

The NASCAR Playoff System is Broken

Why it's flawed and how to fix it
Part I

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7.24.2020

Abstract

NASCAR has used six different point systems since 1975 and during that same time, they've used six different ways of crowning a season ending champion. This paper sets out to answer the question NASCAR fans have had over the recent years, who would have won if a different point or playoff system existed? Data collection, research and analysis was conducted on each NASCAR season from 1975-2019. The core of the analysis is focused on the idea of what if all the point and playoff systems ran simultaneously from 1975-2019. Who would have won and would have the winners been different based on which system was used? As the title suggests, there are flaws in the way that the point system is constructed and there are obvious flaws in how the playoff structure rewards drivers and determines a champion.

Introduction

The National Association for Stock Car Auto Racing (NASCAR) was established in 1948 by Bill France Sr. NASCAR can trace its roots back to Prohibition when bootleggers utilized small, fast cars engineered to outrun the police. Drivers would modify their cars to make them go faster and handle better. It's no surprise that those drivers pitted their cars against each other to see who's was the fastest. In 1933 Prohibition was abolished but the love of fast cars and people watching those fast cars continued. As the years went on, the cars got better, and the races became more organized which led to the establishment of NASCAR as a governing body.

Bob Latford is credited with creating the first point system in 1975 with variations of that point system being used until 2010 when NASCAR revised the scoring system. Since Latford's creation in 1975, NASCAR has utilized six different scoring systems and since 2003, they have changed the playoff system five different times. While the magnitude of the scoring has changed with each different point system, the structure has stayed the same. The driver who finishes first gets the most points and then less points for those who finished 2nd, 3rd etc. The difference between each finishing spot has remained uniform. The drivers who do better get more points and the driver who gets the most points wins the championship at the end of the year.

That premise changed in 2003 when NASCAR instituted a playoff system. A regular season and a playoff season were created, saving the last ten races of the year for a playoff. The changes have been tweaked to allow more drivers into the playoff since the beginning but how those drivers have been chosen and how they advance (or don't advance) has been fluid.

Since there have been six different point systems and five different playoff systems since 2003, it begs the question, how would the outcome of the last 19 seasons been different if any of the five playoff systems as well as the pre-2004 point system were in place. An analysis of that exact scenario has been completed and this paper will discuss those findings. Each of the last 19 seasons have been analyzed, each playoff system was back tested to show which driver would have won a championship if a different playoff system in NASCAR had been in place. The result of the analysis shows that depending on the year or the playoff system, NASCAR history and careers would be substantially different.

Sports, since their inception have been a place where athletes can compete, showcase their skills and for the most part, the best individual (or team) prevails. As sports evolve and age, debate

begins on who the best to ever play their respected sport was. Now since players from different eras didn't play against each other, at least in their primes and if the generational gap is large, the game itself may be materially different. With that said, counterfactuals don't exist because you're dealing with humans competing with other humans.

With NASCAR on the other hand, there is a counterfactual and that is the different point systems. The drivers are competing for the most points over the course of the season. Even though they are competing against other drivers, the point system plays a crucial role in determining who comes out on top. Because of this, recreating what seasons would have looked like given certain point and playoff systems were in place is possible and that is what this paper will set out to do.

The following question will be answered, how would the recognized NASCAR champion of an individual year differ if different point and playoff systems were in place? NASCAR has materially changed how the champion has been identified since it began tweaking the rules in 2004. Changing a point system by itself doesn't affect the outcome of the championship year to year. However, when NASCAR started messing with which drivers qualify for the playoff and then how those qualified drivers move throughout the playoff a driver was up against a completely different set of rules then say a driver just a year prior.

It could also be argued that NASCAR doesn't need a playoff. NASCAR wanted to model its playoff system, especially since 2014 off major American sports leagues such as the NFL, MLB NBA and NHL. There is a stark difference between team sports and an individual sport such as NASCAR, that difference is that NASCAR drivers compete against mostly the same drivers for a 36 race season whereas in team sports, like the NFL, a team will only play against 13 unique teams of the 31 possible teams. Obviously, it isn't possible to play against each team at the same time each week, but the point is that a playoff is needed in team sports because crowning a champion is a process of elimination. Beginning in 2016, NASCAR has run 36 races and there are at least 36 drivers that race in all races. So, then why have a playoff and mess with what worked in the past? Well, hopefully it was in good faith. This paper will show whether the outcome of the changes made a difference and rewarded the wrong driver with a championship.

What needs to be addressed is that saying someone had the best season means different things to different people. Is it the driver who had the most wins? Is it the driver who had the best overall finish throughout the season? The driver who had the most top ten finishes or something else like the best last ten races or maybe just the best last race? This paper doesn't try to define what "best season" means in the context of NASCAR. What this paper does is showcase who would have won a NASCAR championship between 2001 and 2019 given the different systems that have been used.

Even though we don't have a way to show who had the "best season" or determine which playoff system rewards the driver who had the best year, what we do have is a control of sorts. Looking strictly at the 1975-2003 scoring system, that system assigns points to drivers based on their individual finish. Over the course of the year, the driver who accumulated the most points was considered the champion. This doesn't mean that the driver who wins during that system had the "best season" but what it does show is an unfiltered scoring system rewarding the driver who performed most consistently. Regardless of the year, if the playoff was stripped away, the winner of the 1975-2003 system would win in all other systems sans the playoff. That is a fact but certainly doesn't mean that the best driver is rewarded because the definition of "best driver" is not defined nor does it mean that the

1975-2003 system is the preferred system. In other words, it is not the point system that has altered the champion of each system, but the playoff systems that have been in place since 2004.

The Process

A notable change to NASCAR happened in 2016. They would offer 36 charters. Each charter guarantees a starting spot in each race (the maximum number of cars in the field is 40) plus a base revenue that is more than three times that of a non-charter team. Charter teams also receive revenue based on the last three years' performance of the car(s) associated with that charter, with more weight given to the most recent years. The remaining four spots were reserved for any team to qualify. One charter equaled one car and since the charter ensured that a car would race in all 36 races, it allowed teams and sponsors to invest further knowing there wasn't a risk of not qualifying. The result of this capped the number of entries at 40 beginning in the 2016 season.

Beginning in 2014, NASCAR instituted cuts during the playoffs. Resulting in only four qualifying drivers racing for a championship during the last race of the season. Because of this, the point system was slightly tweaked. Normally a driver would receive one bonus point for leading a lap, one bonus point for leading the most laps and the winning driver received 46 points (43 points in 2016). During the last race of the year, the four drivers who were vying for a championship were ineligible for bonus points. Which cleared the way for the driver who finished the highest amongst the four, would win the championship. By removing bonus points, NASCAR avoided any ties between the top four drivers.

In 2017, NASCAR created stage racing. This divided each race into three stages (4 stages for the Coca-Cola 600 at Charlotte). Points were assigned to drivers who finished each stage in the top ten as well as their finish of the race. Along with that, the winning driver of each stage was given one playoff point and the winner of the race was given five playoff points. Playoff points are added to the driver's playoff points begging the playoffs.

The Point Systems

1975-2003:

Year	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	5th	6th	7th	8th	9th	10th	11th	12th	13th	14th	15th	16th	17th	18th	19th	20th	21st	22nd	23rd	24th	25th	26th	27th	
1975-2003	175	170	165	160	155	150	146	142	138	134	130	127	124	121	118	115	112	109	106	103	100	97	94	91	88	85	82	
	28th	29th	30th	31st	32nd	33rd	34th	35th	36th	37th	38th	39th	40th	41st	42nd	43rd	44th	45th	46th	47th	48th	49th	50th	51st	52nd	53rd	54th	
	79	76	73	70	67	64	61	58	55	52	49	46	43	40	37	34	31	28	25	22	19	16	13	10	7	4	1	
Lead a Lap	Lead the Most Laps																											
5	5																											

- The maximum points a driver could receive per race is 185
- Points were distributed to drivers who qualified, running in the race was not required

2004-2006:

Year	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	5th	6th	7th	8th	9th	10th	11th	12th	13th	14th	15th	16th	17th	18th	19th	20th	21st	22nd	23rd	24th	25th	26th	27th	
2004-2006	180	170	165	160	155	150	146	142	138	134	130	127	124	121	118	115	112	109	106	103	100	97	94	91	88	85	82	
	28th	29th	30th	31st	32nd	33rd	34th	35th	36th	37th	38th	39th	40th	41st	42nd	43rd	44th	45th	46th	47th	48th	49th	50th	51st	52nd	53rd	54th	
	79	76	73	70	67	64	61	58	55	52	49	46	43	40	37	34	31	28	25	22	19	16	13	10	7	4	1	
Lead a Lap	Lead the Most Laps																											
5	5																											

- Five points were added to first place

- The maximum points a driver could receive per race is 190

2007-2010:

Year	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	5th	6th	7th	8th	9th	10th	11th	12th	13th	14th	15th	16th	17th	18th	19th	20th	21st	22nd	23rd	24th	25th	26th	27th
2007-2010	185	170	165	160	155	150	146	142	138	134	130	127	124	121	118	115	112	109	106	103	100	97	94	91	88	85	82
	28th	29th	30th	31st	32nd	33rd	34th	35th	36th	37th	38th	39th	40th	41st	42nd	43rd	44th	45th	46th	47th	48th	49th	50th	51st	52nd	53rd	54th
	79	76	73	70	67	64	61	58	55	52	49	46	43	40	37	34	31	28	25	22	19	16	13	10	7	4	1

Lead a Lap	Lead the Most Laps
5	5

- Five points were added to first place
- The maximum points a driver could receive per race is 195

2011-2015:

Year	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	5th	6th	7th	8th	9th	10th	11th	12th	13th	14th	15th	16th	17th	18th	19th	20th	21st	22nd	23rd	24th	25th	26th	27th
2011-2015	43 (+3)	42	41	40	39	38	37	36	35	34	33	32	31	30	29	28	27	26	25	24	23	22	21	20	19	18	17
	28th	29th	30th	31st	32nd	33rd	34th	35th	36th	37th	38th	39th	40th	41st	42nd	43rd											
	16	15	14	13	12	11	10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1											

Lead a Lap	Lead the Most Laps
1	1

- The gap between finishes were separated by one point
- The maximum points a driver could receive per race is 48 (43 in the last race of the year)

2016:

Year	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	5th	6th	7th	8th	9th	10th	11th	12th	13th	14th	15th	16th	17th	18th	19th	20th	21st	22nd	23rd	24th	25th	26th	27th
2016	40 (+3)	39	38	37	36	35	34	33	32	31	30	29	28	27	26	25	24	23	22	21	20	19	18	17	16	15	14
	28th	29th	30th	31st	32nd	33rd	34th	35th	36th	37th	38th	39th	40th														
	13	12	11	10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1														

Lead a Lap	Lead the Most Laps
1	1

- Points for each finish were decreased by three points to account for the reduction in cars relative to the previous season.
- The maximum points a driver could receive per race is 46 (40 in the last race of the year)

2017-2020:

Year	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	5th	6th	7th	8th	9th	10th	11th	12th	13th	14th	15th	16th	17th	18th	19th	20th	21st	22nd	23rd	24th	25th	26th	27th
2017-2020	40	35	34	33	32	31	30	29	28	27	26	25	24	23	22	21	20	19	18	17	16	15	14	13	12	11	10
	28th	29th	30th	31st	32nd	33rd	34th	35th	36th	37th	38th	39th	40th														
	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	1	1	1	1														

Playoff Points for winning	Stage Points													
Pwin	Position	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	5th	6th	7th	8th	9th	10th	S1WIN	S2WIN	S3WIN
5		10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	1	1	1

- Points for each finish were reduced by four points
- First place remained at 40, losing the three bonus points for winning a race
- Stage points were added to race finish points so the maximum points a driver could receive is 60 points with a maximum number of playoff points won per race of seven (S3WIN was reserved only for The Coca-Cola 600)
- The maximum gap between first and second place is 25 which is the same as it was between 2007-2010, not considering the magnitude of the difference. For example, the difference was only 14.71% between 2007-2010. Beginning in 2017, that gap increased to 71.43%. This drastically favored a driver who not only won but was able to finish high in the stages.

The Playoff Systems

Before 2004, there was no playoff system. Since the intuition of a playoff system in NASCAR, there have been five different versions. For this paper, seven different playoff systems have been identified. The reason for the difference is that the points systems changed more frequently. For example, the point system was the same between 2011-2015 but the playoff system changed in 2014. Also, the points system changed again in 2016 but the playoff system stayed the same as the previous two years. This complicated the recreation of the seasons because there was some overlap.

1975-2003:

- No playoffs
- The driver with the most points won the championship
- 28-36 races per year

2004-2006:

- 36 races per year
- 26 regular season races, ten playoff races
- The top ten drivers in points after 26 races qualify for the playoffs. If there are any drivers outside the top ten and within 400 points of the leader, they too would be included in the playoff. During the three years NASCAR ran this system, no one outside of the top ten qualified.
- The points for the playoff drivers were reset (see chart) and only the playoff drivers had an opportunity to win a championship. For the last ten races, NASCAR used the same points system as they did during the regular season.

After 26 Races	Playoff Points
Driver 1	5050
Driver 2	5045
Driver 3	5040
Driver 4	5035
Driver 5	5030
Driver 6	5025
Driver 7	5020
Driver 8	5015
Driver 9	5010
Driver 10	5005

2007-2010:

- 36 races per year
- 26 regular season races, ten playoff races
- Playoffs expanded to 12 drivers
- No one outside of the top 12 could qualify, NASCAR dropped the “within 400 points” rule
- All drivers start with the same amount of points (see chart) and ten points were awarded to playoff drivers for each win they had during the season. For the last ten races, NASCAR used the same points system as they did during the regular season

	Playoff Points
Driver 1	5000 + 10 / reg win
Driver 2	5000 + 10 / reg win
Driver 3	5000 + 10 / reg win
Driver 4	5000 + 10 / reg win
Driver 5	5000 + 10 / reg win
Driver 6	5000 + 10 / reg win
Driver 7	5000 + 10 / reg win
Driver 8	5000 + 10 / reg win
Driver 9	5000 + 10 / reg win
Driver 10	5000 + 10 / reg win
Driver 11	5000 + 10 / reg win
Driver 12	5000 + 10 / reg win

2011-2013:

- 36 races per year
- 26 regular season races, ten playoff races
- The playoffs continue to have 12 drivers, however the qualifying criteria changed. The top ten drivers based on points at the end of the regular season qualify for the playoffs. These drivers are joined by two "wild card" qualifiers, specifically the two drivers ranked from 11th through 20th in drivers' points who have the most regular-season race wins
- The two "wild card" qualifiers are not eligible for bonus points to begin the playoffs
- Driver points reset once the playoffs began (see chart) and three points were awarded to playoff drivers for each win they had during the season. For the last ten races, NASCAR used the same points system as they did during the regular season.

	Playoff Points
Driver 1	2000 + 3 / reg win
Driver 2	2000 + 3 / reg win
Driver 3	2000 + 3 / reg win
Driver 4	2000 + 3 / reg win
Driver 5	2000 + 3 / reg win
Driver 6	2000 + 3 / reg win
Driver 7	2000 + 3 / reg win
Driver 8	2000 + 3 / reg win
Driver 9	2000 + 3 / reg win
Driver 10	2000 + 3 / reg win
Driver 11	2000
Driver 12	2000

2014-2016:

- 36 races per year
- 26 regular season races, ten playoff races
- Playoff expanded to 16 drivers
- The 16 drivers are chosen primarily on wins during the regular season, if fewer than 16 drivers win races during the regular season, the remaining field is filled based on regular season points
- Driver points reset once the playoffs began (see chart) and three points were awarded to playoff drivers for each win they had during the season. For the last ten races, NASCAR used the same points system as they did during the regular season.
- The new playoff system instituted three "cuts" where drivers are eliminated from title contention as the playoff progresses. In each cut the bottom four drivers are eliminated from title contention after the third race of each round. After the first cut, the field is reduced to 12. The bottom four winless drivers kept their points after the first cut, while the remaining 12 drivers' points are reset to 3,000 points. After three more races, the cut line eliminates the bottom four winless drivers after the sixth playoff race, reducing the size of the field by another

four drivers. Drivers who miss the second cut have their points reset to their score at the end of the first cut, plus the combined points accumulated in the three races in the second round.

Those who continue have their points all reset to 4,000. Then the third round involves eliminating another four drivers, leaving the top four drivers to have their point totals reset to 5,000 so that they are tied for the final race of the year. The drivers who miss the cut after this round have their score reset to the score at the end of the first cut, plus total points accumulated in the six previous races. Of these four drivers who make this cut, the driver with the best absolute finish (no bonus points are involved) is crowned the season champion

- Under this system, any playoff driver who wins a race during a playoff round is automatically guaranteed a spot in the next round. Up to three drivers thus can advance to the next round through race wins, regardless of their actual points position after the final (third) race in that round. The remaining drivers to advance are determined by points
- If two drivers tie with points at the end of the round, the driver who had the highest finish during that round will advance

	Round 1	Round 2	Round 3	Round 4
Driver 1	2000 + 3 / reg win	3000	4000	5000
Driver 2	2000 + 3 / reg win	3000	4000	5000
Driver 3	2000 + 3 / reg win	3000	4000	5000
Driver 4	2000 + 3 / reg win	3000	4000	5000
Driver 5	2000 + 3 / reg win	3000	4000	
Driver 6	2000 + 3 / reg win	3000	4000	
Driver 7	2000 + 3 / reg win	3000	4000	
Driver 8	2000 + 3 / reg win	3000	4000	
Driver 9	2000 + 3 / reg win	3000		
Driver 10	2000 + 3 / reg win	3000		
Driver 11	2000 + 3 / reg win	3000		
Driver 12	2000 + 3 / reg win	3000		
Driver 13	2000 + 3 / reg win			
Driver 14	2000 + 3 / reg win			
Driver 15	2000 + 3 / reg win			
Driver 16	2000 + 3 / reg win			

2017-2020:

- 36 races per year
- 26 regular season races, ten playoff races
- Same structure as prior years, with 16 drivers and four playoff rounds. Four drivers are cut after each three race round until there are four drivers remaining, vying for a championship in the final race of the season.
- The difference between the 2014-2016 playoff structure and the 2017-2020 structure was the addition of Stage Points beginning in the 2017 season. Stage wins earn one playoff point which will be added to each driver's total with a race win earning five playoff points. Further, the regular season champion will receive 15 bonus playoff points, second place driver in regular season standings earning ten playoff points, and the third place driver earning eight playoff points, and each subsequent drivers in the top ten earning a descending number of points with the tenth place driver in regular season standings earning one playoff point. These points will be added to each driver's total and carry through the first three rounds of the playoff.
- A win by a championship-eligible driver in any playoff race automatically clinches the winning driver a spot in the next playoff round.

	Round 1	Round 2	Round 3	Round 4
Driver 1	2015 + Stage Points	3000	4000	5000
Driver 2	2010 + Stage Points	3000	4000	5000
Driver 3	2008 + Stage Points	3000	4000	5000
Driver 4	2007 + Stage Points	3000	4000	5000
Driver 5	2006 + Stage Points	3000	4000	
Driver 6	2005 + Stage Points	3000	4000	
Driver 7	2004 + Stage Points	3000	4000	
Driver 8	2003 + Stage Points	3000	4000	
Driver 9	2002 + Stage Points	3000		
Driver 10	2001 + Stage Points	3000		
Driver 11	2000 + Stage Points	3000		
Driver 12	2000 + Stage Points	3000		
Driver 13	2000 + Stage Points			
Driver 14	2000 + Stage Points			
Driver 15	2000 + Stage Points			
Driver 16	2000 + Stage Points			

Putting it all Together

Race and season data go back to 1949, but for the purposes of this paper that was too far back. After analyzing the point structure, what could be considered the modern NASCAR point system was established in 1975 so that was used as the start of the data analysis. Prior to 1975, points were assigned based on number of completed laps instead of a driver's finish. Furthermore, the number of races held, and surfaces ran on were substantially different, especially at the beginning that going back any further than 1975 would, for this paper, not be a representable sample.

Part I

The first step was to find the data for each season. This was easy enough, but there was a lot of cleaning that needed to be done due to formatting issues post download of the data. Data for the end of season rankings was collected. As seen below, there were many data points collected.

Driver	Races	Win	T5	T10	Pole	Laps	Led	Earnings	AvSt	AvFn	RAF	Miles	LLF	Points	Diff
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NASCAR stopped reporting earnings in 2016, so even though earnings were available, it was not used for the purposes of this paper. For reference, RAF stands for 'Running at Finish' and LLF stands for 'Lead Lap Finish'. From 1975 to 2019, NASCAR used these metrics for all seasons. Along with end of season rankings, each race for each season from 1975-2019 was also collected. The data points collected for individual races can be seen below. Like the end of season rankings, NASCAR used the same data points from 1975-2019, which made data collection and then analysis much simpler.

Fin	St	#	Driver	Sponsor / Owner	Car	Laps	Status	Led	Pts
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Once the data for each race of each season from 1975-2019 was collected, a quick glance at the data and it was clear that recreating different playoff systems from 1975 was not going to be possible. The number of races ran since 2001 has stayed constant at 36. However, prior to that year, it ranged from 28 to 34. Since the regular season is 26 races and the playoff is ten races, trying to recreate a playoff system in a year without 36 races was a roadblock. Dividing a season in theory makes sense, but what happens when the math doesn't result in an integer? While possible, making a judgement call on how many races or drivers to include would not have been a fair comparison so the number of seasons were cut and the analysis of different playoff systems in NASCAR would begin in 2001. This still provided 19 years of analysis.

As stated earlier, there have been six different point systems used since 1975 and five different playoff systems not including 1975-2003 when there was no playoff. Also, since there was an overlap between point systems and playoff systems, six different seasons needed to be created. Due to stage racing and the inclusion of stage points, no seasons were analyzed using the point or playoff system after 2016. In total, 114 seasons needed to be recreated. Between 2011-2015 a single point system was used but two different playoff systems were recognized, that is why two different systems needed to be created. Below is a breakdown of each of the six systems that were created. In bold is the name of the system for this paper with the point and playoff system used underneath.

