's champion as he will be the driver of the four that finishes the highest in the race. That makes the racing that we see on Sunday unlike what we have seen all season long as stage racing changed the strategy that crew chiefs used during the season.

It was all about getting points, stage wins and race wins but that line of thinking becomes a distant memory.

Crew chiefs must now bring a car that can qualify up front in order to pick a desirable pit stall that along with a mistake-free day by the crew can gain a driver positions every time he comes on pit road for service.

Of course, all of the strategy, race moves and lighting fast pit stops will make a difference but sometimes it's a little racing luck that can be the difference.

It's going to be a great show and regardless of who pulls into victory lane, one thing for sure, they will earn it on Sunday.

### Race Preview

**Event: Ford EcoBoost 400**  
**Track: Homestead-Miami Speedway (1.5 mile oval, all turns banked 18-19-20o)**  
**Date: November 19, 2:30 pm**  
**TV: NBC Radio: MRN**  
**Defending Race Winner: Jimmy Johnson**

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