

Buescher, Kimmel resume title battle this weekend at Salem Speedway

Written by George Browning
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With just three races remaining on the 2012 ARCA Racing Series presented by Menards schedule the annual fall visit to the high banks of Salem Speedway on Saturday is certainly significant for the drivers and teams that started the season back in February at Daytona International Speedway.

After eight months and 17 races two drivers have emerged as the favorites to slug it out for the coveted ARCA title – local favorite and nine-time series champion Frank Kimmel of Clarksville, Ind., and young gun Chris Buescher of Prosper, Tex.

The 19-year-old Buescher, who has recorded four wins and 11 top five finishes in 2012, will take a 60 point lead (4210-4150) over Kimmel into the Kentuckiana Ford Dealers ARCA Fall Classic presented by Federated Car Care on Saturday night.

Kimmel, the all-time ARCA win leader at Salem with nine victories to his credit, has won two of the last five series races and appears focused on taking the title chase all the way to the season finale at Kansas Speedway in late October.

Kimmel finished second in the spring ARCA race at Salem and Buescher seventh after capturing the Menards Pole Award presented by Ansell. Buescher is the defending Kentuckiana Ford Dealers ARCA Fall Classic race winner.

If Buescher or Kimmel stumble in the final three races a couple of other former Salem winners, Brennan Poole (4075) and Alex Bowman (4020) are poised to move up in the standings. Poole of The Woodlands, Tex., who won the spring race at Salem in 2011, is currently third in the standings, just 75 points back of Kimmel, and Bowman is fourth.

Bowman of Tucson, Ariz., pulled off a surprising win in the spring ARCA race at Salem. The 19-year-old led 146 of 200 laps, but still had to keep Kimmel at bay to score the win in his very first visit to the Salem oval.

Chase Elliott of Dawsonville, Ga., is scheduled for a return visit to the high banks on Saturday night after a very impressive Salem debut in April. The 16-year-old son of NASCAR champion Bill Elliott finished fourth in the Kentuckiana Ford Dealers ARCA 200 after qualifying third quick.

Other notable entrants include Will Kimmel of Sellersburg, Ind., Frank Kimmel II of Borden, Ind., Chad Hackenbracht of Cornelious, N.C., Tom Hessert of Cherry Hill, N.J., Bobby Hamilton Jr. of Greenbrier, Tenn., Matt Lofton of Roxboro, N.C., Mason Mingus of Brentwood, Tenn., Jared Marks of Napoleon, Ohio, and Erik Jones of Byron, Mich.

Adding to the international flavor of the event will be Caracas, Venezuela drivers Milka Duno and Nelson Canache, plus Maryeve Dufault of Sorel Quebec, Canada and Jack Clarke of London, England.

The event will also carry its fair share of local flavor with Henryville, Indiana's Darrell Basham and Owensboro, Kentucky's Brett Hudson and Blake Hillard joining the Kimmel's at their "home" track.

Spectator gates open at 11:30 a.m. on Saturday with practice getting underway at 12-noon. Qualifications for the Lucas Oil Great American Stocks are set for 3 p.m. with Menards Pole Qualifying presented by Ansell for the ARCA Racing Series getting underway at 4 p.m. The Federated Car Care 50 for the Lucas Oil Great American Stocks rolls off at 5:30 p.m. with the Kentuckiana Ford Dealers Fall Classic 200 scheduled for a 7:15 p.m. (EDT) start time.

Advance tickets, both reserved and general admission, are currently selling and may be ordered on-line at www.salemspeedway.com or by calling 812-883-6504 or toll free 1-888-246-7223.

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GAS CHAMPION TO BE CROWNED ON SATURDAY

The 2012 season championship will be on the line when the Lucas Oil Great American Stocks (GAS) return to Salem Speedway on Saturday for the running of the Federated Car Care 50, a prelude to the ARCA Fall Classic 200.

Shawn Smith of Louisville and David Bayens of Memphis, Ind., have been at or near the top of the Lucas Oil Great American Stock standings all season long and that's exactly where they find themselves heading into the final points race of the season.

Smith holds a precarious two-point advantage (383-381) over Bayens, the defending series champion, with one race remaining.

Brian Bayer of Birdseye, Ind., the 2009 GAS champion, is just 17 points back of Smith in third place.

Kyle Hadley and Todd Kempf round out the top five in the standings, while Gary Rogers, Craig Rogers, Justin Pirtle, Mike Sharp and Jerry Norris make up the second five in that order.

Autographs

Saturday's pre-race festivities kick-off with the annual First Harrison Bank On-Track Autograph Session. Race fans are invited to visit with the ARCA Racing Series drivers and take advantage of photo and autograph opportunities. The Lucas Oil Great American Stock drivers, including Medal of Honor recipient Dakota Meyer, will also be available for autographs. The 30-minute autograph session gets underway at 4:45 p.m.

FALL CLASSIC PARTY ON SATURDAY

The annual ARCA Fall Classic Party is scheduled to take place following the racing action on Saturday night with King's Cave set to provide musical entertainment from 9 p.m. until midnight in the Lowe's Zone behind the main grandstand.

King's Cave plays a mix of classic rock and newer tunes.

Admission to the ARCA Fall Classic Party is free for those attending the Kentuckiana Ford Dealers ARCA Fall Classic presented by Federated Car Care.

RACE FANS ARE INVITED TO DOWNTOWN SALEM

The biggest racing weekend of the season at Salem Speedway kicks-off on Friday night, Sept. 14th with the annual "Friday Night On The Square" street festival in downtown Salem.

The popular Friday evening event, which draws thousands of visitors to the historic town square, offers fun and festivities for all ages. The festival, sponsored by the Washington County Chamber of Commerce, features over 70 booths and displays, including face painting and games for the kids, homemade crafts and much more. Local service clubs and organizations, along with vendors and downtown restaurants, provide a wide array of taste-tempting foods.

Salem Speedway and the ARCA Racing Series presented by Menards is also a part of the festivities with a display that includes the ARCA "Command Center" Hauler and show car. A special ARCA driver autograph session is set to take place from 6:30 to 7:30 p.m.

Race fans are also invited to register to win two free reserved seat tickets for the next day (Sept. 15th) Kentuckiana Ford Dealers ARCA Fall Classic presented by Federated Car Care.

"Friday Night On The Square" kicks-off at 6 p.m. on Sept. 14th and goes until 10 p.m. Plenty of parking can be found on the outlying blocks of the square.