1975-2003

- No Playoff
- 1975-2003 Point System

2004-2006_Playoffs

- 2004-2006 Playoff System
- 2004-2006 Point System

2007-2010_Playoffs

- 2007-2010 Playoff System
- 2007-2010 Point System

2011-2015_('11-'13 Playoffs)

- 2011-2013 Playoff System
- 2011-2015 Point System

2011-2015_('14-'15 Playoffs)

- 2014-2016 Playoff System
- 2011-2015 Point System

2016_Playoffs

- 2014-2016 Playoff System
- 2016 Point System

The first major setback happened when it came to assigning points. Separate data sources needed to be created that housed week finishes, wins, laps led, most laps led and most importantly points deducted. This was crucial because when it came to calculating points for each driver per race, it was much easier to have a centralized source of data and have a *vlookup* do the work instead of manually calculating points per race. The output data was housed in a separate spreadsheet, separate from the core data. The point totals were cross referenced with the actual points scored to ensure data accuracy. This was done for all 19 seasons.

Another hurdle that needed to be overcome was how to incorporate deducted points that happened in a race. Depending on the season, the magnitude of the points was different. Furthermore, there isn't a clear explanation on how drivers were penalized or why the points deducted were the amount they were. Deducting points evenly across the seasons was out of the question because a 50-point deduction in the 1975-2003 system for a driver that won and led the most laps would reduce their points from 185 to 135. If that same scenario played out in the 2016_Playoffs system, that same driver would have their points reduced from 43 to -7.

The solution was to use a percentage calculation to deduct points from a driver. First, a separate spreadsheet was created that collected the raw data of points deducted for each race of that season. A second spreadsheet was created for the calculation. The points deducted was divided by the points

possible for each driver's finish. If there were no points deducted, the cell would display 100%. Once that was complete, points earned for each race for each season was multiplied by the cell for the same race. For example, if a driver had 100% in a cell for race #1, then the points earned for that race, regardless of season would not change. However, if points deducted was 75%, then for each race #1 for that driver, the earned points would be all deducted by 25%. The process was used as a proxy to ensure there wasn't an overreduction in points lost in earlier years for the later seasons. Other than a few formatting exercises, once the percentage of points deducted was taken into consideration, the only thing that was left was to add up driver points.

Part II

Drivers that were not eligible for points during a season were deleted from the end of year points standings. This was done for two reasons. The first was that a driver without points doesn't affect the outcome of a recalculation of different scoring systems. A driver would need points to make a point system meaningful. Second, drivers are ineligible for points, and other than two instances of ineligible drivers winning (Justin Haley, Daytona 2019 and Brian Vickers, Loudon 2013), ineligible drivers performed poorly. For the 19 seasons that were analyzed, only drivers who were point eligible were included in the analysis. The number of eligible drivers decreased as the years went on. 70 drivers in the 2001 season to just 40 drivers in 2019.

Once the data collection was completed, the 36 races were added up for each driver for each system. A spreadsheet was created that housed all drivers that were point eligible for the season with 36 columns. Those columns matched with each race that season. A simple *vlookup* aggregated the individual race data into one place, with a total column at the end. This process was done six times for each season because of the different point systems and playoff systems. This was useful because when it came time to calculate the playoff points, those playoff races had already been calculated. At this point, playoff points were not taken into consideration. That came later in Part III. The addition of points without considering playoff points was only relevant for the 1975-2003 system.

Part III

Since there was no playoff between 2001-2003, the process to calculate a champion was already complete because the driver who accumulated the most points was the winner. Based on the process laid out above, identifying who won (or would have won) had the original point system been in place was a simple process. To reduce changeover costs, each playoff system was done at once for all 19 seasons. This reduced error and reduced the time it took to complete each season. The playoffs were the same from 2014-2016 but since the point system was different in 2016, two different playoffs had to be created. Since the playoff was the same, the result was the same. The difference was that the 2016 decreased the amount of points that were assigned but since it was uniform, the overall results were the same. Each playoff was manually calculated including the playoff systems with cuts.

Results

The crucial and unknown aspect of simulating different point and playoff systems in seasons when those rules didn't apply is that the drivers were running a different race. There is nothing that can be done to change the outcomes of the races based on how the drivers and teams may have approached different systems. What can be said is that clearly the winners vary and there is data to back

that fact and show that the outcome would have been different regardless if the drivers were aware of different point systems or not. Below are the results from re-running different point and playoff systems backwards and forwards in time. Would the results be different had the drivers been operating and racing under different rules? Possibly, but this does a good job answering the question this paper set out to address. The playoff system clearly affected the outcome of nearly all 19 seasons. As was discussed above, the point system by itself would not affect any outcome, only the playoff system that was in place.

The Recognized Champion is who, for that season, has been declared the champion by NASCAR in the record books. The color of the cell corresponds with the color in one of the other six columns. For example, Kevin Harvick won in 2014 and Kyle Busch won in 2015. Their names are highlighted in the *2011-2015 ('14-'15 Playoff System)* column because that playoff system was the one being used during those two years. The chart moves from the lower left to the upper right regarding the timeline. Also, note the top three rows (2017, 2018, 2019) are not shaded because those three years were not back tested due to the complexities of Stage points. The playoff system was the same between 2014-2016, but the point systems were different. That is why there are two separate columns. Because of the same playoff system, the winner of both is the same throughout the analyzed period. The unshaded cells are the winners of back tested playoff systems.

Of the 19 years analyzed, 2017 is the only year where one driver would have won in all six different systems. There were ten years where there were two unique winners and eight other years with more than two unique winners. The *2011-2015 ('14-'15 Playoffs)* & *2016 Playoffs* produced two winners who won no races during the season but were declared the winner, once in 2008 and again in 2013. There are five drivers who have never won a recognized championship but won one of the back tested seasons.

If the Stage playoffs were included, the chart below displays 117 different outcomes. Of those outcomes, only 16 are unique and if the five unrecognized winning drivers are taken out, the last 19 years of NASCAR have been dominated by 11 drivers. In the year 2020, of those 11 drivers, only eight of them are still competing. 37% of the time did the recognized winner by NASCAR win the majority of the back tested seasons. It is hard from the current data to determine what is the "right" playoff system to use or in the *1975-2003* case, not to use. What is certain is that the change in the playoff rules altered the outcomes of season and thus having a positive or negative affect on a drivers' career.

Jeff Gordon is a seven-time champion had the point system never changed in 2004. He, not Jimmie Johnson would be tied with Richard Petty and Dale Earnhardt for the most championships. Had the *2007-2010 Playoffs* system been instituted in 2003 and never changed, Jimmie Johnson would be an eight-time champion! Carl Edwards, Dale Earnhardt Jr., Denny Hamlin, Greg Biffle and Sterling Marlin would all be NASCAR champions had they operated under different playoff rules. Other than Marlin, the other four unrecognized winners all won once when the playoff system with cuts was instituted in 2014. Edwards and Marlin were the only two to win in a playoff system without a cut. Furthermore, Edwards won in four different years, the recognized point system was clearly never in his favor.

	1975-2003	2004-2006_Playoffs	2007-2010_Playoffs	2011-2015_('11-'13 Playoffs)	2011-2015_('14-'15 Playoffs)	2016_Playoffs	Recognized Champion
2019	Kyle Busch	Martin Truex Jr.	Martin Truex Jr.	Martin Truex Jr.	Martin Truex Jr.	Martin Truex Jr.	Kyle Busch
2018	Kyle Busch	Joey Logano	Joey Logano	Joey Logano	Joey Logano	Joey Logano	Joey Logano
2017	Martin Truex Jr.	Martin Truex Jr.	Martin Truex Jr.	Martin Truex Jr.	Martin Truex Jr.	Martin Truex Jr.	Martin Truex Jr.
2016	Kevin Harvick	Joey Logano	Kyle Busch	Kyle Busch	Jimmie Johnson	Jimmie Johnson	Jimmie Johnson
2015	Kevin Harvick	Joey Logano	Joey Logano	Carl Edwards	Kyle Busch	Kyle Busch	Kyle Busch
2014	Jeff Gordon	Joey Logano	Kevin Harvick	Joey Logano	Kevin Harvick	Kevin Harvick	Kevin Harvick
2013	Jimmie Johnson	Jimmie Johnson	Jimmie Johnson	Jimmie Johnson	Dale Earnhardt Jr.	Dale Earnhardt Jr.	Jimmie Johnson
2012	Brad Keselowski	Brad Keselowski	Brad Keselowski	Brad Keselowski	Kyle Busch	Kyle Busch	Brad Keselowski
2011	Carl Edwards	Carl Edwards	Tony Stewart	Tony Stewart	Tony Stewart	Tony Stewart	Tony Stewart
2010	Kevin Harvick	Kevin Harvick	Jimmie Johnson	Jimmie Johnson	Carl Edwards	Carl Edwards	Jimmie Johnson
2009	Jimmie Johnson	Jimmie Johnson	Jimmie Johnson	Jimmie Johnson	Kurt Busch	Kurt Busch	Jimmie Johnson
2008	Carl Edwards	Jimmie Johnson	Jimmie Johnson	Jimmie Johnson	Kevin Harvick	Kevin Harvick	Jimmie Johnson
2007	Jeff Gordon	Jimmie Johnson	Jimmie Johnson	Jimmie Johnson	Jeff Gordon	Jeff Gordon	Jimmie Johnson
2006	Matt Kenseth	Jimmie Johnson	Jimmie Johnson	Jimmie Johnson	Denny Hamlin	Denny Hamlin	Jimmie Johnson
2005	Tony Stewart	Tony Stewart	Tony Stewart	Tony Stewart	Greg Biffle	Greg Biffle	Tony Stewart
2004	Jeff Gordon	Kurt Busch	Jimmie Johnson	Kurt Busch	Jimmie Johnson	Jimmie Johnson	Kurt Busch
2003	Matt Kenseth	Jimmie Johnson	Jimmie Johnson	Jimmie Johnson	Jimmie Johnson	Jimmie Johnson	Matt Kenseth
2002	Tony Stewart	Kurt Busch	Kurt Busch	Kurt Busch	Kurt Busch	Kurt Busch	Tony Stewart
2001	Jeff Gordon	Sterling Martin	Sterling Martin	Sterling Martin	Bobby Labonte	Bobby Labonte	Jeff Gordon

In the following charts, the actual (recognized) number of championships by driver are listed including the other six playoff systems that were analyzed. This data goes back to the inception of NASCAR in 1949. The highlighted names below are drivers who were affected during the 2001-2019 season, meaning that they one at least one race between those years. Prior to 2001, Jeff Gordon had won three championships (1995, 1997, 1998) and Bobby Labonte had won once (2000). Jimmie Johnson has the most variability. The 2007-2010_Playoffs produced eight championships for him while the 1975-2003 system only produced two championships. The drivers are ranked first by championships then in alphabetical order by their first name.

Recognized		1975-2003		2004-2006_Playoffs		2007-2010_Playoffs	
Driver	Championships	Driver	Championships	Driver	Championship	Driver	Championships
Dale Earnhardt	7	Dale Earnhardt	7	Dale Earnhardt	7	Jimmie Johnson	8
Jimmie Johnson	7	Jeff Gordon	7	Richard Petty	7	Dale Earnhardt	7
Richard Petty	7	Richard Petty	7	Jimmie Johnson	6	Richard Petty	7
Jeff Gordon	4	Cale Yarborough	3	Joey Logano	4	Cale Yarborough	3
Cale Yarborough	3	Darrell Waltrip	3	Cale Yarborough	3	Darrell Waltrip	3
Darrell Waltrip	3	David Pearson	3	Darrell Waltrip	3	David Pearson	3
David Pearson	3	Kevin Harvick	3	David Pearson	3	Jeff Gordon	3
Lee Petty	3	Lee Petty	3	Jeff Gordon	3	Lee Petty	3
Tony Stewart	3	Buck Baker	2	Lee Petty	3	Buck Baker	2
Buck Baker	2	Carl Edwards	2	Buck Baker	2	Herb Thomas	2
Herb Thomas	2	Herb Thomas	2	Herb Thomas	2	Joe Weatherly	2
Joe Weatherly	2	Jimmie Johnson	2	Joe Weatherly	2	Joey Logano	2
Kyle Busch	2	Joe Weatherly	2	Kurt Busch	2	Martin Truex Jr.	2
Ned Jarrett	2	Kyle Busch	2	Martin Truex Jr.	2	Ned Jarrett	2
Terry Labonte	2	Matt Kenseth	2	Ned Jarrett	2	Terry Labonte	2
Tim Flock	2	Ned Jarrett	2	Terry Labonte	2	Tim Flock	2
Alan Kulwicki	1	Terry Labonte	2	Tim Flock	2	Tony Stewart	2
Benny Parsons	1	Tim Flock	2	Alan Kulwicki	1	Alan Kulwicki	1
Bill Elliott	1	Tony Stewart	2	Benny Parsons	1	Benny Parsons	1
Bill Rexford	1	Alan Kulwicki	1	Bill Elliott	1	Bill Elliott	1
Bobby Allison	1	Benny Parsons	1	Bill Rexford	1	Bill Rexford	1
Bobby Isaac	1	Bill Elliott	1	Bobby Allison	1	Bobby Allison	1
Bobby Labonte	1	Bill Rexford	1	Bobby Isaac	1	Bobby Isaac	1
Brad Keselowski	1	Bobby Allison	1	Bobby Labonte	1	Bobby Labonte	1
Dale Jarrett	1	Bobby Isaac	1	Brad Keselowski	1	Brad Keselowski	1
Joey Logano	1	Bobby Labonte	1	Carl Edwards	1	Dale Jarrett	1
Kevin Harvick	1	Brad Keselowski	1	Dale Jarrett	1	Kevin Harvick	1
Kurt Busch	1	Dale Jarrett	1	Kevin Harvick	1	Kurt Busch	1
Martin Truex Jr.	1	Martin Truex Jr.	1	Red Byron	1	Kyle Busch	1
Matt Kenseth	1	Martin Truex Jr.	1	Rex White	1	Red Byron	1
Red Byron	1	Red Byron	1	Rusty Wallace	1	Rex White	1
Rex White	1	Rex White	1	Sterling Martin	1	Rusty Wallace	1
Rusty Wallace	1	Rusty Wallace	1	Tony Stewart	1	Sterling Martin	1

2011-2015_('11-'13 Playoffs)		2011-2015_('14-'15 Playoffs)		2016_Playoffs	
Driver	Championships	Driver	Championships	Driver	Championships
Dale Earnhardt	7	Dale Earnhardt	7	Dale Earnhardt	7
Jimmie Johnson	7	Richard Petty	7	Richard Petty	7
Richard Petty	7	Jeff Gordon	4	Jeff Gordon	4
Cale Yarborough	3	Cale Yarborough	3	Cale Yarborough	3
Darrell Waltrip	3	Darrell Waltrip	3	Darrell Waltrip	3
David Pearson	3	David Pearson	3	David Pearson	3
Jeff Gordon	3	Jimmie Johnson	3	Jimmie Johnson	3
Lee Petty	3	Lee Petty	3	Lee Petty	3
Buck Baker	2	Bobby Labonte	2	Bobby Labonte	2
Herb Thomas	2	Buck Baker	2	Buck Baker	2
Joe Weatherly	2	Herb Thomas	2	Herb Thomas	2
Joey Logano	2	Joe Weatherly	2	Joe Weatherly	2
Kurt Busch	2	Kevin Harvick	2	Kevin Harvick	2
Martin Truex Jr.	2	Kurt Busch	2	Kurt Busch	2
Ned Jarrett	2	Kyle Busch	2	Kyle Busch	2
Terry Labonte	2	Martin Truex Jr.	2	Martin Truex Jr.	2
Tim Flock	2	Ned Jarrett	2	Ned Jarrett	2
Tony Stewart	2	Terry Labonte	2	Terry Labonte	2
Alan Kulwicki	1	Tim Flock	2	Tim Flock	2
Benny Parsons	1	Alan Kulwicki	1	Alan Kulwicki	1
Bill Elliott	1	Benny Parsons	1	Benny Parsons	1
Bill Rexford	1	Bill Elliott	1	Bill Elliott	1
Bobby Allison	1	Bill Rexford	1	Bill Rexford	1
Bobby Isaac	1	Bobby Allison	1	Bobby Allison	1
Bobby Labonte	1	Bobby Isaac	1	Bobby Isaac	1
Brad Keselowski	1	Carl Edwards	1	Carl Edwards	1
Carl Edwards	1	Dale Earnhardt Jr.	1	Dale Earnhardt Jr.	1
Dale Jarrett	1	Dale Jarrett	1	Dale Jarrett	1
Dale Jarrett	1	Denny Hamlin	1	Denny Hamlin	1
Kyle Busch	1	Greg Biffle	1	Greg Biffle	1
Red Byron	1	Joey Logano	1	Joey Logano	1
Rex White	1	Red Byron	1	Red Byron	1
Rusty Wallace	1	Rex White	1	Rex White	1
Sterling Martin	1	Rusty Wallace	1	Rusty Wallace	1
		Tony Stewart	1	Tony Stewart	1

Discussion of the Results

This paper covers 19 seasons between 2001-2019 and the following section will breakdown each year. Not only will each season be broken down, but so will each of the six playoff systems. Each playoff system breakdown will include the following:

- Chart displaying winning drivers in each of the six systems
- Noteworthy general callouts
- Biggest Benefactors
 - Those drivers who benefited the most by different playoff systems
- Biggest Losers
 - Those drivers who benefited the least from different playoff systems
- Individual system breakdown
 - How the driver won
 - Other noteworthy callouts per playoff system

2001

	1975-2003	2004-2006_Playoffs	2007-2010_Playoffs	2011-2015_('11-'13 Playoffs)	2011-2015_('14-'15 Playoffs)	2016_Playoffs	Recognized Champion
2001	Jeff Gordon	Sterling Martin	Sterling Martin	Sterling Martin	Bobby Labonte	Bobby Labonte	Jeff Gordon

- Steve Park was injured so he did not race in the final 12 races of the year. He qualified for three playoffs because of his win in race #2

- Tony Stewart had the highest average finish (2.0) in the playoff, finishing second in all six scoring systems
- Jeff Gordon had the best regular season and overall season average finish of 10.69 and 10.97, respectively
- Sterling Marlin and Jeff Burton both had an average finish of 9.50 in the playoff
- There were no ties during the playoff
- Steve Park's average year end finish standard deviation was 8.77. The average for the 70 drivers was 1.34

Biggest Benefactor:

- Sterling Marlin – He won two championships
- Bobby Labonte – He won three championships
- Jeff Burton - 5.75 places better during playoffs and he won a race during the playoff resulting in four - 3rd place finishes and an 11th. His recognized finish for the '01 season was 10th
- Dale Earnhardt Jr. - He made the final four in *2016_Playoffs* and *2011-2015_('14-'15 Playoffs)* based on wins in the 1st and 2nd rounds of the playoff
- Michael Waltrip – Due to his Daytona 500 win, he made the playoff which resulted in his only two top-20 finishes because of the *2016_Playoffs* and *2011-2015_('14-'15 Playoffs)*

Biggest Losers:

- Jeff Gordon – He is recognized as the '01 champion, but that would be the only champion he would be awarded. Missing the final for the *2016_Playoffs* and *2011-2015_('14-'15 Playoffs)*
- Ricky Rudd - No wins in the playoff and a negative 4.03 average playoff finish relative to his season average. He was recognized as a 4th place finisher in '01, but in the other systems he finished with an 8th place finish and four – 10th place finishes
- Steve Park - Although his win punched his ticket to the playoffs, he missed the final 12 races of the season due to a season ending injury. He would have qualified for the *2011-2015_('11-'13 Playoffs)*, *2011-2015_('14-'15 Playoffs)* and *2016_Playoffs*

1975-2003

How did Jeff Gordon win? He had the highest average finish throughout the season of 10.97, 1.58 places better than the next closest driver. Because of the way the point system was set up, consistency along with having the highest average finish is the determining factor to winning.

1975-2003

Fin	Driver	Points	Diff.
1	Jeff Gordon	5112	
2	Tony Stewart	4763	-349
3	Sterling Marlin	4741	-371
4	Ricky Rudd	4706	-406
5	Dale Jarrett	4612	-500
6	Bobby Labonte	4561	-551
7	Rusty Wallace	4481	-631
8	Dale Earnhardt, Jr.	4460	-652
9	Kevin Harvick	4406	-706
10	Jeff Burton	4394	-718
11	Johnny Benson, Jr.	4152	-960
12	Mark Martin	4095	-1017
13	Matt Kenseth	3982	-1130
14	Ward Burton	3846	-1266
15	Bill Elliott	3824	-1288
16	Jimmy Spencer	3782	-1330
17	Jerry Nadeau	3675	-1437
18	Bobby Hamilton	3575	-1537
19	Ken Schrader	3480	-1632
20	Elliott Sadler	3471	-1641

2004-2006 Playoffs

How did Sterling Marlin win? Gordon's 486-point lead over Marlin was cut to 20 once the playoff started. Gordon and Marlin both had a win, but Marlin's average finish was 9.50 versus Gordon's 11.70. Because of Marlin's better playoff performance, he scored 95 more points leading to his 75-point win over 3rd place Jeff Gordon and 32-point win over 2nd place Tony Stewart.

2004-2006_Playoffs

Fin	Driver	Points	Diff.
1	Sterling Marlin	6474	
2	Tony Stewart	6442	-32
3	Jeff Gordon	6399	-75
4	Bobby Labonte	6324	-150
5	Dale Jarrett	6277	-197
6	Rusty Wallace	6266	-208
7	Dale Earnhardt, Jr.	6246	-228
8	Ricky Rudd	6205	-269
9	Kevin Harvick	6191	-283
10	Johnny Benson, Jr.	6059	-415
11	Jeff Burton	4404	-2070
12	Mark Martin	4095	-2379
13	Matt Kenseth	3982	-2492
14	Ward Burton	3851	-2623
15	Bill Elliott	3829	-2645
16	Jimmy Spencer	3782	-2692
17	Jerry Nadeau	3675	-2799
18	Bobby Hamilton	3580	-2894
19	Ken Schrader	3480	-2994
20	Elliott Sadler	3476	-2998

2007-2010 Playoffs

How did Sterling Marlin win? Gordon's 506-point lead over Marlin entering the playoffs was cut to just 40. Marlin had the highest point total during the playoff, 1,449, 24 points better than 3rd place finisher Jeff Burton.

Jeff Burton and Mark Martin get into the expanded playoff of 12 drivers. They finish 3rd and 11th respectively. Burton had a playoff win and tied Marlin for the best playoff average finish of 9.50.

Burton also had the 2nd best playoffs behind Marlin based on points but finished 3rd because Stewart started with 20 more points than Burton. Burton beat Stewart by 18 points in the playoffs.

2007-2010_Playoffs			
Fin	Driver	Points	Diff.
1	Sterling Marlin	6459	
2	Tony Stewart	6437	-22
3	Jeff Burton	6435	-24
4	Jeff Gordon	6404	-55
5	Bobby Labonte	6314	-145
6	Dale Jarrett	6277	-182
7	Rusty Wallace	6266	-193
8	Dale Earnhardt, Jr.	6246	-213
9	Kevin Harvick	6196	-263
10	Ricky Rudd	6180	-279
11	Mark Martin	6147	-312
12	Johnny Benson, Jr.	6054	-405
13	Matt Kenseth	3982	-2477
14	Ward Burton	3856	-2603
15	Bill Elliott	3834	-2625
16	Jimmy Spencer	3782	-2677
17	Jerry Nadeau	3675	-2784
18	Bobby Hamilton	3585	-2874
19	Elliott Sadler	3481	-2978
20	Ken Schrader	3480	-2979

2011-2015 ('11-'13 Playoffs)

How did Sterling Marlin win? Gordon's lead over Marlin fell from 120 to 12. Once the playoffs started, Marling scored more points than Jeff Burton by 3. Of Marlin's three wins, this is the smallest margin of victory, 32,22,6 points respectively. This is all due to how NASCAR assigned points to begin the playoffs. Due to the new point system, Marlin scored 355 points, Burton 352 and Tony Stewart 343. Stewart started the playoffs with 2009 points, Marlin with 2003 and Burton with 2000. Because Burton wasn't in the top ten of points, he wasn't granted three points for his win earlier in the season.

Mark Martin misses the playoff because he did not finish in the top-10 in regular season points nor did he have a regular season win. Steve Park is the outlier. Unknown what would have happened had this point system been in place in 2001 because Park was unable to finish. Would have NASCAR granted Ward Burton his playoff spot? For the record, had that happened, W. Burton would have finished 12th instead of 15th. Whatever they would have done, the decision would not have affected the outcome of the championship.

2011-2015('11-'13 Playoffs)

Fin	Driver	Points	Diff.
1	Sterling Marlin	2358	
2	Tony Stewart	2352	-6
3	Jeff Burton	2352	-6
4	Jeff Gordon	2346	-12
5	Bobby Labonte	2317	-41
6	Rusty Wallace	2312	-46
7	Dale Jarrett	2308	-50
8	Dale Earnhardt, Jr.	2292	-66
9	Kevin Harvick	2285	-73
10	Ricky Rudd	2276	-82
11	Johnny Benson, Jr.	2241	-117
12	Steve Park	2000	-358
13	Mark Martin	959	-1399
14	Matt Kenseth	928	-1430
15	Ward Burton	882	-1476
16	Bill Elliott	880	-1478
17	Jimmy Spencer	868	-1490
18	Jerry Nadeau	828	-1530
19	Bobby Hamilton	806	-1552
20	Ken Schrader	783	-1575

2011-2015 ('14-'15 Playoffs) & 2016 Playoffs

How did Bobby Labonte win? He is the biggest benefactor of the playoff system with cuts. He was 6th in regular season points, 5th in playoff points. He had one regular season win and one playoff win. Labonte's average finish was 7th best and during the playoffs, his average finish was basically average (.05 better than average). So how does Bobby Labonte win?

He made the playoff, he finished the regular season 7th in points and 125 points behind Jeff Gordon but once the playoffs reset, he was only behind by 9. After the first round he, finished 12th, two points above the cut line. He was in 4th after the second round. With his win in the second to last race, he finished the 3rd round in first. Because of the way the point system is set up, the final four drivers have their points reset to 5000 and the highest finisher of the 4, wins the championship. Labonte finished 3rd, Stewart finished 5th with Jeff Burton and Dale Earnhardt Jr. finishing 17th and 24th respectively. Furthermore, Labonte could have made the finals without a win in the 35th race. Labonte won because he was consistent enough to not get cut, collected points in the middle, his win ensured he got into the final and beat three other drivers.

Michael Waltrip makes the playoff even with the 28th highest point value (1975-2003 point system). Waltrip was one of 15 unique winners during the '01 season, leaving the last spot for Johnny Benson, Jr.

2011-2015('14-'15 Playoffs)				2016_Playoffs			
Fin	Driver	Points	Diff.	Fin	Driver	Points	Diff.
1	Bobby Labonte	5041		1	Bobby Labonte	5038	
2	Tony Stewart	5039	-2	2	Tony Stewart	5036	-2
3	Jeff Burton	5027	-14	3	Jeff Burton	5024	-14
4	Dale Earnhardt, Jr.	5020	-21	4	Dale Earnhardt, Jr.	5017	-21
5	Sterling Marlin	2358	-2683	5	Sterling Marlin	2328	-2710
6	Jeff Gordon	2346	-2695	6	Jeff Gordon	2316	-2722
7	Rusty Wallace	2312	-2729	7	Rusty Wallace	2282	-2756
8	Dale Jarrett	2308	-2733	8	Dale Jarrett	2279	-2759
9	Kevin Harvick	2285	-2756	9	Kevin Harvick	2255	-2783
10	Ricky Rudd	2276	-2765	10	Ricky Rudd	2246	-2792
11	Ward Burton	2265	-2776	11	Ward Burton	2238	-2800
12	Johnny Benson, Jr.	2241	-2800	12	Johnny Benson, Jr.	2211	-2827
13	Bobby Hamilton	2218	-2823	13	Bobby Hamilton	2188	-2850
14	Michael Waltrip	2183	-2858	14	Michael Waltrip	2153	-2885
15	Elliott Sadler	2179	-2862	15	Elliott Sadler	2149	-2889
16	Steve Park	2003	-3038	16	Steve Park	2003	-3035
17	Mark Martin	959	-4082	17	Mark Martin	852	-4186
18	Matt Kenseth	928	-4113	18	Matt Kenseth	822	-4216
19	Bill Elliott	880	-4161	19	Bill Elliott	774	-4264
20	Jimmy Spencer	868	-4173	20	Jimmy Spencer	763	-4275

Below is a chart displaying how many top 20s, top 10s and top 4s each of the drivers who had a taop-20 in at least one of the six playoff systems. The average finish in the last column refers to the average finish of the six different playoff systems.

Driver	Top4s	Top10s	Top20s	AvgFin	FirstPlaceFinishes
Tony Stewart	6	6	6	2.0	0
Sterling Marlin	4	6	6	2.7	3
Bobby Labonte	3	6	6	3.7	2
Jeff Gordon	4	6	6	4.0	1
Jeff Burton	4	5	6	5.5	0
Dale Jarrett	0	6	6	6.5	0
Dale Earnhardt, Jr.	2	6	6	6.5	0
Rusty Wallace	0	6	6	6.7	0
Ricky Rudd	1	6	6	8.7	0
Kevin Harvick	0	6	6	9.0	0
Johnny Benson, Jr.	0	1	6	11.3	0
Ward Burton	0	0	6	13.2	0
Mark Martin	0	0	6	13.7	0
Matt Kenseth	0	0	6	14.8	0
Bill Elliott	0	0	6	16.5	0
Bobby Hamilton	0	0	6	16.5	0
Jimmy Spencer	0	0	6	17.5	0
Elliott Sadler	0	0	5	18.3	0
Jerry Nadeau	0	0	4	18.5	0
Ken Schrader	0	0	4	20.3	0
Michael Waltrip	0	0	2	21.3	0
Steve Park	0	0	3	23.3	0

2002

	1975-2003	2004-2006_Playoffs	2007-2010_Playoffs	2011-2015_('11-'13 Playoffs)	2011-2015_('14-'15 Playoffs)	2016_Playoffs	Recognized Champion
2002	Tony Stewart	Kurt Busch	Kurt Busch	Kurt Busch	Kurt Busch	Kurt Busch	Tony Stewart

- Sterling Marlin cracked a vertebra during the 29th race and missed the final seven races.
- 12 drivers instead of ten made the *2004-2006_Playoffs*, all were within 400 points of the leader
- Kurt Busch had the highest average finish (1.33) in the playoff, finishing 1st five different times
- Mark Martin had the best regular season and overall season average finish of 12.35 and 12.17, respectively
- Busch had the best average finish in the playoff of 6.80

- Ryan Newman's average year end finish standard deviation was 6.34. The average for the 87 drivers was 1.49

Biggest Benefactor:

- Busch – He won five championships
- Dale Jarrett – He finished 2nd in *2011-2015_ ('14-'15 Playoffs)* and *2016_Playoffs* while winless in the playoff. The point resets each round help him
- Dale Earnhardt Jr. – He had two top four finishes in *2011-2015_ ('14-'15 Playoffs)* and *2016_Playoffs* because of his sole playoff win
- Ward Burton – He made the *2011-2015_ ('14-'15 Playoffs)* and *2016_Playoffs* because of his two regular season wins.
- Kevin Harvick - He made the *2011-2015_ ('14-'15 Playoffs)* and *2016_Playoffs* because of his two regular season wins.

Biggest Losers:

- Jeff Gordon – He only had one top four finish and that came in the *1975-2003* system but during the playoff systems, the best he did was 7th
- Sterling Marlin – Marlin made all six playoffs but because of his injury he competed in none of them
- Tony Stewart – Due to the playoff structures, Stewart would not win in any of the playoff structures
- Martin – He is recognized as the runner-up finisher for the '02 season, but once the playoff systems were instituted, he had three top four finishes and two top five finishes
- Ryan Newman – He was winless in the regular season and finished 17th in regular season points which resulted in him missing the *2011-2015_ ('14-'15 Playoffs)* and *2016_Playoffs*

1975-2003

How did Tony Stewart win? Stewart's average finish was 0.44 less than Mark Martin's and Stewart's standard deviation of his average finish was 2.01 worse than Martin's. By these two metrics, Martin should have won, but Stewart won the championship by 38 points. Looking closer at their wins, helps to explain the difference. Stewart won three times in 2002 and Martin won once, during those four races, Stewart at a +84-point advantage, helping to explain why Stewart won the championship.

1975-2003

Fin	Driver	Points	Diff.
1	Tony Stewart	4800	
2	Mark Martin	4762	-38
3	Kurt Busch	4641	-159
4	Jeff Gordon	4607	-193
5	Jimmie Johnson	4600	-200
6	Ryan Newman	4593	-207
7	Rusty Wallace	4574	-226
8	Matt Kenseth	4432	-368
9	Dale Jarrett	4415	-385
10	Ricky Rudd	4323	-477
11	Dale Earnhardt, Jr.	4270	-530
12	Jeff Burton	4259	-541
13	Bill Elliott	4158	-642
14	Michael Waltrip	3985	-815
15	Ricky Craven	3888	-912
16	Bobby Labonte	3810	-990
17	Jeff Green	3704	-1096
18	Sterling Marlin	3703	-1097
19	Dave Blaney	3670	-1130
20	Robby Gordon	3632	-1168

2004-2006 Playoffs

How did Kurt Busch win? If it wasn't for the "within 400 points", Kurt Busch would not have made the playoffs. He entered the playoffs in 12th position. Not just him, but also Dale Jarrett (finished 5th) made the playoffs because he was within 400 points of the leader at the end of the regular season. Busch entered the playoff 366 points behind Marlin but after the point reset, he was 55 points behind. Busch had an average finish of 6.80 during the playoff, which was best. That was .80 better than runner r-up, Tony Stewart. Furthermore, entering the playoff, Stewart had a 35-point lead on Busch, but Busch scored 1,578 points during the playoff compared to Stewart's 1,479, a difference of 99. Based on the first three races of the playoff, it was unlikely Marlin would have competed for a championship had he not gotten hurt. Busch had scored 127 more points than Marlin, making up the deficit and then some just after three races. Of all the drivers, Busch scored the most points during the last ten races of the year.

2004-2006 Playoffs

Fin	Driver	Points	Diff.
1	Kurt Busch	6573	
2	Tony Stewart	6509	-64
3	Ryan Newman	6435	-138
4	Mark Martin	6377	-196
5	Dale Jarrett	6321	-252
6	Rusty Wallace	6306	-267
7	Jeff Gordon	6290	-283
8	Jimmie Johnson	6278	-295
9	Matt Kenseth	6261	-312
10	Ricky Rudd	6142	-431
11	Bill Elliott	5923	-650
12	Sterling Marlin	5314	-1259
13	Dale Earnhardt, Jr.	4280	-2293
14	Jeff Burton	4259	-2314
15	Michael Waltrip	3990	-2583
16	Ricky Craven	3888	-2685
17	Bobby Labonte	3815	-2758
18	Jeff Green	3704	-2869
19	Dave Blaney	3670	-2903
20	Robby Gordon	3632	-2941

2007-2010 Playoffs

How did Kurt Busch win? Busch entered the playoffs as the 12th seed, but after the point reset and due to his one win during the regular season that got him ten bonus points, he began the playoffs tied for 8th. Busch had the best average finish of 6.80 during the playoff and he won three races. He led all drivers with the most points in the playoff and besting runner-up Tony Stewart by 114. The key difference between this point system and the previous one, is that the *2007-2010 Playoffs* bunched up the drivers more to start the playoff. Only 40 points separated 1st through 12th, whereas the previous system, the difference was 55.

2007-2010_Playoffs

Fin	Driver	Points	Diff.
1	Kurt Busch	6603	
2	Tony Stewart	6509	-94
3	Ryan Newman	6435	-168
4	Mark Martin	6342	-261
5	Dale Jarrett	6341	-262
6	Matt Kenseth	6291	-312
7	Rusty Wallace	6281	-322
8	Jeff Gordon	6280	-323
9	Jimmie Johnson	6263	-340
10	Ricky Rudd	6142	-461
11	Bill Elliott	5923	-680
12	Sterling Marlin	5284	-1319
13	Dale Earnhardt, Jr.	4290	-2313
14	Jeff Burton	4259	-2344
15	Michael Waltrip	3995	-2608
16	Ricky Craven	3888	-2715
17	Bobby Labonte	3820	-2783
18	Jeff Green	3704	-2899
19	Dave Blaney	3670	-2933
20	Robby Gordon	3632	-2971

2011-2015 ('11-'13 Playoffs)

How did Kurt Busch win? Busch finished the regular season 12th in points. He did not get an automatic entry into the playoff. He was then grouped with those drivers who finished 11th to 20th in regular season points. His one win during the regular season allowed him to qualify. Busch did not receive any bonus points to begin the playoff because he was one of the wild card drivers. With that said, Busch only started the playoff behind the leader, Matt Kenseth by 40 points. During the playoff, Busch had the best average finish and he scored the most points. He outscored runner-up Tony Stewart by 23 points.

2011-2015 ('11-'13 Playoffs)

Fin	Driver	Points	Diff.
1	Kurt Busch	2391	
2	Tony Stewart	2377	-14
3	Ryan Newman	2354	-37
4	Mark Martin	2326	-65
5	Dale Jarrett	2324	-67
6	Rusty Wallace	2313	-78
7	Matt Kenseth	2312	-79
8	Jimmie Johnson	2303	-88
9	Jeff Gordon	2301	-90
10	Ricky Rudd	2269	-122
11	Bill Elliott	2198	-193
12	Sterling Marlin	2063	-328
13	Jeff Burton	1012	-1379
14	Dale Earnhardt, Jr.	999	-1392
15	Michael Waltrip	931	-1460
16	Ricky Craven	902	-1489
17	Bobby Labonte	878	-1513
18	Jeff Green	848	-1543
19	Dave Blaney	842	-1549
20	Robby Gordon	828	-1563

2011-2015 ('14-'15 Playoffs) & 2016 Playoffs

How does Kurt Busch win? Busch had one regular season win, three playoff wins including the last race of the year. His average finish for the season was 5th best but his average finish during the playoff was the best of all drivers at 6.8. Busch ended the regular season in 12th place and after the

playoff point reset, began the playoff tied for 9th. After the 1st round, Busch was tied for 3rd. He won a race during the 2nd round and finished 2nd. The third round produced another win for Busch which punched his ticket into the final four and the points lead. The final four drivers had their points reset to 5000 and with Busch winning the race, he would win the championship by a wide margin. Although the magnitude of points doesn't show it compared to years when the winner won by hundreds of points, Busch finished 1st, the runner-up, Dale Jarrett finished in 15th.

There were 15 unique winners in 2002. Rusty Wallace got into the playoffs and ended up finishing 6th in both playoff systems. There were no ties during any of the playoff rounds.

2011-2015_ ('14-'15 Playoffs)				2016_Playoffs			
Fin	Driver	Points	Diff.	Fin	Driver	Points	Diff.
1	Kurt Busch	5043		1	Kurt Busch	5040	
2	Dale Jarrett	5029	-14	2	Dale Jarrett	5026	-14
3	Tony Stewart	5026	-17	3	Tony Stewart	5023	-17
4	Dale Earnhardt, Jr.	5023	-20	4	Dale Earnhardt, Jr.	5020	-20
5	Mark Martin	2326	-2717	5	Mark Martin	2296	-2744
6	Rusty Wallace	2313	-2730	6	Rusty Wallace	2283	-2757
7	Matt Kenseth	2312	-2731	7	Matt Kenseth	2282	-2758
8	Jimmie Johnson	2303	-2740	8	Jimmie Johnson	2273	-2767
9	Jeff Gordon	2301	-2742	9	Jeff Gordon	2273	-2767
10	Michael Waltrip	2272	-2771	10	Michael Waltrip	2243	-2797
11	Ricky Rudd	2269	-2774	11	Ricky Rudd	2239	-2801
12	Bobby Labonte	2250	-2793	12	Bobby Labonte	2221	-2819
13	Bill Elliott	2198	-2845	13	Bill Elliott	2170	-2870
14	Kevin Harvick	2188	-2855	14	Ward Burton	2160	-2880
15	Ward Burton	2184	-2859	15	Kevin Harvick	2158	-2882
16	Sterling Marlin	2063	-2980	16	Sterling Marlin	2054	-2986
17	Ryan Newman	1089	-3954	17	Ryan Newman	986	-4054
18	Jeff Burton	1012	-4031	18	Jeff Burton	904	-4136
19	Ricky Craven	902	-4141	19	Ricky Craven	795	-4245
20	Jeff Green	848	-4195	20	Jeff Green	741	-4299

Driver	Top4s	Top10s	Top20s	AvgFin	FirstPlaceFinishes
Kurt Busch	6	6	6	1.33	5
Tony Stewart	6	6	6	2.17	1
Mark Martin	4	6	6	4.00	0
Dale Jarrett	2	6	6	4.67	0
Rusty Wallace	0	6	6	6.33	0
Matt Kenseth	0	6	6	7.33	0
Jeff Gordon	1	6	6	7.50	0
Jimmie Johnson	0	6	6	7.67	0
Ryan Newman	3	4	6	8.17	0
Dale Earnhardt, Jr.	2	2	6	9.83	0
Ricky Rudd	0	4	6	10.33	0
Bill Elliott	0	0	6	12.00	0
Michael Waltrip	0	2	6	13.17	0
Sterling Marlin	0	0	6	14.33	0
Jeff Burton	0	0	6	14.83	0
Bobby Labonte	0	0	6	15.17	0
Ricky Craven	0	0	6	16.83	0
Jeff Green	0	0	6	18.50	0
Kevin Harvick	0	0	2	19.00	0
Dave Blaney	0	0	4	19.67	0
Robby Gordon	0	0	4	20.67	0
Ward Burton	0	0	2	21.50	0

2003

	1975-2003	2004-2006_Playoffs	2007-2010_Playoffs	2011-2015_ ('11-'13 Playoffs)	2011-2015_ ('14-'15 Playoffs)	2016_Playoffs	Recognized Champion
2003	Matt Kenseth	Jimmie Johnson	Jimmie Johnson	Jimmie Johnson	Jimmie Johnson	Jimmie Johnson	Matt Kenseth

- Jimmie Johnson had the highest average finish (1.17) in the playoffs, finishing 1st five different times
- Matt Kenseth had the best regular season and overall season average finish of 7.65 and 10.25, respectively
- Jimmie Johnson had the best average finish in the playoff of 6.50
- Dale Jarrett's average year end finish standard deviation was 6.49. The average for the 71 drivers was 2.12

Biggest Benefactor:

- Jimmie Johnson – He won five championships
- Greg Biffle – He had two top tens in the *2011-2015_('14-'15 Playoffs) and 2016_Playoffs*
- Joe Nemecheck – Due to his regular season win, he made the playoff giving him a top-20 finish in *2011-2015_('14-'15 Playoffs) and 2016_Playoffs*
- Dale Jarrett – Due to his regular season win, he made the playoff giving him a top-20 finish in *2011-2015_('14-'15 Playoffs) and 2016_Playoffs*
- Jeff Gordon – His average finish during the playoffs was 2.5. He finished 4th in the recognized season but never worse than 3rd in the other five systems
- Tony Stewart – He finished in 11th for the *2004-2006_Playoffs* but once the playoff was expanded to 12 then 16, he never finished worse than 5th

Biggest Losers:

- Matt Kenseth – He only had one top four finish and that came in the *1975-2003* system but during the playoff systems, the best he did was 4th
- Ryan Newman – Even though he had eight wins over the course of the season, the best he finished was 3rd in the *2004-2006_Playoffs* system. Him not winning a championship was not a product of the point system since he never would have won a championship regardless of playoff system. His average finish during the year was 13.92 and the standard deviation of his finished throughout the year was 14.48, the worst of all drivers.
- Jeremy Mayfield – His only top-20 finish was with the recognized point (*1975-2003*) system. In all other point systems, his best finish was 23rd

1975-2003

How did Matt Kenseth Win? One win along with the best average finish during the season of 10.25 was enough to secure a championship for Kenseth. His average finish was 1.14 better than second place finisher, Jimmie Johnson. He was also fifth best when it came to the standard deviation of his average finish.

1975-2003

Fin	Driver	Points	Diff.
1	Matt Kenseth	5022	
2	Jimmie Johnson	4932	-90
3	Dale Earnhardt, Jr.	4815	-207
4	Jeff Gordon	4785	-237
5	Kevin Harvick	4770	-252
6	Ryan Newman	4711	-311
7	Tony Stewart	4549	-473
8	Bobby Labonte	4377	-645
9	Bill Elliott	4303	-719
10	Terry Labonte	4162	-860
11	Kurt Busch	4150	-872
12	Jeff Burton	4109	-913
13	Jamie McMurray	3965	-1057
14	Rusty Wallace	3950	-1072
15	Michael Waltrip	3934	-1088
16	Robby Gordon	3856	-1166
17	Mark Martin	3769	-1253
18	Sterling Marlin	3745	-1277
19	Jeremy Mayfield	3736	-1286
20	Greg Biffle	3696	-1326

2004-2006 Playoffs

How did Jimmie Johnson win? Johnson ended the regular season behind Matt Kenseth in points by 496, after the point reset Johnson trailed by 15. Johnson had an average finish in the playoff of 6.5 where Kenseth's was 17. Runner-up Jeff Gordon had an average finish of 7.5 during the playoff. Johnson started the playoffs ahead of Gordon by ten and outscored him in the playoff by 50. The top-5 finishers were also the five who scored the most points in the playoffs. Of all drivers, Johnson scored the most points during the last ten races.

2004-2006_Playoffs

Fin	Driver	Points	Diff.
1	Jimmie Johnson	6609	
2	Jeff Gordon	6549	-60
3	Ryan Newman	6496	-113
4	Dale Earnhardt, Jr.	6419	-190
5	Kevin Harvick	6387	-222
6	Matt Kenseth	6208	-401
7	Bobby Labonte	6189	-420
8	Terry Labonte	6090	-519
9	Kurt Busch	5965	-644
10	Michael Waltrip	5865	-744
11	Tony Stewart	3023	-3586
12	Jeff Burton	3009	-3600
13	Robby Gordon	3000	-3609
14	Mark Martin	2861	-3748
15	Rusty Wallace	2812	-3797
16	Bill Elliott	2787	-3822
17	Sterling Marlin	2768	-3841
18	Greg Biffle	2718	-3891
19	Ward Burton	2694	-3915
20	Jamie McMurray	2685	-3924

2007-2010 Playoffs

How did Jimmie Johnson win? Johnson entered the playoff in 4th but after the point reset, he began tied for 3rd thanks to his two regular season wins which gave him a 20-point bonus. He did have a playoff win and his average finish during the playoff of 6.5 was best of all drivers, 0.50 better than

runner-up Tony Stewart. Johnson led all drivers with the most points during the playoffs and scored 38 more points than Stewart.

2007-2010_Playoffs			
Fin	Driver	Points	Diff.
1	Jimmie Johnson	6599	
2	Tony Stewart	6551	-48
3	Jeff Gordon	6544	-55
4	Ryan Newman	6536	-63
5	Dale Earnhardt, Jr.	6389	-210
6	Kevin Harvick	6357	-242
7	Bobby Labonte	6189	-410
8	Matt Kenseth	6168	-431
9	Terry Labonte	6090	-509
10	Kurt Busch	5985	-614
11	Robby Gordon	5886	-713
12	Michael Waltrip	5875	-724
13	Jeff Burton	3009	-3590
14	Mark Martin	2861	-3738
15	Rusty Wallace	2812	-3787
16	Bill Elliott	2787	-3812
17	Sterling Marlin	2768	-3831
18	Greg Biffle	2723	-3876
19	Ward Burton	2694	-3905
20	Jamie McMurray	2685	-3914

2011-2015 ('11-'13 Playoffs)

How did Jimmie Johnson win? Johnson had two regular season wins and one playoff win. He had the best average finish during the playoff and he outscored all drivers during the playoff. Johnson started the playoff 12 points behind Ryan Newman and led Jeff Gordon by three and Tony Stewart by 6. During the playoff, Johnson bested Gordon by seven points and beat Stewart by six points.

2011-2015_('11-'13 Playoffs)			
Fin	Driver	Points	Diff.
1	Jimmie Johnson	2392	
2	Jeff Gordon	2382	-10
3	Tony Stewart	2380	-12
4	Ryan Newman	2375	-17
5	Dale Earnhardt, Jr.	2336	-56
6	Kevin Harvick	2332	-60
7	Bobby Labonte	2279	-113
8	Matt Kenseth	2276	-116
9	Terry Labonte	2256	-136
10	Kurt Busch	2214	-178
11	Robby Gordon	2184	-208
12	Michael Waltrip	2179	-213
13	Jeff Burton	713	-1679
14	Mark Martin	663	-1729
15	Rusty Wallace	652	-1740
16	Bill Elliott	645	-1747
17	Sterling Marlin	637	-1755
18	Greg Biffle	634	-1758
19	Ward Burton	623	-1769
20	Jamie McMurray	606	-1786

2011-2015 ('14-'15 Playoffs) & 2016 Playoffs

How did Jimmie Johnson win? Johnson had two regular seasons win, one playoff win, he had the 2nd best average finish during the season and the best average finish during the playoff. Johnson finished the regular season 4th in points but started the playoff tied for 3rd. Johnson finished the 1st round tied for 3rd and he recorded his only playoff win in this round as well. After round 2, Johnson was in 4th place.

During the 3rd round, two drivers won races and Johnson finished below the other winless driver, Ryan Newman so had another eligible driver won, Johnson would have finished the round 5th. Johnson did not win the final race, but his 3rd place finish bested Jeff Gordon's 5th place finish which secured the championship for Johnson.

There were 16 unique winners during the season so no driver without a win would have qualified for the playoff. There were no ties during any of the playoff rounds.

2011-2015_ ('14-'15 Playoffs)				2016_Playoffs			
Fin	Driver	Points	Diff.	Fin	Driver	Points	Diff.
1	Jimmie Johnson	5041		1	Jimmie Johnson	5038	
2	Jeff Gordon	5039	-2	2	Jeff Gordon	5036	-2
3	Dale Earnhardt, Jr.	5020	-21	3	Dale Earnhardt, Jr.	5017	-21
4	Matt Kenseth	5001	-40	4	Matt Kenseth	5001	-37
5	Tony Stewart	2383	-2658	5	Tony Stewart	2353	-2685
6	Ryan Newman	2375	-2666	6	Ryan Newman	2345	-2693
7	Kevin Harvick	2332	-2709	7	Kevin Harvick	2302	-2736
8	Bobby Labonte	2279	-2762	8	Bobby Labonte	2250	-2788
9	Terry Labonte	2256	-2785	9	Terry Labonte	2226	-2812
10	Greg Biffle	2226	-2815	10	Greg Biffle	2199	-2839
11	Kurt Busch	2214	-2827	11	Kurt Busch	2185	-2853
12	Joe Nemechek	2202	-2839	12	Joe Nemechek	2175	-2863
13	Dale Jarrett	2195	-2846	13	Dale Jarrett	2166	-2872
14	Robby Gordon	2190	-2851	14	Robby Gordon	2160	-2878
15	Michael Waltrip	2179	-2862	15	Michael Waltrip	2152	-2886
16	Ricky Craven	2125	-2916	16	Ricky Craven	2096	-2942
17	Bill Elliott	1024	-4017	17	Bill Elliott	919	-4119
18	Jeff Burton	973	-4068	18	Jeff Burton	869	-4169
19	Rusty Wallace	922	-4119	19	Rusty Wallace	817	-4221
20	Jamie McMurray	922	-4119	20	Jamie McMurray	814	-4224

Driver	Top4s	Top10s	Top20s	AvgFin	FirstPlaceFinishes
Jimmie Johnson	6	6	6	1.17	5
Jeff Gordon	6	6	6	2.50	0
Dale Earnhardt, Jr.	4	6	6	3.83	0
Ryan Newman	3	6	6	4.83	0
Matt Kenseth	3	6	6	5.17	1
Tony Stewart	2	5	6	5.50	0
Kevin Harvick	0	6	6	6.00	0
Bobby Labonte	0	6	6	7.50	0
Terry Labonte	0	6	6	9.00	0
Kurt Busch	0	3	6	10.33	0
Michael Waltrip	0	1	6	13.17	0
Robby Gordon	0	0	6	13.17	0
Jeff Burton	0	0	6	14.33	0
Bill Elliott	0	1	6	15.17	0
Greg Biffle	0	2	6	15.67	0
Rusty Wallace	0	0	6	16.17	0
Mark Martin	0	0	4	16.83	0
Jamie McMurray	0	0	6	18.67	0
Sterling Marlin	0	0	4	18.83	0
Ricky Craven	0	0	2	20.33	0
Ward Burton	0	0	3	21.00	0
Joe Nemechek	0	0	2	21.00	0
Dale Jarrett	0	0	2	22.17	0
Jeremy Mayfield	0	0	1	22.83	0

2004

	1975-2003	2004-2006_Playoffs	2007-2010_Playoffs	2011-2015_ ('11-'13 Playoffs)	2011-2015_ ('14-'15 Playoffs)	2016_Playoffs	Recognized Champion
2004	Jeff Gordon	Kurt Busch	Jimmie Johnson	Kurt Busch	Jimmie Johnson	Jimmie Johnson	Kurt Busch

- Jimmie Johnson had the highest average finish (1.50) in the playoffs, finishing 1st three different times
- Jeff Gordon had the best overall season average finish of 11.39

- Dale Earnhardt Jr. had the best average finish during the regular season of 11.92
- Kurt Busch had the best average finish during the playoff of 8.90
- Jimmie Johnson had the best average finish in the playoff of 6.50
- Greg Biffle's average year end finish standard deviation was 4.03. The average for the 88 drivers was 1.77

Biggest Benefactor:

- Jeff Gordon – He won in the 1975-2003 system
- Jimmie Johnson – He won three times
- Tony Stewart – He finished 2nd in the 2011-2015_ ('14-'15 Playoffs) and 2016_ Playoffs even though he was winless in the playoff
- Jaime McMurray – He is recognized as finishing 11th during the '04 season, but that was his worst finish. In the other five systems, he had a 6th, two 4ths and two 3rds
- Rusty Wallace – Winless during the playoff, but his one regular season win help secure his spot in the 2011-2015_ ('11-'13 Playoffs), 2011-2015_ ('14-'15 Playoffs) and 2016_ Playoffs. He is recognized has a 16th place finisher during the '04 season

Biggest Losers:

- Kurt Busch – He had an average finish during the six systems of 3.0. He is recognized as the '04 champion and also would have won in the 2011-2015_ ('11-'13 Playoffs) system. He would have missed the final four in both the 2011-2015_ ('14-'15 Playoffs) and 2016_ Playoffs systems

1975-2003

How did Jeff Gordon win? Gordon's five wins was third best to Jimmie Johnson (8) and Dale Earnhardt Jr. (6) but his average finish of 11.39 was best of the season. Gordon's average finish was 0.67 better than Jimmie Johnson.

1975-2003

Fin	Driver	Points	Diff.
1	Jeff Gordon	5017	
2	Jimmie Johnson	4955	-62
3	Dale Earnhardt, Jr.	4840	-177
4	Kurt Busch	4780	-237
5	Tony Stewart	4691	-326
6	Jamie McMurray	4597	-420
7	Mark Martin	4592	-425
8	Matt Kenseth	4366	-651
9	Ryan Newman	4351	-666
10	Elliott Sadler	4305	-712
11	Bobby Labonte	4277	-740
12	Kasey Kahne	4274	-743
13	Kevin Harvick	4228	-789
14	Dale Jarrett	4214	-803
15	Jeremy Mayfield	4178	-839
16	Rusty Wallace	3955	-1062
17	Jeff Burton	3902	-1115
18	Greg Biffle	3892	-1125
19	Michael Waltrip	3878	-1139
20	Joe Nemechek	3873	-1144

2004-2006 Playoffs

How did Kurt Busch win? Busch had the best average finish during the playoff, he averaged 8.90. Busch entered the playoff in 7th, 293 points behind Jeff Gordon. The playoff point reset left Busch 30

points behind the leader. Busch started the playoff 25 points behind runner-up Jimmie Johnson. During the playoffs, Busch outscored Johnson and Gordon by 33 and 46, respectively.

2004-2006_Playoffs

Fin	Driver	Points	Diff.
1	Kurt Busch	6506	
2	Jimmie Johnson	6498	-8
3	Jeff Gordon	6490	-16
4	Mark Martin	6399	-107
5	Dale Earnhardt, Jr.	6368	-138
6	Tony Stewart	6326	-180
7	Ryan Newman	6180	-326
8	Matt Kenseth	6069	-437
9	Elliott Sadler	6024	-482
10	Jeremy Mayfield	6000	-506
11	Jamie McMurray	4597	-1909
12	Bobby Labonte	4277	-2229
13	Kasey Kahne	4274	-2232
14	Kevin Harvick	4228	-2278
15	Dale Jarrett	4214	-2292
16	Rusty Wallace	3960	-2546
17	Greg Biffle	3902	-2604
18	Jeff Burton	3902	-2604
19	Joe Nemechek	3878	-2628
20	Michael Waltrip	3878	-2628

2007-2010_Playoffs

How did Jimmie Johnson win? The point system worked in Johnson’s favor during the *2007-2010_Playoffs*. He led Kurt Busch by 20 to begin the playoff. During the playoff, Busch scored 18 more points than Johnson, leading to a Johnson win by 2. However, in the *2004-2006_Playoffs* (same race outcomes) Johnson began the playoff ahead by 25 but Busch scored 33 more points than Johnson during the playoff. The reason for this is that Johnson had four playoff wins and Busch had 1. Beginning in 2007, wins were worth five more points, all other finishes were worth the same as before. That means that Johnson scored 20 more points and Busch scored five more points leaving a net of 15. So if Busch won in the previous system by 8, he now loses by seven and when the bonus points are factored in, Johnson end up with a win by two points, exactly the outcome. As it can be seen in this example, small tweaks create a different outcome.

2007-2010_Playoffs

Fin	Driver	Points	Diff.
1	Jimmie Johnson	6513	
2	Kurt Busch	6511	-2
3	Jeff Gordon	6490	-23
4	Jamie McMurray	6426	-87
5	Mark Martin	6394	-119
6	Dale Earnhardt, Jr.	6377	-136
7	Tony Stewart	6311	-202
8	Ryan Newman	6190	-323
9	Kasey Kahne	6116	-397
10	Matt Kenseth	6059	-454
11	Elliott Sadler	6019	-494
12	Jeremy Mayfield	6000	-513
13	Bobby Labonte	4277	-2236
14	Kevin Harvick	4228	-2285
15	Dale Jarrett	4214	-2299
16	Rusty Wallace	3965	-2548
17	Greg Biffle	3912	-2601
18	Jeff Burton	3902	-2611
19	Joe Nemechek	3883	-2630
20	Michael Waltrip	3878	-2635

2011-2015 ('11-'13 Playoffs)

How did Kurt Busch win? Busch started the playoff nine points behind Jeff Gordon and six points behind Jimmie Johnson. Busch led all drivers in two key categories, best average finish during the playoff as well as outscoring all drivers in the playoff. Busch outscored Johnson by nine points and Gordon by 14.

Rusty Wallace qualified for the playoff although he finished the regular season in 17th place. His sole win of the season got him into the playoff. He would go on to finish 8th.

2011-2015_('11-'13 Playoffs)

Fin	Driver	Points	Diff.
1	Kurt Busch	2371	
2	Jimmie Johnson	2368	-3
3	Jeff Gordon	2366	-5
4	Jamie McMurray	2354	-17
5	Mark Martin	2344	-27
6	Dale Earnhardt, Jr.	2333	-38
7	Tony Stewart	2322	-49
8	Rusty Wallace	2287	-84
9	Ryan Newman	2270	-101
10	Matt Kenseth	2242	-129
11	Elliott Sadler	2227	-144
12	Jeremy Mayfield	2223	-148
13	Bobby Labonte	1025	-1346
14	Kevin Harvick	1007	-1364
15	Dale Jarrett	1000	-1371
16	Kasey Kahne	998	-1373
17	Jeff Burton	915	-1456
18	Greg Biffle	906	-1465
19	Michael Waltrip	901	-1470
20	Joe Nemechek	898	-1473

2011-2015 ('14-'15 Playoffs) & 2016 Playoffs

How did Jimmie Johnson win? Johnson had four regular season wins and four playoff wins. He had the 2nd best regular season average finish and the 4th best average finish during the playoff. Johnson ended the regular season 3rd in points and started the playoff tied for 2nd. Johnson finished round one in 11th place thanks to a 37th place finish during the 1st round. He had two wins during the 2nd round and finished third. Two more wins during the 3rd round put Johnson in 1st place and punched his ticket to the final four. None of the final four won the last race. Johnson finished 2nd with Tony Stewart finishing 4th securing the championship for Johnson.

There were 12 unique winners which allowed four other drivers to qualify for the playoff. Dale Earnhardt Jr. and Mark Martin were tied after round 2. The tiebreaker goes to the driver who had the better finish during the round they tied in which was round 2. Earnhardt Jr.'s best finish was 3rd while Martin's best finish was 13th.

2011-2015_('14-'15 Playoffs)				2016_Playoffs			
Fin	Driver	Points	Diff.	Fin	Driver	Points	Diff.
1	Jimmie Johnson	5042		1	Jimmie Johnson	5039	
2	Tony Stewart	5040	-2	2	Tony Stewart	5037	-2
3	Jamie McMurray	5037	-5	3	Jamie McMurray	5034	-5
4	Dale Earnhardt, Jr.	5021	-21	4	Dale Earnhardt, Jr.	5018	-21
5	Kurt Busch	2371	-2671	5	Kurt Busch	2343	-2696
6	Jeff Gordon	2366	-2676	6	Jeff Gordon	2336	-2703
7	Mark Martin	2344	-2698	7	Mark Martin	2314	-2725
8	Rusty Wallace	2290	-2752	8	Rusty Wallace	2260	-2779
9	Greg Biffle	2277	-2765	9	Greg Biffle	2248	-2791
10	Bobby Labonte	2274	-2768	10	Bobby Labonte	2244	-2795
11	Ryan Newman	2273	-2769	11	Ryan Newman	2243	-2796
12	Dale Jarrett	2258	-2784	12	Dale Jarrett	2228	-2811
13	Kevin Harvick	2252	-2790	13	Kevin Harvick	2222	-2817
14	Matt Kenseth	2242	-2800	14	Matt Kenseth	2213	-2826
15	Elliott Sadler	2227	-2815	15	Elliott Sadler	2197	-2842
16	Jeremy Mayfield	2223	-2819	16	Jeremy Mayfield	2193	-2846
17	Kasey Kahne	998	-4044	17	Kasey Kahne	894	-4145
18	Jeff Burton	915	-4127	18	Jeff Burton	809	-4230
19	Michael Waltrip	901	-4141	19	Michael Waltrip	793	-4246
20	Joe Nemechek	898	-4144	20	Joe Nemechek	792	-4247

Driver	Top4s	Top10s	Top20s	AvgFin	FirstPlaceFinishes
Jimmie Johnson	6	6	6	1.50	3
Kurt Busch	4	6	6	3.00	2
Jeff Gordon	4	6	6	3.67	1
Dale Earnhardt, Jr.	3	6	6	4.67	0
Tony Stewart	2	6	6	4.83	0
Jamie McMurray	4	5	6	5.17	0
Mark Martin	1	6	6	5.83	0
Ryan Newman	0	4	6	9.17	0
Matt Kenseth	0	4	6	10.67	0
Bobby Labonte	0	2	6	11.50	0
Elliott Sadler	0	2	6	11.83	0
Rusty Wallace	0	3	6	12.00	0
Jeremy Mayfield	0	1	6	13.50	0
Kevin Harvick	0	0	6	13.50	0
Dale Jarrett	0	0	6	13.83	0
Kasey Kahne	0	1	6	14.00	0
Greg Biffle	0	2	6	14.67	0
Jeff Burton	0	0	6	17.50	0
Michael Waltrip	0	0	6	19.17	0
Joe Nemechek	0	0	6	19.67	0

2005

	1975-2003	2004-2006_Playoffs	2007-2010_Playoffs	2011-2015_('11-'13 Playoffs)	2011-2015_('14-'15 Playoffs)	2016_Playoffs	Recognized Champion
2005	Tony Stewart	Tony Stewart	Tony Stewart	Tony Stewart	Greg Biffle	Greg Biffle	Tony Stewart

- Kurt Busch missed the final two races of the season
- Greg Biffle and Tony Stewart had the highest average finish (2.0) in the playoffs, Biffle won twice while Stewart would have won four different times
- Stewart had the best regular season and overall season average finish of 10.38 and 9.92, respectively
- Carl Edwards had the best average finish in the playoff of 8.40
- Kasey Kahne's average year end finish standard deviation was 6.49. The average for the 88 drivers was 1.28
- Matt Kenseth finished 7th in all six systems

Biggest Benefactor:

- Greg Biffle – He won twice thanks to his win in the last race of the year
- Mark Martin – With his one playoff win, he finished 2nd in both *2011-2015_ ('14-'15 Playoffs)* and *2016_Playoffs* systems
- Kahne – Due to his regular season win, he qualified for the *2011-2015_ ('14-'15 Playoffs)* and *2016_Playoffs* and finished 16th, his only top-20s. He was recognized as the 23rd place finisher in the '11 season

Biggest Losers:

- Tony Stewart – He is the recognized '05 champion, but finished 4th in the *2011-2015_ ('14-'15 Playoffs)* and *2016_Playoffs* systems
- Carl Edwards – His only finish outside of the top three was a 5th place finish in the *1975-2003* system

1975-2003

How did Tony Stewart Win? Stewart won five races, one behind Greg Biffle. Stewart's average finish was 9.92 for the season. That was 1.97 better than Biffle and 2.78 better than Jimmie Johnson.

1975-2003

Fin	Driver	Points	Diff.
1	Tony Stewart	5174	
2	Greg Biffle	4954	-220
3	Jimmie Johnson	4752	-422
4	Mark Martin	4671	-503
5	Carl Edwards	4577	-597
6	Rusty Wallace	4512	-662
7	Matt Kenseth	4446	-728
8	Ryan Newman	4404	-770
9	Jeremy Mayfield	4276	-898
10	Kurt Busch	4233	-941
11	Jeff Gordon	4154	-1020
12	Jamie McMurray	4130	-1044
13	Elliott Sadler	4084	-1090
14	Kevin Harvick	4067	-1107
15	Dale Jarrett	3955	-1219
16	Joe Nemechek	3953	-1221
17	Brian Vickers	3847	-1327
18	Jeff Burton	3803	-1371
19	Dale Earnhardt, Jr.	3775	-1399
20	Kyle Busch	3743	-1431

2004-2006 Playoffs

How did Tony Stewart win? Stewart ended the regular season as the point leader, 185 points better than Greg Biffle and 602 points better than Carl Edwards. To start the playoffs, Stewart led Biffle by five points and Edwards by 35. Edwards had the best average finish of the playoff. His average finish of 8.40 was 0.30 better than Stewart. However, during the playoff, Stewart and Edwards tied with 1,483 points and Biffle followed with 1,453.

2004-2006 Playoffs

Fin	Driver	Points	Diff.
1	Tony Stewart	6533	
2	Greg Biffle	6498	-35
3	Carl Edwards	6498	-35
4	Mark Martin	6428	-105
5	Jimmie Johnson	6406	-127
6	Ryan Newman	6359	-174
7	Matt Kenseth	6352	-181
8	Rusty Wallace	6140	-393
9	Jeremy Mayfield	6073	-460
10	Kurt Busch	5974	-559
11	Jeff Gordon	4174	-2359
12	Jamie McMurray	4130	-2403
13	Elliott Sadler	4084	-2449
14	Kevin Harvick	4072	-2461
15	Dale Jarrett	3960	-2573
16	Joe Nemechek	3953	-2580
17	Brian Vickers	3847	-2686
18	Jeff Burton	3803	-2730
19	Dale Earnhardt, Jr.	3780	-2753
20	Kyle Busch	3753	-2780

2007-2010 Playoffs

How did Tony Stewart win? Stewart had a 185 point lead over Greg Biffle and a 617 lead over Carl Edwards to end the regular season. After the playoff point reset, Stewart and Biffle were tied because they both had five regular season wins. Edwards had two regular season wins, so he began the playoff 30 points behind the other two. Edwards had the best average finish during the playoff which led him to scoring the most points during the playoff. Even though Edwards had two wins compared to Stewart's 1, he only scored ten more points than Stewart which resulted in a 2nd place finish.

2007-2010 Playoffs

Fin	Driver	Points	Diff.
1	Tony Stewart	6533	
2	Carl Edwards	6513	-20
3	Greg Biffle	6508	-25
4	Mark Martin	6408	-125
5	Jimmie Johnson	6401	-132
6	Ryan Newman	6359	-174
7	Matt Kenseth	6347	-186
8	Jeff Gordon	6237	-296
9	Rusty Wallace	6100	-433
10	Elliott Sadler	6095	-438
11	Jeremy Mayfield	6063	-470
12	Kurt Busch	5974	-559
13	Jamie McMurray	4130	-2403
14	Kevin Harvick	4077	-2456
15	Dale Jarrett	3965	-2568
16	Joe Nemechek	3953	-2580
17	Brian Vickers	3847	-2686
18	Jeff Burton	3803	-2730
19	Dale Earnhardt, Jr.	3785	-2748
20	Kyle Busch	3763	-2770

2011-2015 ('11-'13 Playoffs)

How did Tony Stewart win? Stewart's five regular season wins put him tied for 1st beginning the playoff, along with Carl Edwards. During the playoff, Stewart was 2nd behind Edwards in playoff points scored as well as average finish during the playoff. His lead over Edwards to begin the playoff was nine

but Edwards outscored him by five during the playoff. Although they started all square, Stewart outscored Biffle by nine during the playoff.

Kevin Harvick finished the regular season in 13th and Jeff Gordon finished the regular season in 14th. However, they both qualified for the playoff because had wins during the regular season whereas the drivers who finished in 11th and 12th were winless.

2011-2015_ ('11-'13 Playoffs)

Fin	Driver	Points	Diff.
1	Tony Stewart	2378	
2	Carl Edwards	2374	-4
3	Greg Biffle	2369	-9
4	Jimmie Johnson	2339	-39
5	Mark Martin	2337	-41
6	Ryan Newman	2332	-46
7	Matt Kenseth	2322	-56
8	Jeff Gordon	2282	-96
9	Kevin Harvick	2270	-108
10	Rusty Wallace	2256	-122
11	Jeremy Mayfield	2247	-131
12	Kurt Busch	2231	-147
13	Jamie McMurray	983	-1395
14	Elliott Sadler	965	-1413
15	Dale Jarrett	933	-1445
16	Joe Nemechek	926	-1452
17	Jeff Burton	882	-1496
18	Brian Vickers	881	-1497
19	Dale Earnhardt, Jr.	856	-1522
20	Kyle Busch	839	-1539

2011-2015 ('14-'15 Playoffs) & 2016 Playoffs

How did Greg Biffle win? Biffle had five wins in the regular season and one win during the playoff. He had the 8th best average finish during the season and the 3rd best average finish during the playoff. Biffle won the final race of the year. He finished the regular season in 2nd place and began the playoff tied for 1st. Biffle finished the 1st and 2nd round in third place and after the 3rd round he finished fourth, two points above Jimmie Johnson. During the final race of the year, Biffle beat Mark Martin to secure a 1st place win and the championship.

There were 12 unique winners during the regular season which allowed four non-winners to qualify for the playoff. There were no tied during any rounds of the playoff.

2011-2015_('14-'15 Playoffs)				2016_Playoffs			
Fin	Driver	Points	Diff.	Fin	Driver	Points	Diff.
1	Greg Biffle	5043		1	Greg Biffle	5040	
2	Mark Martin	5042	-1	2	Mark Martin	5039	-1
3	Carl Edwards	5040	-3	3	Carl Edwards	5037	-3
4	Tony Stewart	5029	-14	4	Tony Stewart	5026	-14
5	Jimmie Johnson	2339	-2704	5	Jimmie Johnson	2309	-2731
6	Ryan Newman	2332	-2711	6	Ryan Newman	2302	-2738
7	Matt Kenseth	2322	-2721	7	Matt Kenseth	2292	-2748
8	Jeff Gordon	2291	-2752	8	Jeff Gordon	2261	-2779
9	Kevin Harvick	2273	-2770	9	Kevin Harvick	2243	-2797
10	Rusty Wallace	2256	-2787	10	Rusty Wallace	2226	-2814
11	Elliott Sadler	2255	-2788	11	Elliott Sadler	2225	-2815
12	Jeremy Mayfield	2247	-2796	12	Jeremy Mayfield	2217	-2823
13	Kurt Busch	2231	-2812	13	Kurt Busch	2207	-2833
14	Kyle Busch	2224	-2819	14	Kyle Busch	2195	-2845
15	Dale Earnhardt, Jr.	2205	-2838	15	Dale Earnhardt, Jr.	2177	-2863
16	Kasey Kahne	2195	-2848	16	Kasey Kahne	2168	-2872
17	Jamie McMurray	983	-4060	17	Jamie McMurray	875	-4165
18	Dale Jarrett	933	-4110	18	Dale Jarrett	825	-4215
19	Joe Nemechek	926	-4117	19	Joe Nemechek	818	-4222
20	Jeff Burton	882	-4161	20	Brian Vickers	780	-4260

Driver	Top4s	Top10s	Top20s	AvgFin	FirstPlaceFinishes
Tony Stewart	6	6	6	2.00	4
Greg Biffle	6	6	6	2.00	2
Carl Edwards	5	6	6	2.83	0
Mark Martin	5	6	6	3.50	0
Jimmie Johnson	2	6	6	4.50	0
Ryan Newman	0	6	6	6.33	0
Matt Kenseth	0	6	6	7.00	0
Rusty Wallace	0	6	6	8.83	0
Jeff Gordon	0	4	6	9.00	0
Jeremy Mayfield	0	2	6	10.67	0
Kevin Harvick	0	3	6	11.50	0
Kurt Busch	0	2	6	11.67	0
Elliott Sadler	0	1	6	12.00	0
Jamie McMurray	0	0	6	14.00	0
Dale Jarrett	0	0	6	16.00	0
Joe Nemechek	0	0	6	17.00	0
Dale Earnhardt, Jr.	0	0	6	17.67	0
Kyle Busch	0	0	6	18.00	0
Brian Vickers	0	0	5	18.33	0
Jeff Burton	0	0	5	18.67	0
Kasey Kahne	0	0	2	20.67	0

2006

	1975-2003	2004-2006_Playoffs	2007-2010_Playoffs	2011-2015_('11-'13 Playoffs)	2011-2015_('14-'15 Playoffs)	2016_Playoffs	Recognized Champion
2006	Matt Kenseth	Jimmie Johnson	Jimmie Johnson	Jimmie Johnson	Denny Hamlin	Denny Hamlin	Jimmie Johnson

- Jimmie Johnson had the highest average finish (2.5) in the playoffs, finishing 1st three different times
- Johnson had the best regular season and overall season average finish of 9.23 and 9.67, respectively
- Carl Edwards had the best average finish in the playoff of 9.0
- Tony Stewart's average year end finish standard deviation was 3.04. The average for the 76 drivers was 1.03

Biggest Benefactor:

- Denny Hamlin – He was winless in the playoff, but would have won in both the 2011-2015_('14-'15 Playoffs) and 2016_Playoffs systems

- Kevin Harvick – With help from his two playoff wins, he would have finished 2nd behind Hamlin in both the *2011-2015_ ('14-'15 Playoffs)* and *2016_Playoffs* systems
- Tony Stewart – His worst finished was his recognized finish in the '06 season. In the playoff system in place in '06, only the top ten drivers made the playoff, Stewart finished the regular season in 11th. In the *1975-2003* system, he finished 5th and never finished worse than 3rd in the others

Biggest Losers:

- Jimmie Johnson – He is the recognized champion of the '06 season, but missed the final four in the *2011-2015_ ('14-'15 Playoffs)* and *2016_Playoffs* systems
- Matt Kenseth – He would have won in the *1975-2003* system but finished 7th in the *2011-2015_ ('14-'15 Playoffs)* and *2016_Playoffs* systems

1975-2003

How did Matt Kenseth Win? Kenseth's average finish for the season was 9.81, 0.14 worse than Jimmie Johnson. Looking at the standard deviation, Kenseth was better than Johnson by 1.14. Kenseth had a five point advantage when comparing the races Kenseth or Johnson won compared to where the other finished. This small difference was enough for Kenseth to win.

1975-2003

Fin	Driver	Points	Diff.
1	Matt Kenseth	5134	
2	Jimmie Johnson	5133	-1
3	Kevin Harvick	4813	-321
4	Denny Hamlin	4715	-419
5	Tony Stewart	4702	-432
6	Dale Earnhardt, Jr.	4636	-498
7	Jeff Gordon	4557	-577
8	Jeff Burton	4530	-604
9	Mark Martin	4484	-650
10	Kasey Kahne	4467	-667
11	Carl Edwards	4428	-706
12	Kyle Busch	4411	-723
13	Greg Biffle	4065	-1069
14	Casey Mears	3914	-1220
15	Brian Vickers	3901	-1233
16	Kurt Busch	3895	-1239
17	Clint Bowyer	3833	-1301
18	Ryan Newman	3748	-1386
19	Martin Truex, Jr.	3673	-1461
20	Scott Riggs	3619	-1515

2004-2006 Playoffs

How did Jimmie Johnson win? Johnson Trailed Matt Kenseth by 57 points entering the playoffs and the playoff reset left Johnson five points behind Kenseth. During the playoff, Johnson scored the most points. He scored 53 more than Hamlin and 61 more than Kenseth. Johnson scored more points than everyone else during the playoff.

2004-2006 Playoffs

Fin	Driver	Points	Diff.
1	Jimmie Johnson	6475	
2	Matt Kenseth	6419	-56
3	Denny Hamlin	6407	-68
4	Kevin Harvick	6397	-78
5	Dale Earnhardt, Jr.	6328	-147
6	Jeff Gordon	6256	-219
7	Jeff Burton	6228	-247
8	Kasey Kahne	6183	-292
9	Mark Martin	6168	-307
10	Kyle Busch	6027	-448
11	Tony Stewart	4727	-1748
12	Carl Edwards	4428	-2047
13	Greg Biffle	4075	-2400
14	Casey Mears	3914	-2561
15	Brian Vickers	3906	-2569
16	Kurt Busch	3900	-2575
17	Clint Bowyer	3833	-2642
18	Ryan Newman	3748	-2727
19	Martin Truex, Jr.	3673	-2802
20	Scott Riggs	3619	-2856

2007-2010 Playoffs

How did Jimmie Johnson win? Johnson started the playoff 20 points ahead of Tony Stewart due to Johnson's four regular season wins compared to Stewart's two. Even though Stewart scored the most points during the playoff, Johnson finished a close second, only being outscored by four. Stewart had two more wins than Johnson during the playoff and his average finish was 0.20 better than Johnson.

2007-2010 Playoffs

Fin	Driver	Points	Diff.
1	Jimmie Johnson	6475	
2	Tony Stewart	6459	-16
3	Matt Kenseth	6409	-66
4	Kevin Harvick	6397	-78
5	Denny Hamlin	6397	-78
6	Dale Earnhardt, Jr.	6313	-162
7	Jeff Gordon	6266	-209
8	Kasey Kahne	6233	-242
9	Jeff Burton	6218	-257
10	Mark Martin	6148	-327
11	Greg Biffle	6051	-424
12	Kyle Busch	6002	-473
13	Carl Edwards	4428	-2047
14	Casey Mears	3914	-2561
15	Brian Vickers	3911	-2564
16	Kurt Busch	3905	-2570
17	Clint Bowyer	3833	-2642
18	Ryan Newman	3748	-2727
19	Martin Truex, Jr.	3673	-2802
20	Scott Riggs	3619	-2856

2011-2015 ('11-'13 Playoffs)

How did Jimmie Johnson win? Johnson entered the playoff tied for 2nd. He had the 4th best average finish and was second in playoff scoring, four points behind Tony Stewart. To start the playoff, Johnson had a 12-point lead over Stewart because even though he had two regular season wins, since he was a wild card driver, he was not awarded bonus points. Further, Johnson was tied with Matt Kenseth to start the playoff but outscored him by five points during the playoff while being outscored by Stewart by four points.

2011-2015_ ('11-'13 Playoffs)

Fin	Driver	Points	Diff.
1	Jimmie Johnson	2357	
2	Matt Kenseth	2352	-5
3	Tony Stewart	2349	-8
4	Denny Hamlin	2343	-14
5	Kevin Harvick	2339	-18
6	Dale Earnhardt, Jr.	2320	-37
7	Jeff Gordon	2299	-58
8	Jeff Burton	2287	-70
9	Kasey Kahne	2286	-71
10	Mark Martin	2271	-86
11	Greg Biffle	2231	-126
12	Kyle Busch	2221	-136
13	Carl Edwards	1049	-1308
14	Casey Mears	915	-1442
15	Brian Vickers	904	-1453
16	Kurt Busch	895	-1462
17	Clint Bowyer	884	-1473
18	Ryan Newman	856	-1501
19	Martin Truex, Jr.	840	-1517
20	Scott Riggs	833	-1524

2011-2015 ('14-'15 Playoffs) & 2016 Playoffs

How did Denny Hamlin win? Hamlin had two regular season wins and no playoff wins. Which meant that none of the final four drivers won the last race of the year. He had the 4th best average finish during the regular season and his average finish during the playoff tied him for 2nd. Hamlin ended the regular season in 5th place and started the playoff tied for 5th. After the 1st round of the playoff, Hamlin was second and after the 2nd round he fell to 7th. He finished the 4th round in fourth place, five points ahead of the 5th place finisher. A 3rd place finish in the final race of the year was enough to win the championship, besting Kevin Harvick, Tony Stewart and Dale Earnhardt Jr.

There were 11 unique winners in 2006, which meant that five drivers qualified for the playoff off points. There were no ties during any of the rounds of the playoff.

2011-2015_ ('14-'15 Playoffs)				2016 Playoffs			
Fin	Driver	Points	Diff.	Fin	Driver	Points	Diff.
1	Denny Hamlin	5041		1	Denny Hamlin	5038	
2	Kevin Harvick	5039	-2	2	Kevin Harvick	5036	-2
3	Tony Stewart	5029	-12	3	Tony Stewart	5026	-12
4	Dale Earnhardt, Jr.	5025	-16	4	Dale Earnhardt, Jr.	5022	-16
5	Jimmie Johnson	2357	-2684	5	Jimmie Johnson	2327	-2711
6	Carl Edwards	2354	-2687	6	Carl Edwards	2324	-2714
7	Matt Kenseth	2352	-2689	7	Matt Kenseth	2322	-2716
8	Jeff Gordon	2299	-2742	8	Jeff Gordon	2269	-2769
9	Jeff Burton	2287	-2754	9	Jeff Burton	2259	-2779
10	Kasey Kahne	2286	-2755	10	Kasey Kahne	2256	-2782
11	Mark Martin	2271	-2770	11	Mark Martin	2241	-2797
12	Casey Mears	2255	-2786	12	Kurt Busch	2229	-2809
13	Kurt Busch	2254	-2787	13	Casey Mears	2225	-2813
14	Greg Biffle	2234	-2807	14	Greg Biffle	2205	-2833
15	Kyle Busch	2221	-2820	15	Kyle Busch	2191	-2847
16	Scott Riggs	2192	-2849	16	Scott Riggs	2162	-2876
17	Brian Vickers	904	-4137	17	Brian Vickers	801	-4237
18	Clint Bowyer	884	-4157	18	Clint Bowyer	777	-4261
19	Ryan Newman	856	-4185	19	Ryan Newman	751	-4287
20	Martin Truex, Jr.	840	-4201	20	Martin Truex, Jr.	733	-4305

Driver	Top4s	Top10s	Top20s	AvgFin	FirstPlaceFinishes
Jimmie Johnson	4	6	6	2.50	3
Denny Hamlin	5	6	6	2.83	2
Kevin Harvick	5	6	6	3.33	0
Matt Kenseth	4	6	6	3.67	1
Tony Stewart	4	5	6	4.50	0
Dale Earnhardt, Jr.	2	6	6	5.17	0
Jeff Gordon	0	6	6	7.17	0
Jeff Burton	0	6	6	8.33	0
Kasey Kahne	0	6	6	9.17	0
Mark Martin	0	4	6	10.00	0
Carl Edwards	0	2	6	10.17	0
Kyle Busch	0	1	6	12.67	0
Greg Biffle	0	0	6	12.67	0
Casey Mears	0	0	6	13.50	0
Kurt Busch	0	0	6	14.83	0
Brian Vickers	0	0	6	15.67	0
Clint Bowyer	0	0	6	17.33	0
Ryan Newman	0	0	6	18.33	0
Scott Riggs	0	0	6	18.67	0
Martin Truex, Jr.	0	0	6	19.33	0

2007

	1975-2003	2004-2006_Playoffs	2007-2010_Playoffs	2011-2015_ ('11-'13 Playoffs)	2011-2015_ ('14-'15 Playoffs)	2016_Playoffs	Recognized Champion
2007	Jeff Gordon	Jimmie Johnson	Jimmie Johnson	Jimmie Johnson	Jeff Gordon	Jeff Gordon	Jimmie Johnson

- Jimmie Johnson and Jeff Gordon had the highest average finish (1.50) in the playoffs, finishing 1st three times and 2nd three times a piece
- Gordon had the best regular season and overall season average finish of 8.19 and 7.33, respectively
- Johnson had the best average finish in the playoff of 5.0
- Casey Mears's average year end finish standard deviation was 4.24. The average for the 69 drivers was 0.83

Biggest Benefactor:

- Gordon – He is the recognized 2nd place finisher for the '07 season, but would have won in three different systems
- Tony Stewart – He would have finished 3rd in the 1975-2003 season
- Kevin Harvick – Even though he was winless in the playoff, he would have finished 3rd in the 2011-2015_ ('14-'15 Playoffs) and 2016_Playoffs systems
- Mears – His one regular season win secured his spot in the playoff which resulted in a 6th place finish in the 2011-2015_ ('14-'15 Playoffs) and 2016_Playoffs systems
- Denny Hamlin – He would have finished 5th in the 1975-2003 season

Biggest Losers:

- Clint Bowyer – His only non-top five finish would have happened in the 1975-2003 system.

1975-2003

How did Jeff Gordon win? Consistency. Gordon had an average finish of 7.33 with six wins. Although Jimmie Johnson had 10, Gordon's standard deviation of average finish was 8.23, 4.5 better than Jimmie Johnson. For reference, the average finish of the top-20 was 16.24.

1975-2003

Fin	Driver	Points	Diff.
1	Jeff Gordon	5395	
2	Jimmie Johnson	5002	-393
3	Tony Stewart	4720	-675
4	Matt Kenseth	4698	-697
5	Denny Hamlin	4613	-782
6	Kyle Busch	4575	-820
7	Clint Bowyer	4546	-849
8	Carl Edwards	4545	-850
9	Jeff Burton	4539	-856
10	Kurt Busch	4351	-1044
11	Kevin Harvick	4334	-1061
12	Martin Truex, Jr.	4304	-1091
13	Ryan Newman	4046	-1349
14	Greg Biffle	3981	-1414
15	Casey Mears	3939	-1456
16	Dale Earnhardt, Jr.	3929	-1466
17	Jamie McMurray	3546	-1849
18	Bobby Labonte	3517	-1878
19	Kasey Kahne	3489	-1906
20	Juan Pablo Montoya	3477	-1918

2004-2006 Playoffs

How did Jimmie Johnson win? Johnson's average finish in the playoff was 5.0, Jeff Gordon had an average finish of 5.10. Four wins during the playoffs helped propel Johnson to the championship. Johnson trailed Gordon by 420 entering the playoff but the point reset meant Johnson only trailed by 20. Johnson outscored Gordon by 47 points during the playoffs. He had the highest point total of all drivers.

2004-2006_Playoffs

Fin	Driver	Points	Diff.
1	Jimmie Johnson	6673	
2	Jeff Gordon	6646	-27
3	Clint Bowyer	6382	-291
4	Matt Kenseth	6318	-355
5	Kyle Busch	6298	-375
6	Tony Stewart	6257	-416
7	Jeff Burton	6241	-432
8	Carl Edwards	6223	-450
9	Denny Hamlin	6173	-500
10	Martin Truex, Jr.	6159	-514
11	Kurt Busch	4361	-2312
12	Kevin Harvick	4339	-2334
13	Ryan Newman	4046	-2627
14	Greg Biffle	3986	-2687
15	Casey Mears	3944	-2729
16	Dale Earnhardt, Jr.	3929	-2744
17	Jamie McMurray	3551	-3122
18	Bobby Labonte	3517	-3156
19	Kasey Kahne	3489	-3184
20	Juan Pablo Montoya	3482	-3191

2007-2010 Playoffs

How did Jimmie Johnson win? Johnson's six regular season wins allowed him to start the playoff in 1st, 20 points ahead of Jeff Gordon. Gordon ended the regular season with a 410 lead over Johnson. Johnson had four playoff wins and led all drivers with an average finish of 5.0, which was 0.10 better than Gordon. During the playoff, Gordon had nine top-10s and an 11th place finish where Johnson eight

top tens with two 11th place finishes. Johnson scored more points than all drivers during the playoff and bested Gordon by 57 points.

2007-2010_Playoffs			
Fin	Driver	Points	Diff.
1	Jimmie Johnson	6723	
2	Jeff Gordon	6646	-77
3	Clint Bowyer	6377	-346
4	Matt Kenseth	6298	-425
5	Kyle Busch	6293	-430
6	Tony Stewart	6242	-481
7	Kurt Busch	6231	-492
8	Jeff Burton	6231	-492
9	Carl Edwards	6222	-501
10	Kevin Harvick	6199	-524
11	Martin Truex, Jr.	6164	-559
12	Denny Hamlin	6143	-580
13	Ryan Newman	4046	-2677
14	Greg Biffle	3991	-2732
15	Casey Mears	3949	-2774
16	Dale Earnhardt, Jr.	3929	-2794
17	Jamie McMurray	3556	-3167
18	Bobby Labonte	3517	-3206
19	Kasey Kahne	3489	-3234
20	Juan Pablo Montoya	3487	-3236

2011-2015 ('11-'13 Playoffs)

How did Jimmie Johnson win? Johnson had six regular season wins and four playoff wins, he had the best average finish during the playoff, and he outscored all drivers during the playoff. Even though Johnson finished the regular season 125 behind Jeff Gordon, after the playoff point reset, Johnson led Gordon by six to begin the playoff. Johnson extended his lead by outscoring Gordon by 11 points during the playoff.

2011-2015_('11-'13 Playoffs)			
Fin	Driver	Points	Diff.
1	Jimmie Johnson	2430	
2	Jeff Gordon	2413	-17
3	Clint Bowyer	2336	-94
4	Kyle Busch	2306	-124
5	Matt Kenseth	2303	-127
6	Tony Stewart	2298	-132
7	Jeff Burton	2296	-134
8	Kurt Busch	2294	-136
9	Carl Edwards	2290	-140
10	Kevin Harvick	2287	-143
11	Martin Truex, Jr.	2267	-163
12	Denny Hamlin	2265	-165
13	Ryan Newman	933	-1497
14	Greg Biffle	928	-1502
15	Casey Mears	916	-1514
16	Dale Earnhardt, Jr.	908	-1522
17	Jamie McMurray	795	-1635
18	Bobby Labonte	793	-1637
19	Kasey Kahne	780	-1650
20	Juan Pablo Montoya	774	-1656

2011-2015 ('14-'15 Playoffs) & 2016 Playoffs

How did Jeff Gordon win? Gordon had four regular season wins and two playoff wins but did not win the last race of the year meaning that no driver in the final four won the last race. His average finish for the season was 7.33, best of all drivers and his average finish during the playoff was 5.1, second best

to Jimmie Johnson's 5.0. Gordon ended the regular season in 1st place, 93 points ahead of Tony Stewart. After the playoff point reset, Johnson held a 6-point lead over Gordon. He was 2nd after the first round and 1st after the second round which included his two playoff wins. Johnson won all three races of the third round with left Gordon a 2nd place finish after round three. The last race of the year ended with Gordon finishing 4th and Johnson finishing in 7th position.

There were 14 unique winners in 2007, which allowed two drivers to make the playoff by only points. There were no ties during any of the rounds of the playoff.

2011-2015_('14-'15 Playoffs)				2016_Playoffs			
Fin	Driver	Points	Diff.	Fin	Driver	Points	Diff.
1	Jeff Gordon	5040		1	Jeff Gordon	5037	
2	Jimmie Johnson	5037	-3	2	Jimmie Johnson	5034	-3
3	Kevin Harvick	5025	-15	3	Kevin Harvick	5022	-15
4	Kyle Busch	5024	-16	4	Kyle Busch	5021	-16
5	Clint Bowyer	2336	-2704	5	Clint Bowyer	2306	-2731
6	Casey Mears	2308	-2732	6	Casey Mears	2278	-2759
7	Matt Kenseth	2303	-2737	7	Matt Kenseth	2273	-2764
8	Tony Stewart	2298	-2742	8	Jeff Burton	2269	-2768
9	Jeff Burton	2296	-2744	9	Tony Stewart	2268	-2769
10	Kurt Busch	2294	-2746	10	Kurt Busch	2264	-2773
11	Carl Edwards	2290	-2750	11	Carl Edwards	2262	-2775
12	Martin Truex, Jr.	2270	-2770	12	Martin Truex, Jr.	2242	-2795
13	Denny Hamlin	2265	-2775	13	Denny Hamlin	2235	-2802
14	Jamie McMurray	2237	-2803	14	Jamie McMurray	2207	-2830
15	Juan Pablo Montoya	2233	-2807	15	Juan Pablo Montoya	2203	-2834
16	Dale Earnhardt, Jr.	2215	-2825	16	Dale Earnhardt, Jr.	2188	-2849
17	Ryan Newman	933	-4107	17	Ryan Newman	830	-4207
18	Greg Biffle	928	-4112	18	Greg Biffle	824	-4213
19	Bobby Labonte	793	-4247	19	Bobby Labonte	691	-4346
20	Kasey Kahne	780	-4260	20	Kasey Kahne	673	-4364

Driver	Top4s	Top10s	Top20s	AvgFin	FirstPlaceFinishes
Jimmie Johnson	6	6	6	1.50	3
Jeff Gordon	6	6	6	1.50	3
Clint Bowyer	3	6	6	4.33	0
Kyle Busch	3	6	6	4.67	0
Matt Kenseth	3	6	6	5.17	0
Tony Stewart	1	6	6	6.33	0
Jeff Burton	0	6	6	7.83	0
Kevin Harvick	2	4	6	8.17	0
Kurt Busch	0	5	6	9.33	0
Carl Edwards	0	4	6	9.33	0
Denny Hamlin	0	2	6	10.67	0
Martin Truex, Jr.	0	1	6	11.33	0
Casey Mears	0	2	6	12.00	0
Ryan Newman	0	0	6	14.33	0
Greg Biffle	0	0	6	15.33	0
Dale Earnhardt, Jr.	0	0	6	16.00	0
Jamie McMurray	0	0	6	16.00	0
Bobby Labonte	0	0	6	18.33	0
Juan Pablo Montoya	0	0	6	18.33	0
Kasey Kahne	0	0	6	19.33	0

2008

	1975-2003	2004-2006_Playoffs	2007-2010_Playoffs	2011-2015_('11-'13 Playoffs)	2011-2015_('14-'15 Playoffs)	2016_Playoffs	Recognized Champion
2008	Carl Edwards	Jimmie Johnson	Jimmie Johnson	Jimmie Johnson	Kevin Harvick	Kevin Harvick	Jimmie Johnson

- Kevin Harvick wins 2011-2015_('14-'15 Playoffs) and 2016_Playoffs with 0 wins
- Jimmie Johnson had the highest average finish (1.83) in the playoffs, finishing 1st three different times
- Carl Edwards had the best overall season average finish of 9.5
- Johnson had the best average finish in the playoff of 5.7
- Kyle Busch had the best average finish during the regular season of 9.92
- Denny Hamlin's average year end finish standard deviation was 3.35. The average for the 71 drivers was 0.72

Biggest Benefactor:

- Kevin Harvick – He is recognized as the 4th place finisher in the '08 season, but even though he was winless during the entire season, he would have won in both the 2011-2015_('14-'15 Playoffs) and 2016_Playoffs systems
- Carl Edwards – He would have won in the 1975-2003 system
- Denny Hamlin – Based solely on points because he had no playoff wins, he would have finished 2nd in the 2011-2015_('14-'15 Playoffs) and 2016_Playoffs systems.
- Kyle Busch – With his eight regular season wins, he would have finished 3rd in the 1975-2003 even though he was recognized as a tenth-place finisher in '08

Biggest Losers:

- Johnson – Even though he was the recognized champion in '08, he would have finished 2nd in the 1975-2003 system and 3rd in the 2011-2015_('14-'15 Playoffs) and 2016_Playoffs systems
- Clint Bowyer – He would have finished 11th in the 2004-2006_Playoffs. His higher finishes in the other systems was due to hi improving his average finish during the playoff. It was 4.16 better than his overall season average

1975-2003

How did Carl Edwards win? Edwards had an average finish of 9.50, 1.03 better than Jimmie Johnson. Edwards also had nine wins, two more than Johnson. The two won the last five races of the season. Edwards was +171 when comparing each other's finish compared to when the other won. Also, Edwards won the third race of the year but was penalized 49% of his points, which equaled 94.35 points lost. Take note that since the points were lost in the 2008 season, they needed to be adjusted for the 1975-2003 system. That is why the number is not whole. Without the point deduction, Edwards wins the championship easily. The penalty occurred during post-race inspection when NASCAR discovered the cover was off the oil tank. It's believed that by opening the oil tank trunk, the air can circulate through the car and create as much as ten percent more downforce. Without altering the car, it's likely Edwards would not have won the race and if he would have finished 20th or better, he would have earned enough points to still win the championship.

1975-2003

Fin	Driver	Points	Diff.
1	Carl Edwards	5151	
2	Jimmie Johnson	5150	-1
3	Kyle Busch	4904	-247
4	Greg Biffle	4727	-424
5	Kevin Harvick	4691	-460
6	Jeff Burton	4689	-462
7	Dale Earnhardt, Jr.	4595	-556
8	Jeff Gordon	4537	-614
9	Clint Bowyer	4477	-674
10	Tony Stewart	4477	-674
11	Denny Hamlin	4429	-722
12	Matt Kenseth	4316	-835
13	David Ragan	4299	-852
14	Kasey Kahne	4065	-1086
15	Martin Truex, Jr.	3839	-1312
16	Jamie McMurray	3809	-1342
17	Ryan Newman	3725	-1426
18	Kurt Busch	3625	-1526
19	Brian Vickers	3580	-1571
20	Casey Mears	3527	-1624

2004-2006 Playoffs

How did Jimmie Johnson win? Johnson trailed Kyle Busch by 282 points entering the playoffs, but that difference was narrowed to ten due to the reset. Johnson had an average finish during the playoff of 5.70, which was 2.3 better than runner-up Carl Edwards. Edwards' penalty during race #3 cost him an adjusted 99.45 points which would have secured him a championship. Johnson outscored Edwards by 79 during the playoff.

2004-2006_Playoffs

Fin	Driver	Points	Diff.
1	Jimmie Johnson	6669	
2	Carl Edwards	6595	-74
3	Greg Biffle	6472	-197
4	Kevin Harvick	6428	-241
5	Jeff Burton	6350	-319
6	Jeff Gordon	6321	-348
7	Tony Stewart	6222	-447
8	Denny Hamlin	6214	-455
9	Kyle Busch	6156	-513
10	Dale Earnhardt, Jr.	6152	-517
11	Clint Bowyer	4482	-2187
12	Matt Kenseth	4316	-2353
13	David Ragan	4299	-2370
14	Kasey Kahne	4075	-2594
15	Martin Truex, Jr.	3839	-2830
16	Jamie McMurray	3809	-2860
17	Ryan Newman	3730	-2939
18	Kurt Busch	3630	-3039
19	Brian Vickers	3580	-3089
20	Casey Mears	3527	-3142

2007-2010 Playoffs

How did Jimmie Johnson win? Johnson led all drivers with an average finish during the playoff of 5.70, which was 2.3 better than runner-up Carl Edwards. Johnson had eight top-10s and finished 15th twice. Johnson ended the regular season behind Kyle Busch by 302 points but after the playoff point reset, he only trailed Busch by 40 and trailed Edwards by 20. During the playoff, Johnson led all drivers with 1,644 points and scored 79 more points than Edwards.

Official NASCAR scoring shows Edwards scoring 6,615 but after adding up each race, there was a difference of 10. That difference was unable to be explained or reconciled.

2007-2010_Playoffs

Fin	Driver	Points	Diff.
1	Jimmie Johnson	6684	
2	Carl Edwards	6625	-59
3	Greg Biffle	6467	-217
4	Kevin Harvick	6408	-276
5	Clint Bowyer	6381	-303
6	Jeff Burton	6335	-349
7	Jeff Gordon	6316	-368
8	Denny Hamlin	6214	-470
9	Tony Stewart	6202	-482
10	Kyle Busch	6186	-498
11	Matt Kenseth	6184	-500
12	Dale Earnhardt, Jr.	6127	-557
13	David Ragan	4299	-2385
14	Kasey Kahne	4085	-2599
15	Martin Truex, Jr.	3839	-2845
16	Jamie McMurray	3809	-2875
17	Ryan Newman	3735	-2949
18	Kurt Busch	3635	-3049
19	Brian Vickers	3580	-3104
20	Casey Mears	3527	-3157

2011-2015 ('11-'13 Playoffs)

How did Jimmie Johnson win? Johnson had four regular season wins, three playoff wins, he led all drivers in playoff points and had the best average finish during the same time. Johnson began the playoff six points behind Carl Edwards but he outscored him by 28 during the playoff.

Kasey Kahne made the playoffs while finishing the regular season 14th in points. The two drivers that finished ahead of him were winless, he won two races during the regular season.

2011-2015_('11-'13 Playoffs)

Fin	Driver	Points	Diff.
1	Jimmie Johnson	2418	
2	Carl Edwards	2396	-22
3	Greg Biffle	2362	-56
4	Kevin Harvick	2352	-66
5	Clint Bowyer	2343	-75
6	Jeff Burton	2326	-92
7	Jeff Gordon	2315	-103
8	Denny Hamlin	2290	-128
9	Tony Stewart	2287	-131
10	Kyle Busch	2278	-140
11	Dale Earnhardt, Jr.	2261	-157
12	Kasey Kahne	2236	-182
13	David Ragan	1032	-1386
14	Matt Kenseth	1014	-1404
15	Martin Truex, Jr.	900	-1518
16	Jamie McMurray	872	-1546
17	Ryan Newman	856	-1562
18	Brian Vickers	812	-1606
19	Kurt Busch	808	-1610
20	Casey Mears	792	-1626

2011-2015 ('14-'15 Playoffs) & 2016 Playoffs

How did Kevin Harvick win? Harvick did not have a win during the 2008 season. He did have the 3rd best average finish during the season and during the playoff, his average finish was 4th best. He ended the regular season 6th in points but after the playoff point reset, he started the playoff tied for 11th (tied for last). Harvick was 5th after the first round, 5th after the second round and beat David Ragan by two points to secure his spot in the final four. Harvick finished 2nd in the final race of the year, good enough to win him a championship.

There were ten unique winners in 2008 allowing for six drivers to make the playoff based off their points. There were no ties during any of the rounds of the playoff.

2011-2015_ ('14-'15 Playoffs)				2016_Playoffs			
Fin	Driver	Points	Diff.	Fin	Driver	Points	Diff.
1	Kevin Harvick	5042		1	Kevin Harvick	5039	
2	Denny Hamlin	5031	-11	2	Denny Hamlin	5028	-11
3	Jimmie Johnson	5029	-13	3	Jimmie Johnson	5026	-13
4	Greg Biffle	5026	-16	4	Greg Biffle	5023	-16
5	Carl Edwards	2396	-2646	5	Carl Edwards	2366	-2673
6	Clint Bowyer	2346	-2696	6	Clint Bowyer	2316	-2723
7	Jeff Burton	2326	-2716	7	Jeff Burton	2296	-2743
8	Jeff Gordon	2315	-2727	8	Jeff Gordon	2286	-2753
9	David Ragan	2309	-2733	9	David Ragan	2279	-2760
10	Tony Stewart	2287	-2755	10	Tony Stewart	2257	-2782
11	Kyle Busch	2278	-2764	11	Kyle Busch	2251	-2788
12	Matt Kenseth	2274	-2768	12	Matt Kenseth	2245	-2794
13	Dale Earnhardt, Jr.	2261	-2781	13	Dale Earnhardt, Jr.	2232	-2807
14	Kasey Kahne	2242	-2800	14	Kasey Kahne	2212	-2827
15	Kurt Busch	2224	-2818	15	Kurt Busch	2198	-2841
16	Ryan Newman	2193	-2849	16	Ryan Newman	2166	-2873
17	Martin Truex, Jr.	900	-4142	17	Martin Truex, Jr.	803	-4236
18	Jamie McMurray	872	-4170	18	Jamie McMurray	768	-4271
19	Brian Vickers	812	-4230	19	Brian Vickers	713	-4326
20	Casey Mears	792	-4250	20	Casey Mears	689	-4350

Driver	Top4s	Top10s	Top20s	AvgFin	FirstPlaceFinishes
Jimmie Johnson	6	6	6	1.83	3
Carl Edwards	4	6	6	2.83	1
Kevin Harvick	5	6	6	3.17	2
Greg Biffle	6	6	6	3.50	0
Jeff Burton	0	6	6	6.17	0
Denny Hamlin	2	5	6	6.50	0
Clint Bowyer	0	5	6	7.00	0
Jeff Gordon	0	6	6	7.33	0
Tony Stewart	0	6	6	9.00	0
Kyle Busch	1	4	6	9.00	0
Dale Earnhardt, Jr.	0	2	6	11.00	0
David Ragan	0	2	6	11.67	0
Matt Kenseth	0	0	6	12.17	0
Kasey Kahne	0	0	6	13.67	0
Martin Truex, Jr.	0	0	6	15.67	0
Jamie McMurray	0	0	6	16.67	0
Ryan Newman	0	0	6	16.67	0
Kurt Busch	0	0	6	17.17	0
Brian Vickers	0	0	6	18.83	0
Casey Mears	0	0	6	20.00	0

2009

	1975-2003	2004-2006_Playoffs	2007-2010_Playoffs	2011-2015_ ('11-'13 Playoffs)	2011-2015_ ('14-'15 Playoffs)	2016_Playoffs	Recognized Champion
2009	Jimmie Johnson	Jimmie Johnson	Jimmie Johnson	Jimmie Johnson	Kurt Busch	Kurt Busch	Jimmie Johnson

- Brad Keselowski won once in 2009 however since he didn't run a full schedule, he wasn't included in any playoffs because of his lack of points. Other drivers who won and weren't included was because they were not point eligible. It is possible that NASCAR would have allowed him to participate in the playoff but during this year, he only raced in six of the ten playoff races. Whether he would have been included or not, he would have gotten 16th assuming the team would not have altered their racing schedule
- Jimmie Johnson had the highest average finish (1.33) in the playoffs, finishing 1st four different times
- Jeff Gordon had the best overall season average finish of 10.17
- Johnson had the best average finish in the playoff of 6.8
- Tony Stewart had the best average finish during the regular season of 9.12
- Kyle Busch's average year end finish standard deviation was 3.98. The average for the 67 drivers was 1.01

Biggest Benefactor:

- Kurt Busch – He would have in the *2011-2015_ ('14-'15 Playoffs) and 2016_Playoffs*
- Tony Stewart – He would have finished 3rd in the *1975-2003* system
- Kyle Busch – Even though he was winless in the playoff, he would have finished 3rd in the *2011-2015_ ('14-'15 Playoffs) and 2016_Playoffs*

Biggest Losers:

- Mark Martin – He would have finished outside of the top five only during the *1975-2003* system

1975-2003

How did Jimmie Johnson win? Johnson had the third best average finish. His 11.08 was bested by Jeff Gordon's 10.17 and Tony Stewart's 10.44. Johnson's standard deviation of average win was also worse than both Gordon and Stewart. Seven wins for Johnson compared to one for Gordon and four for Stewart help explain Johnson's win. Johnson was +259 over Gordon and +131 over Stewart when comparing their wins and the others finish in those same races.

1975-2003

Fin	Driver	Points	Diff.
1	Jimmie Johnson	5086	
2	Jeff Gordon	5080	-6
3	Tony Stewart	5045	-41
4	Denny Hamlin	4766	-320
5	Kurt Busch	4738	-348
6	Mark Martin	4712	-374
7	Greg Biffle	4541	-545
8	Juan Pablo Montoya	4503	-583
9	Ryan Newman	4447	-639
10	Kyle Busch	4417	-669
11	Carl Edwards	4398	-688
12	Matt Kenseth	4369	-717
13	Kasey Kahne	4368	-718
14	Clint Bowyer	4359	-727
15	David Reutimann	4211	-875
16	Brian Vickers	4112	-974
17	Jeff Burton	4022	-1064
18	Marcos Ambrose	3830	-1256
19	Kevin Harvick	3796	-1290
20	Joey Logano	3781	-1305

2004-2006 Playoffs

How did Jimmie Johnson win? The top-4 finishers could have been based on their average finish during the playoffs. Johnson had the best average finish of 6.80 followed by Jeff Gordon (8.2), Mark Martin (8.70) and Kurt Busch (9.80). During the playoff, Johnson outscored Martin by 136 and Gordon by 139. Johnson also had four wins during the playoffs. Even though Johnson trailed Tony Stewart by 272 entering the playoff, he would have still overcome the difference. Beginning the playoff trailing Stewart by ten was only a plus.

2004-2006_Playoffs			
Fin	Driver	Points	Diff.
1	Jimmie Johnson	6642	
2	Jeff Gordon	6508	-134
3	Mark Martin	6481	-161
4	Kurt Busch	6461	-181
5	Denny Hamlin	6340	-302
6	Tony Stewart	6324	-318
7	Juan Pablo Montoya	6257	-385
8	Ryan Newman	6195	-447
9	Carl Edwards	6143	-499
10	Kasey Kahne	6118	-524
11	Greg Biffle	4541	-2101
12	Kyle Busch	4437	-2205
13	Matt Kenseth	4379	-2263
14	Clint Bowyer	4359	-2283
15	David Reutimann	4216	-2426
16	Brian Vickers	4117	-2525
17	Jeff Burton	4022	-2620
18	Marcos Ambrose	3830	-2812
19	Kevin Harvick	3796	-2846
20	Joey Logano	3786	-2856

2007-2010 Playoffs

How did Jimmie Johnson win? Johnson had four playoff wins, an average finish of 6.80 and nine top-10s. All three led all drivers during the playoff. Mark Martin led Johnson by ten points to begin the playoff but during the playoff Johnson outscored Martin by 151 points. Johnson's 1,622 points during the playoff was best of all drivers.

2007-2010_Playoffs			
Fin	Driver	Points	Diff.
1	Jimmie Johnson	6652	
2	Mark Martin	6511	-141
3	Jeff Gordon	6473	-179
4	Kurt Busch	6446	-206
5	Denny Hamlin	6335	-317
6	Tony Stewart	6309	-343
7	Greg Biffle	6292	-360
8	Juan Pablo Montoya	6252	-400
9	Ryan Newman	6175	-477
10	Kasey Kahne	6128	-524
11	Carl Edwards	6118	-534
12	Brian Vickers	5929	-723
13	Kyle Busch	4457	-2195
14	Matt Kenseth	4389	-2263
15	Clint Bowyer	4359	-2293
16	David Reutimann	4221	-2431
17	Jeff Burton	4022	-2630
18	Marcos Ambrose	3830	-2822
19	Kevin Harvick	3796	-2856
20	Joey Logano	3791	-2861

2011-2015 ('11-'13 Playoffs)

How did Jimmie Johnson win? Johnson started the playoff tied for 1st with Tony Stewart. He won four times during the playoff, outscoring all drivers and having the best average finish. Johnson outscored runner-up Jeff Gordon by 33 points.

Kyle Busch finished the regular season 14th in points, but because of his four wins, more than the two drivers that ahead of him, he qualified.

2011-2015_('11-'13 Playoffs)			
Fin	Driver	Points	Diff.
1	Jimmie Johnson	2405	
2	Jeff Gordon	2366	-39
3	Mark Martin	2362	-43
4	Kurt Busch	2357	-48
5	Tony Stewart	2318	-87
6	Greg Biffle	2317	-88
7	Denny Hamlin	2309	-96
8	Kyle Busch	2309	-96
9	Juan Pablo Montoya	2292	-113
10	Ryan Newman	2282	-123
11	Carl Edwards	2264	-141
12	Kasey Kahne	2260	-145
13	Clint Bowyer	1052	-1353
14	Matt Kenseth	1051	-1354
15	David Reutimann	1007	-1398
16	Brian Vickers	973	-1432
17	Jeff Burton	943	-1462
18	Marcos Ambrose	883	-1522
19	Casey Mears	874	-1531
20	Joey Logano	873	-1532

2011-2015 ('14-'15 Playoffs) & 2016 Playoffs

How did Kurt Busch win? Busch had one regular season win and one playoff win which was not the last race of the year. He had the 4th best average finish during the season as well as during the playoff. He finished the regular season in 5th position but began the playoff tied for 8th. After the first round, Busch was in 5th place, after the second round he was in 6th place but a win during round three qualified him for the final four. Busch finished 4th in the final race of the year, one position better than runner-up, Jimmie Johnson.

There were 13 unique winners in 2009 including Brad Keselowski. Because he was not included in the playoff, four drivers qualified based on their points total. Jeff Gordon and Jimmie Johnson were tied after the third round. Johnson's best finish was 1st which qualified him for the final race regardless of his overall point total.

2011-2015_ ('14-'15 Playoffs)				2016_Playoffs			
Fin	Driver	Points	Diff.	Fin	Driver	Points	Diff.
1	Kurt Busch	5040		1	Kurt Busch	5037	
2	Jimmie Johnson	5039	-1	2	Jimmie Johnson	5036	-1
3	Kyle Busch	5036	-4	3	Kyle Busch	5033	-4
4	Mark Martin	5032	-8	4	Mark Martin	5029	-8
5	Jeff Gordon	2366	-2674	5	Jeff Gordon	2336	-2701
6	Tony Stewart	2318	-2722	6	Tony Stewart	2288	-2749
7	Greg Biffle	2317	-2723	7	Greg Biffle	2287	-2750
8	Denny Hamlin	2309	-2731	8	Denny Hamlin	2281	-2756
9	Matt Kenseth	2297	-2743	9	Juan Pablo Montoya	2262	-2775
10	Juan Pablo Montoya	2292	-2748	10	David Reutimann	2258	-2779
11	David Reutimann	2288	-2752	11	Ryan Newman	2252	-2785
12	Ryan Newman	2282	-2758	12	Carl Edwards	2234	-2803
13	Carl Edwards	2264	-2776	13	Kasey Kahne	2175	-2862
14	Kasey Kahne	2260	-2780	14	Matt Kenseth	2172	-2865
15	Joey Logano	2255	-2785	15	Joey Logano	2135	-2902
16	Brian Vickers	2206	-2834	16	Brian Vickers	2127	-2910
17	Clint Bowyer	1052	-3988	17	Clint Bowyer	944	-4093
18	Jeff Burton	943	-4097	18	Jeff Burton	835	-4202
19	Marcos Ambrose	883	-4157	19	Marcos Ambrose	776	-4261
20	Casey Mears	874	-4166	20	Casey Mears	766	-4271

Driver	Top4s	Top10s	Top20s	AvgFin	FirstPlaceFinishes
Jimmie Johnson	6	6	6	1.33	4
Jeff Gordon	4	6	6	3.17	0
Kurt Busch	5	6	6	3.17	2
Mark Martin	5	6	6	3.67	0
Tony Stewart	1	6	6	5.33	0
Denny Hamlin	1	6	6	6.17	0
Greg Biffle	0	5	6	7.50	0
Kyle Busch	2	4	6	8.17	0
Juan Pablo Montoya	0	6	6	8.50	0
Ryan Newman	0	4	6	9.83	0
Carl Edwards	0	1	6	11.17	0
Kasey Kahne	0	2	6	12.00	0
Matt Kenseth	0	1	6	12.67	0
David Reutimann	0	1	6	13.67	0
Clint Bowyer	0	0	6	15.00	0
Brian Vickers	0	0	6	15.33	0
Jeff Burton	0	0	6	17.33	0
Marcos Ambrose	0	0	6	18.33	0
Joey Logano	0	0	6	18.33	0
Kevin Harvick	0	0	3	20.00	0
Casey Mears	0	0	3	20.33	0

2010

	1975-2003	2004-2006_Playoffs	2007-2010_Playoffs	2011-2015_ ('11-'13 Playoffs)	2011-2015_ ('14-'15 Playoffs)	2016_Playoffs	Recognized Champion
2010	Kevin Harvick	Kevin Harvick	Jimmie Johnson	Jimmie Johnson	Carl Edwards	Carl Edwards	Jimmie Johnson

- Jimmie Johnson had the highest average finish (1.67) in the playoffs, finishing 1st two different times
- Kevin Harvick had the best average finish during the regular season, the playoff and the overall season of 9.77, 5.80 and 8.67, respectively
- Jamie McMurray's average year end finish standard deviation was 4.35. The average for the 75 drivers was 1.38
- During the 2011-2015_ ('14-'15 Playoffs) Greg Biffle and Ryan Newman tied for 7th, but during the 2016_Playoffs, Biffle beat Newman by one point.

Biggest Benefactor:

- Harvick – He would have won the championship in the 1975-2003 and 2004-2006_Playoffs system

- Carl Edwards – Due to his win in the last race of the regular season, he would have won in both the *2011-2015_('14-'15 Playoffs)* and *2016_Playoffs* systems
- Jamie McMurray – His recognized finish in the '10 season was 14th, but because he won during the regular season, he qualified for the *2011-2015_('14-'15 Playoffs)* and *2016_Playoffs* systems and finished 6th
- Newman – Like McMurray, he won during the regular season, so Newman qualified for the playoff and finished tied for 7th in the *2011-2015_('14-'15 Playoffs)* and 8th in the *2016_Playoffs*

Biggest Losers:

- Johnson – He was the recognized champion in '10, but would have finished 2nd four different times

1975-2003

Why did Kevin Harvick win? Harvick finished the year with an average finish of 8.67 and three wins. His average finish was best, and his win total tied him for third. Harvick's average finish was 3.5 better than Jimmie Johnson. The standard deviation of his finishes was 8.75 leaving him with the highest average finish and one of the best standard deviations. Consistency wins yet another championship.

1975-2003

Fin	Driver	Points	Diff.
1	Kevin Harvick	5244	
2	Jimmie Johnson	4929	-315
3	Carl Edwards	4800	-444
4	Denny Hamlin	4785	-459
5	Jeff Gordon	4669	-575
6	Matt Kenseth	4640	-604
7	Kyle Busch	4617	-627
8	Tony Stewart	4608	-636
9	Kurt Busch	4439	-805
10	Jeff Burton	4423	-821
11	Greg Biffle	4394	-850
12	Mark Martin	4364	-880
13	Clint Bowyer	4364	-880
14	Jamie McMurray	4295	-949
15	Ryan Newman	4292	-952
16	Joey Logano	4185	-1059
17	Juan Pablo Montoya	4108	-1136
18	David Reutimann	4014	-1230
19	A.J. Allmendinger	3998	-1246
20	Kasey Kahne	3961	-1283

2004-2006 Playoffs

How did Kevin Harvick win? Beginning the playoff, Harvick led Jimmie Johnson by 25. Johnson won a race and scored more points than Harvick during the playoff. Harvick had an average finish of 5.80, which was 0.40 better than Johnson. During the playoff, Johnson outscored Harvick, 1,567 to 1,551 for a difference of 16 points. Not enough to erase Harvick's lead. Entering the playoff, Harvick led Johnson by 316 points.

2004-2006_Playoffs			
Fin	Driver	Points	Diff.
1	Kevin Harvick	6601	
2	Jimmie Johnson	6592	-9
3	Denny Hamlin	6518	-83
4	Carl Edwards	6418	-183
5	Matt Kenseth	6309	-292
6	Tony Stewart	6236	-365
7	Jeff Gordon	6221	-380
8	Kyle Busch	6192	-409
9	Kurt Busch	6132	-469
10	Jeff Burton	6053	-548
11	Greg Biffle	4404	-2197
12	Clint Bowyer	4370	-2231
13	Mark Martin	4364	-2237
14	Jamie McMurray	4310	-2291
15	Ryan Newman	4297	-2304
16	Joey Logano	4185	-2416
17	Juan Pablo Montoya	4113	-2488
18	David Reutimann	4019	-2582
19	A.J. Allmendinger	3998	-2603
20	Kasey Kahne	3961	-2640

2007-2010 Playoffs

How did Jimmie Johnson win? During the regular season Johnson had five wins, Denny Hamlin had six while Kevin Harvick had 3. That meant that Hamlin began the playoff ten points ahead of Johnson and 30 points more Harvick. During the playoff, Johnson led all drivers in points, besting Harvick by 21 and Hamlin by 49. Harvick led all drivers during the playoff with an average finish of 5.8, which was 0.40 better than Johnson but Harvick didn't win during the playoff. Compared to *2004-2006_Playoffs*, where Harvick started the playoff with a 25-point lead over Johnson and a 45 point over Hamlin, the addition of bonus points per regular season win was the determining factor.

2007-2010_Playoffs			
Fin	Driver	Points	Diff.
1	Jimmie Johnson	6622	
2	Denny Hamlin	6583	-39
3	Kevin Harvick	6581	-41
4	Carl Edwards	6393	-229
5	Matt Kenseth	6294	-328
6	Greg Biffle	6247	-375
7	Tony Stewart	6221	-401
8	Kyle Busch	6182	-440
9	Jeff Gordon	6176	-446
10	Clint Bowyer	6155	-467
11	Kurt Busch	6142	-480
12	Jeff Burton	6033	-589
13	Mark Martin	4364	-2258
14	Jamie McMurray	4325	-2297
15	Ryan Newman	4302	-2320
16	Joey Logano	4185	-2437
17	Juan Pablo Montoya	4118	-2504
18	David Reutimann	4024	-2598
19	A.J. Allmendinger	3998	-2624
20	Kasey Kahne	3961	-2661

2011-2015 ('11-'13 Playoffs)

How did Jimmie Johnson win? Johnson had five wins during the regular season, one behind Denny Hamlin. Hamlin led Johnson by three points to begin the playoff. During the playoff, Johnson had one win, had the 2nd best average finish and outscored all drivers.

Jamie McMurray finished the regular season in 15th place, but because he won two races during the regular season and the three drivers ahead of him had no wins, he made it into the playoff. Johnson outscored Kevin Harvick by one and Hamlin by 8, enough to make up his deficit starting the playoff.

2011-2015_('11-'13 Playoffs)

Fin	Driver	Points	Diff.
1	Jimmie Johnson	2403	
2	Denny Hamlin	2398	-5
3	Kevin Harvick	2396	-7
4	Carl Edwards	2340	-63
5	Matt Kenseth	2314	-89
6	Jamie McMurray	2309	-94
7	Greg Biffle	2293	-110
8	Tony Stewart	2290	-113
9	Jeff Gordon	2279	-124
10	Kyle Busch	2276	-127
11	Kurt Busch	2271	-132
12	Jeff Burton	2232	-171
13	Clint Bowyer	1049	-1354
14	Mark Martin	1046	-1357
15	Ryan Newman	1031	-1372
16	Joey Logano	988	-1415
17	Juan Pablo Montoya	959	-1444
18	A.J. Allmendinger	948	-1455
19	David Reutimann	942	-1461
20	Dale Earnhardt, Jr.	924	-1479

2011-2015 ('14-'15 Playoffs) & 2016 Playoffs

How did Carl Edwards win? Edwards had no wins during the regular season, but he was able to win twice during the playoff including the last race of the year. He had the 2nd best average finish during the season and during the playoff, he had the 4th best average finish. Despite not winning during the regular season, he ended it 4th in points. To start the playoff, Edwards started tied for 12th (tied for last). After the first round, he was in 5th place. Edwards finished the second round two points better than Clint Bowyer, good enough for the 8th and final spot. He went on to win during the third round which gave him an automatic entry into the final four. Edwards had back to back wins to close the season and win the championship. Jimmie Johnson would finish the race in 2nd and Kevin Harvick would finish 3rd.

There were 11 unique winners in the 2010 season, allowing five drivers to qualify based on their points. There were no ties during any of the rounds of the playoff.

Fin	Driver	Points	Diff.	Fin	Driver	Points	Diff.
1	Carl Edwards	5043		1	Carl Edwards	5040	
2	Jimmie Johnson	5042	-1	2	Jimmie Johnson	5039	-1
3	Kevin Harvick	5041	-2	3	Kevin Harvick	5038	-2
4	Denny Hamlin	5030	-13	4	Denny Hamlin	5027	-13
5	Jamie McMurray	2315	-2728	5	Jamie McMurray	2285	-2755
6	Matt Kenseth	2314	-2729	6	Matt Kenseth	2284	-2756
7	Greg Biffle	2296	-2747	7	Greg Biffle	2267	-2773
8	Ryan Newman	2296	-2747	8	Ryan Newman	2266	-2774
9	Tony Stewart	2290	-2753	9	Tony Stewart	2260	-2780
10	Jeff Gordon	2279	-2764	10	Jeff Gordon	2249	-2791
11	Kyle Busch	2276	-2767	11	Clint Bowyer	2247	-2793
12	Clint Bowyer	2275	-2768	12	Kyle Busch	2246	-2794
13	Kurt Busch	2271	-2772	13	Kurt Busch	2241	-2799
14	Juan Pablo Montoya	2261	-2782	14	Juan Pablo Montoya	2231	-2809
15	David Reutimann	2239	-2804	15	David Reutimann	2209	-2831
16	Jeff Burton	2232	-2811	16	Jeff Burton	2203	-2837
17	Mark Martin	1046	-3997	17	Mark Martin	938	-4102
18	Joey Logano	988	-4055	18	Joey Logano	880	-4160
19	A.J. Allmendinger	948	-4095	19	A.J. Allmendinger	840	-4200
20	Dale Earnhardt, Jr.	924	-4119	20	Dale Earnhardt, Jr.	816	-4224

Driver	Top4s	Top10s	Top20s	AvgFin	FirstPlaceFinishes
Jimmie Johnson	6	6	6	1.67	2
Kevin Harvick	6	6	6	2.33	2
Carl Edwards	3	6	6	2.83	2
Denny Hamlin	3	6	6	3.17	0
Matt Kenseth	0	6	6	5.50	0
Tony Stewart	0	6	6	7.83	0
Greg Biffle	0	4	6	8.17	0
Jeff Gordon	0	6	6	8.33	0
Kyle Busch	0	4	6	9.33	0
Jamie McMurray	0	3	6	9.67	0
Kurt Busch	0	2	6	11.00	0
Clint Bowyer	0	1	6	11.83	0
Ryan Newman	0	2	6	12.50	0
Jeff Burton	0	2	6	12.67	0
Mark Martin	0	0	6	14.33	0
Juan Pablo Montoya	0	0	6	16.00	0
Joey Logano	0	0	6	16.67	0
David Reutimann	0	0	6	17.17	0
A.J. Allmendinger	0	0	6	18.83	0
Dale Earnhardt, Jr.	0	0	3	20.50	0
Kasey Kahne	0	0	3	21.00	0

2011

	1975-2003	2004-2006_Playoffs	2007-2010_Playoffs	2011-2015_('11-'13 Playoffs)	2011-2015_('14-'15 Playoffs)	2016_Playoffs	Recognized Champion
2011	Carl Edwards	Carl Edwards	Tony Stewart	Tony Stewart	Tony Stewart	Tony Stewart	Tony Stewart

- Tony Stewart and Carl Edwards had the highest average finish (1.67) in the playoffs, Stewart finishing 1st four times and Edwards finishing 1st twice
- Edwards had the best playoff and overall season average finish of 4.9 and 9.31, respectively
- Jimmie Johnson had the best regular season average finish of 10.62
- Regan Smith's average year end finish standard deviation was 5.19. The average for the 52 drivers was 1.02

Biggest Benefactor:

- Edwards – He would have won the *1975-2003* and *2004-2006_Playoffs* championships

- David Ragan - Due to his regular season win, he qualified for the *2011-2015_ ('14-'15 Playoffs)* and *2016_Playoffs* and finished 16th, his only top-20s. He was recognized as the 23rd place finisher in the '11 season
- Regan Smith - Due to his regular season win, he qualified for the *2011-2015_ ('14-'15 Playoffs)* and *2016_Playoffs* and finished 15th, his only top-20s. He was recognized as the 26th place finisher in the '11 season

Biggest Losers:

- Stewart – He is recognized as the '11 champion, but would have finished 4th in the *1975-2003* system and 2nd in the *2004-2006_Playoffs* system
- Jeff Burton – He had his only top-20 in the recognized playoff system of '11, all other systems, he would have finished outside of the top-20

1975-2003

How did Carl Edwards win? Even though he had one win, his average finish for the year was 9.31, 2.61 better than Jimmie Johnson who finished second. Furthermore, during the last ten races, Edwards had an average finish of 4.90 where the top-20 drivers average 14.80.

1975-2003

Fin	Driver	Points	Diff.
1	Carl Edwards	5219	
2	Jimmie Johnson	4896	-323
3	Kevin Harvick	4856	-363
4	Tony Stewart	4852	-367
5	Matt Kenseth	4840	-379
6	Jeff Gordon	4759	-460
7	Kyle Busch	4665	-554
8	Ryan Newman	4550	-669
9	Kurt Busch	4511	-708
10	Brad Keselowski	4498	-721
11	Dale Earnhardt, Jr.	4418	-801
12	Kasey Kahne	4377	-842
13	Clint Bowyer	4373	-846
14	Denny Hamlin	4308	-911
15	A.J. Allmendinger	4201	-1018
16	Greg Biffle	4189	-1030
17	Paul Menard	4010	-1209
18	Marcos Ambrose	3998	-1221
19	Martin Truex, Jr.	3991	-1228
20	Juan Pablo Montoya	3980	-1239

2004-2006 Playoffs

How did Carl Edwards win? Edward's had an average finish during the playoff of 4.9, which was 1.4 better than runner-up Tony Stewart. Stewart did however have five wins during the 10-race playoff. Edwards entered the playoff in 3rd place and Stewart entered in 9th. Even with the five wins, Stewart only outscored Edwards by four points. Edwards had seven top-5s during the playoff.

2004-2006_Playoffs			
Fin	Driver	Points	Diff.
1	Carl Edwards	6650	
2	Tony Stewart	6624	-26
3	Kevin Harvick	6385	-265
4	Matt Kenseth	6375	-275
5	Jimmie Johnson	6318	-332
6	Jeff Gordon	6223	-427
7	Dale Earnhardt, Jr.	6206	-444
8	Ryan Newman	6192	-458
9	Kurt Busch	6137	-513
10	Kyle Busch	6067	-583
11	Brad Keselowski	4513	-2137
12	Kasey Kahne	4382	-2268
13	Clint Bowyer	4378	-2272
14	Denny Hamlin	4313	-2337
15	A.J. Allmendinger	4201	-2449
16	Greg Biffle	4189	-2461
17	Paul Menard	4015	-2635
18	Marcos Ambrose	4003	-2647
19	Martin Truex, Jr.	3991	-2659
20	Juan Pablo Montoya	3980	-2670

2007-2010 Playoffs

How did Tony Stewart win? Stewart began the playoff behind the leader by 40 points. He also won five races and had an average finish during the playoff of 6.3. Stewart trailed Edwards by ten points beginning the playoff but outscored him by 29 points. Compared to the *2004-2006_Playoff* when Edwards started the playoff with a 30-point lead and even though Stewart had the most playoff points, he only outscored Edwards by four resulting in a loss by Stewart by 26. With the *2007-2010_Playoffs*, Stewart started the playoff behind ten points, gaining 20 off the top. Then during the playoff, he gained 25 more points because a win was worth five more points. So, a 26 point loss in *2004-2006_Playoffs* turned into a 19 point win by adding 25 additional points and the 20 less points begging the playoff.

2007-2010_Playoffs			
Fin	Driver	Points	Diff.
1	Tony Stewart	6639	
2	Carl Edwards	6620	-19
3	Kevin Harvick	6395	-244
4	Matt Kenseth	6375	-264
5	Brad Keselowski	6353	-286
6	Jimmie Johnson	6288	-351
7	Jeff Gordon	6218	-421
8	Dale Earnhardt, Jr.	6201	-438
9	Denny Hamlin	6188	-451
10	Ryan Newman	6187	-452
11	Kurt Busch	6132	-507
12	Kyle Busch	6057	-582
13	Kasey Kahne	4387	-2252
14	Clint Bowyer	4383	-2256
15	A.J. Allmendinger	4201	-2438
16	Greg Biffle	4189	-2450
17	Paul Menard	4020	-2619
18	Marcos Ambrose	4008	-2631
19	Martin Truex, Jr.	3991	-2648
20	Juan Pablo Montoya	3980	-2659

2011-2015 ('11-'13 Playoffs)

How did Tony Stewart win? Stewart did not have a regular season win and entered the playoff in 9th place, 12 points behind Kyle Busch and Kevin Harvick, but only three points behind runner up Carl

Edwards. During the playoff, Stewart won five times and outscored all other drivers. Even though he won half the races, Edwards had a higher average finish. Edwards had an average finish during the playoff of 4.9, recording nine top-10s and an 11th place finish including finishing the year with three 2nd place finishes. During the playoff, Stewart outscored Edwards by three points which left them tied.

The tiebreaker between Stewart and Edwards was number of wins. Stewart had five while Edwards only had one win.

2011-2015_ ('11-'13 Playoffs)			
Fin	Driver	Points	Diff.
1	Tony Stewart	2403	
2	Carl Edwards	2403	0
3	Kevin Harvick	2345	-58
4	Matt Kenseth	2330	-73
5	Brad Keselowski	2319	-84
6	Jimmie Johnson	2304	-99
7	Dale Earnhardt, Jr.	2290	-113
8	Jeff Gordon	2287	-116
9	Denny Hamlin	2284	-119
10	Ryan Newman	2284	-119
11	Kurt Busch	2262	-141
12	Kyle Busch	2246	-157
13	Clint Bowyer	1047	-1356
14	Kasey Kahne	1041	-1362
15	A.J. Allmendinger	1013	-1390
16	Greg Biffle	997	-1406
17	Paul Menard	947	-1456
18	Martin Truex, Jr.	937	-1466
19	Marcos Ambrose	936	-1467
20	Jeff Burton	935	-1468

2011-2015 ('14-'15 Playoffs) & 2016 Playoffs

How did Tony Stewart win? Stewart was winless in the regular season but was able to win five of the ten playoff races including the last race of the year. He had the 4th best average finish throughout the season and his average finish of 6.3 during the playoff was second best to Carl Edwards average finish of 4.9. Stewart ended the regular season in 9th place but after the playoff point reset, he began the playoff tied for 15th (tied for last). Stewart won twice in the 1st round which qualified him for round 2. He had no wins in round two, but he was able to finish in 4th. He would go on to win three of the last four races of the year to lock up a championship. Edwards went on to finish 2nd in the final race.

There were 14 unique winners in 2011, which allowed two drivers to qualify for the playoff based off their points. David Ragan and Dale Earnhardt Jr. were tied after the second round. Earnhardt Jr.'s best finish was 14th whereas Ragan's best finish was 11th which meant Ragan moved on to the next round.

2011-2015_ ('14-'15 Playoffs)				2016_Playoffs			
Fin	Driver	Points	Diff.	Fin	Driver	Points	Diff.
1	Kurt Busch	5043		1	Tony Stewart	5040	
2	Dale Jarrett	5029	-14	2	Carl Edwards	5039	-1
3	Tony Stewart	5026	-17	3	Kevin Harvick	5033	-7
4	Dale Earnhardt, Jr.	5023	-20	4	Jimmie Johnson	5009	-31
5	Mark Martin	2326	-2717	5	Matt Kenseth	2300	-2740
6	Rusty Wallace	2313	-2730	6	Brad Keselowski	2298	-2742
7	Matt Kenseth	2312	-2731	7	Dale Earnhardt, Jr.	2260	-2780
8	Jimmie Johnson	2303	-2740	8	Jeff Gordon	2257	-2783
9	Jeff Gordon	2301	-2742	9	Denny Hamlin	2257	-2783
10	Michael Waltrip	2272	-2771	10	Ryan Newman	2254	-2786
11	Ricky Rudd	2269	-2774	11	Paul Menard	2253	-2787
12	Bobby Labonte	2250	-2793	12	Marcos Ambrose	2236	-2804
13	Bill Elliott	2198	-2845	13	Kurt Busch	2232	-2808
14	Kevin Harvick	2188	-2855	14	Kyle Busch	2219	-2821
15	Ward Burton	2184	-2859	15	Regan Smith	2204	-2836
16	Sterling Marlin	2063	-2980	16	David Ragan	2202	-2838
17	Ryan Newman	1089	-3954	17	Clint Bowyer	939	-4101
18	Jeff Burton	1012	-4031	18	Kasey Kahne	933	-4107
19	Ricky Craven	902	-4141	19	A.J. Allmendinger	905	-4135
20	Jeff Green	848	-4195	20	Greg Biffle	889	-4151

Driver	Top4s	Top10s	Top20s	AvgFin	FirstPlaceFinishes
Tony Stewart	6	6	6	1.67	4
Carl Edwards	6	6	6	1.67	2
Kevin Harvick	6	6	6	3.00	0
Matt Kenseth	3	6	6	4.50	0
Jimmie Johnson	3	6	6	4.50	0
Brad Keselowski	0	5	6	7.17	0
Jeff Gordon	0	6	6	7.17	0
Dale Earnhardt, Jr.	0	5	6	7.83	0
Ryan Newman	0	6	6	9.17	0
Denny Hamlin	0	4	6	10.33	0
Kurt Busch	0	2	6	11.00	0
Kyle Busch	0	2	6	11.50	0
Clint Bowyer	0	0	6	14.50	0
Kasey Kahne	0	0	6	14.50	0
Paul Menard	0	0	6	15.00	0
Marcos Ambrose	0	0	6	16.17	0
A.J. Allmendinger	0	0	6	16.33	0
Greg Biffle	0	0	6	17.33	0
Martin Truex, Jr.	0	0	4	19.50	0
David Ragan	0	0	2	20.67	0
Jeff Burton	0	0	1	21.17	0
Juan Pablo Montoya	0	0	3	21.17	0
Regan Smith	0	0	2	22.33	0

2012

	1975-2003	2004-2006_Playoffs	2007-2010_Playoffs	2011-2015_ ('11-'13 Playoffs)	2011-2015_ ('14-'15 Playoffs)	2016_Playoffs	Recognized Champion
2012	Brad Keselowski	Brad Keselowski	Brad Keselowski	Brad Keselowski	Kyle Busch	Kyle Busch	Brad Keselowski

- Dale Earnhardt Jr. missed two playoff races after making it to the 2nd round
- Brad Keselowski had the highest average finish (1.33) in the playoffs, finishing 1st four different times
- Keselowski had the best playoff and overall season average finish of 6.3 and 10.08, respectively
- Greg Biffle had the best average finish in the playoff of 6.65
- Kyle Busch's average year end finish standard deviation was 5.11. The average for the 58 drivers was 1.02

Biggest Benefactor:

- Kyle Busch – He is recognized as the 13th place finisher for the '12 season, but because of his regular season win, he qualified for the *2011-2015_ ('14-'15 Playoffs) and 2016_Playoffs* systems. This resulted in two wins along with the best average finish during the playoff

Biggest Losers:

- Keselowski – He is recognized as the '12 champion, but would have finished 2nd in the *2011-2015_ ('14-'15 Playoffs) and 2016_Playoffs* systems
- Clint Bowyer – He is recognized as the runner-up for the '12 season, but would have finished 5th in the *2011-2015_ ('14-'15 Playoffs) and 2016_Playoffs* systems

1975-2003

How did Brad Keselowski win? Keselowski had an average finish of 10.08, which was 1.08 better than Jimmie Johnson. Also, Keselowski's standard deviation of his finishes were 3.07 better than Johnson contributing in him earning more points. Keselowski's average finish over the last ten races was 6.30 and he tied with Johnson and Denny Hamlin with five wins.

1975-2003

Fin	Driver	Points	Diff.
1	Brad Keselowski	5084	
2	Jimmie Johnson	5065	-19
3	Greg Biffle	5003	-81
4	Matt Kenseth	4957	-127
5	Clint Bowyer	4914	-170
6	Denny Hamlin	4819	-265
7	Martin Truex, Jr.	4733	-351
8	Kyle Busch	4724	-360
9	Kevin Harvick	4694	-390
10	Kasey Kahne	4660	-424
11	Dale Earnhardt, Jr.	4641	-443
12	Tony Stewart	4598	-486
13	Jeff Gordon	4485	-599
14	Ryan Newman	4349	-735
15	Carl Edwards	4272	-812
16	Paul Menard	4149	-935
17	Joey Logano	4057	-1027
18	Marcos Ambrose	4013	-1071
19	Jeff Burton	3807	-1277
20	Aric Almirola	3749	-1335

2004-2006 Playoffs

How did Brad Keselowski win? During the playoff, Keselowski had an average finish of 6.3 and was tied for first with two wins during the playoff. Keselowski entered the playoff in 5th, but he scored the most points during the playoff, besting Jimmie Johnson by 99 points.

2004-2006_Playoffs			
Fin	Driver	Points	Diff.
1	Brad Keselowski	6586	
2	Jimmie Johnson	6492	-94
3	Clint Bowyer	6455	-131
4	Greg Biffle	6369	-217
5	Matt Kenseth	6360	-226
6	Denny Hamlin	6340	-246
7	Kevin Harvick	6303	-283
8	Martin Truex, Jr.	6255	-331
9	Tony Stewart	6250	-336
10	Dale Earnhardt, Jr.	6029	-557
11	Kyle Busch	4729	-1857
12	Kasey Kahne	4670	-1916
13	Jeff Gordon	4495	-2091
14	Ryan Newman	4354	-2232
15	Carl Edwards	4272	-2314
16	Paul Menard	4149	-2437
17	Joey Logano	4062	-2524
18	Marcos Ambrose	4018	-2568
19	Jeff Burton	3807	-2779
20	Aric Almirola	3749	-2837

2007-2010 Playoffs

How did Brad Keselowski win? Keselowski had two playoff wins, an average finish of 6.30 along with eight top-10s. He also led all drivers in playoff points, outscoring Jimmie Johnson by 99 points. Johnson and Keselowski started the playoff tied for 2nd because of their four regular season wins.

2007-2010_Playoffs			
Fin	Driver	Points	Diff.
1	Brad Keselowski	6596	
2	Jimmie Johnson	6497	-99
3	Clint Bowyer	6465	-131
4	Kasey Kahne	6425	-171
5	Denny Hamlin	6360	-236
6	Matt Kenseth	6340	-256
7	Greg Biffle	6339	-257
8	Kevin Harvick	6298	-298
9	Tony Stewart	6275	-321
10	Jeff Gordon	6246	-350
11	Martin Truex, Jr.	6235	-361
12	Dale Earnhardt, Jr.	5994	-602
13	Kyle Busch	4734	-1862
14	Ryan Newman	4359	-2237
15	Carl Edwards	4272	-2324
16	Paul Menard	4149	-2447
17	Joey Logano	4067	-2529
18	Marcos Ambrose	4023	-2573
19	Jeff Burton	3807	-2789
20	Aric Almirola	3749	-2847

2011-2015 ('11-'13 Playoffs)

How did Brad Keselowski win? Keselowski began the playoff tied for 2nd, three points behind Denny Hamlin. Keselowski had three regular season wins and two playoff wins. He also had the best average finish during the playoff and outscored all drivers. He scored 36 more points than runner-up Clint Bowyer.

2011-2015_ ('11-'13 Playoffs)

Fin	Driver	Points	Diff.
1	Brad Keselowski	2400	
2	Clint Bowyer	2361	-39
3	Jimmie Johnson	2360	-40
4	Kasey Kahne	2345	-55
5	Greg Biffle	2332	-68
6	Denny Hamlin	2329	-71
7	Matt Kenseth	2324	-76
8	Kevin Harvick	2321	-79
9	Tony Stewart	2311	-89
10	Jeff Gordon	2303	-97
11	Martin Truex, Jr.	2299	-101
12	Dale Earnhardt, Jr.	2245	-155
13	Kyle Busch	1133	-1267
14	Ryan Newman	1051	-1349
15	Carl Edwards	1030	-1370
16	Paul Menard	1006	-1394
17	Joey Logano	965	-1435
18	Marcos Ambrose	950	-1450
19	Jeff Burton	883	-1517
20	Aric Almirola	868	-1532

2011-2015 ('14-'15 Playoffs) & 2016 Playoffs

How did Kyle Busch win? Busch had one regular season win and no playoff wins. He had the 11th best average finish throughout the year and during the playoff, he had an average finish of 9.0, which was 2nd best of all drivers. Busch ended the regular season in 13th position and after the playoff point reset, he began the playoff tied for 8th. He was 10th after the 1st round. Busch finished the 2nd round in 8th place, one point better than Tony Stewart who was cut after round 2. During round 3, he finished 2nd, 3rd and 3rd, earning enough points to not only make it to the final four, but he was in 1st place after round 3. Busch finished the final race of the year in 4th, besting the other three drivers

There were 14 unique winners in the 2012 season, allowing two other drivers to secure a spot in the playoff based off their points. There were no ties during any of the rounds of the playoff.

2011-2015_ ('14-'15 Playoffs)				2016 Playoffs			
Fin	Driver	Points	Diff.	Fin	Driver	Points	Diff.
1	Kyle Busch	5040		1	Kyle Busch	5037	
2	Brad Keselowski	5029	-11	2	Brad Keselowski	5026	-11
3	Kasey Kahne	5023	-17	3	Kasey Kahne	5020	-17
4	Jimmie Johnson	5008	-32	4	Jimmie Johnson	5005	-32
5	Clint Bowyer	2361	-2679	5	Clint Bowyer	2331	-2706
6	Greg Biffle	2332	-2708	6	Greg Biffle	2302	-2735
7	Denny Hamlin	2329	-2711	7	Denny Hamlin	2299	-2738
8	Matt Kenseth	2324	-2716	8	Matt Kenseth	2294	-2743
9	Kevin Harvick	2321	-2719	9	Kevin Harvick	2291	-2746
10	Ryan Newman	2320	-2720	10	Ryan Newman	2290	-2747
11	Tony Stewart	2311	-2729	11	Jeff Gordon	2281	-2756
12	Jeff Gordon	2306	-2734	12	Tony Stewart	2281	-2756
13	Martin Truex, Jr.	2299	-2741	13	Martin Truex, Jr.	2272	-2765
14	Joey Logano	2290	-2750	14	Joey Logano	2260	-2777
15	Dale Earnhardt, Jr.	2245	-2795	15	Dale Earnhardt, Jr.	2221	-2816
16	Marcos Ambrose	2218	-2822	16	Marcos Ambrose	2188	-2849
17	Carl Edwards	1030	-4010	17	Carl Edwards	922	-4115
18	Paul Menard	1006	-4034	18	Paul Menard	900	-4137
19	Jeff Burton	883	-4157	19	Jeff Burton	775	-4262
20	Aric Almirola	868	-4172	20	Aric Almirola	760	-4277

Driver	Top4s	Top10s	Top20s	AvgFin	FirstPlaceFinishes
Brad Keselowski	6	6	6	1.33	4
Jimmie Johnson	6	6	6	2.83	0
Clint Bowyer	3	6	6	3.83	0
Greg Biffle	2	6	6	5.17	0
Kasey Kahne	4	5	6	6.00	0
Denny Hamlin	0	6	6	6.17	0
Matt Kenseth	1	6	6	6.33	0
Kyle Busch	2	3	6	7.83	2
Kevin Harvick	0	6	6	8.33	0
Tony Stewart	0	3	6	10.33	0
Martin Truex, Jr.	0	2	6	10.50	0
Jeff Gordon	0	2	6	11.50	0
Dale Earnhardt, Jr.	0	1	6	12.50	0
Ryan Newman	0	2	6	12.67	0
Carl Edwards	0	0	6	15.67	0
Joey Logano	0	0	6	16.00	0
Paul Menard	0	0	6	16.67	0
Marcos Ambrose	0	0	6	17.33	0
Jeff Burton	0	0	6	19.00	0
Aric Almirola	0	0	6	20.00	0

2013

	1975-2003	2004-2006_Playoffs	2007-2010_Playoffs	2011-2015_ ('11-'13 Playoffs)	2011-2015_ ('14-'15 Playoffs)	2016_Playoffs	Recognized Champion
2013	Jimmie Johnson	Jimmie Johnson	Jimmie Johnson	Jimmie Johnson	Dale Earnhardt Jr.	Dale Earnhardt Jr.	Jimmie Johnson

- Dale Earnhardt Jr. wins *2011-2015_ ('14-'15 Playoffs)* and *2016_Playoffs* with 0 wins
- Brian Vickers was not point eligible, so his win did not qualify him for any of the playoffs
- 13 drivers made the *2004-2006_Playoffs* instead of 10, all were within 400 points of the leader
- Tony Stewart missed the final 14 races of the year due to a broken leg but still qualified for the playoff because of a regular season win. Unknown what NASCAR would have done with his playoff spot, for this paper, he was left in the playoff
- Jimmie Johnson had the highest average finish (1.33) in the playoffs, finishing 1st four different times
- Johnson had the best playoff and overall season average finish of 5.1 and 10.69, respectively
- Carl Edwards had the best average finish in the playoff of 12.31
- David Ragan's average year end finish standard deviation was 5.58. The average for the 53 drivers was 1.05

Biggest Benefactor:

- Earnhardt Jr. – He was winless during the entire season, but based on points alone he would have won the championship in the *2011-2015_ ('14-'15 Playoffs)* and *2016_Playoffs* systems
- Edwards – He would have had a 6th place finish in the *1975-2003* system. He is recognized as the 13th place finisher for the '13 season
- Ragan – He is recognized as the 28th place finisher for the '13 season, but a win in the regular season qualified him for the *2011-2015_ ('14-'15 Playoffs)* and *2016_Playoffs* systems where he would finish 15th
- Stewart – He is recognized as the 29th place finisher for the '13 season, but a win in the regular season qualified him for the *2011-2015_ ('14-'15 Playoffs)* and *2016_Playoffs* systems where he would finish 16th

Biggest Losers:

- Matt Kenseth – He would have finished outside of the top four in the *2011-2015_ ('14-'15 Playoffs)* and *2016_Playoffs* systems

- Johnson – He was the recognized champion in '13, but would have finished 2nd in the 2011-2015_('14-'15 Playoffs) and 2016_Playoffs systems

1975-2003

How did Jimmie Johnson win? Johnson had the best average finish of 10.69 and along with six wins, won the championship. His average finish was 0.50 better than runner up, Kevin Harvick. Lastly, Johnson had an average finish of 5.10 during the last ten races of the year.

1975-2003

Fin	Driver	Points	Diff.
1	Jimmie Johnson	5083	
2	Kevin Harvick	4878	-205
3	Matt Kenseth	4878	-205
4	Kyle Busch	4813	-270
5	Dale Earnhardt, Jr.	4724	-359
6	Carl Edwards	4600	-483
7	Jeff Gordon	4527	-556
8	Clint Bowyer	4520	-564
9	Kurt Busch	4488	-595
10	Joey Logano	4463	-620
11	Greg Biffle	4426	-657
12	Brad Keselowski	4370	-713
13	Kasey Kahne	4338	-745
14	Ryan Newman	4301	-782
15	Jamie McMurray	4212	-871
16	Martin Truex, Jr.	4168	-915
17	Paul Menard	4018	-1065
18	Aric Almirola	3882	-1201
19	Jeff Burton	3872	-1211
20	Ricky Stenhouse, Jr.	3866	-1217

2004-2006 Playoffs

How did Jimmie Johnson win? Johnson had an average finish of 5.1 during the playoff, 2.3 better than runner-up Matt Kenseth. Johnson also won two races during the playoff. Johnson scored the most points during the regular season as well as the playoff, outscoring Kenseth by 64 points.

2004-2006_Playoffs

Fin	Driver	Points	Diff.
1	Jimmie Johnson	6677	
2	Matt Kenseth	6593	-84
3	Kevin Harvick	6546	-131
4	Dale Earnhardt, Jr.	6510	-167
5	Kyle Busch	6475	-202
6	Jeff Gordon	6385	-292
7	Clint Bowyer	6366	-311
8	Joey Logano	6323	-354
9	Kurt Busch	6290	-387
10	Greg Biffle	6282	-395
11	Carl Edwards	6203	-474
12	Kasey Kahne	6202	-475
13	Ryan Newman	6182	-495
14	Brad Keselowski	4375	-2302
15	Jamie McMurray	4217	-2460
16	Martin Truex, Jr.	4173	-2504
17	Paul Menard	4018	-2659
18	Aric Almirola	3882	-2795
19	Jeff Burton	3872	-2805
20	Ricky Stenhouse, Jr.	3866	-2811

2007-2010 Playoffs

How did Jimmie Johnson win? Johnson had two playoff wins, his average finish during the playoff was 5.10 along with seven top-5s, a 6th and 9th place finish. Johnson ended the regular season with a 134 lead over Matt Kenseth but after the playoff point reset, Kenseth, because of his five regular season wins, he had a 10-point lead over Johnson. During the playoff, Johnson outscored all drivers, besting Kenseth by 64.

2007-2010_Playoffs			
Fin	Driver	Points	Diff.
1	Jimmie Johnson	6677	
2	Matt Kenseth	6623	-54
3	Kevin Harvick	6541	-136
4	Dale Earnhardt, Jr.	6485	-192
5	Kyle Busch	6475	-202
6	Jeff Gordon	6380	-297
7	Clint Bowyer	6351	-326
8	Joey Logano	6328	-349
9	Greg Biffle	6297	-380
10	Kurt Busch	6270	-407
11	Kasey Kahne	6222	-455
12	Carl Edwards	6178	-499
13	Brad Keselowski	4380	-2297
14	Ryan Newman	4311	-2366
15	Jamie McMurray	4222	-2455
16	Martin Truex, Jr.	4178	-2499
17	Paul Menard	4018	-2659
18	Aric Almirola	3882	-2795
19	Jeff Burton	3872	-2805
20	Ricky Stenhouse, Jr.	3866	-2811

2011-2015 ('11-'13 Playoffs)

How did Jimmie Johnson win? Johnson's four regular season meant that he would start the playoff tied for 2nd, three points behind Matt Kenseth. During the playoff, Johnson had an average finish of 5.1 and led all drivers in playoff points. Johnson outscored runner-up Kenseth by 22 points, erasing the three-point deficit he started the playoffs with.

The reason for 13 drivers in the playoff: <https://www.sportingnews.com/us/nascar/story/2013-09-13/jeff-gordon-added-to-chase-joey-logano-violation-richmond-controversy>

2011-2015_('11-'13 Playoffs)			
Fin	Driver	Points	Diff.
1	Jimmie Johnson	2419	
2	Matt Kenseth	2400	-19
3	Kevin Harvick	2385	-34
4	Kyle Busch	2364	-55
5	Dale Earnhardt, Jr.	2363	-56
6	Jeff Gordon	2337	-82
7	Clint Bowyer	2336	-83
8	Joey Logano	2323	-96
9	Greg Biffle	2321	-98
10	Kurt Busch	2309	-110
11	Ryan Newman	2286	-133
12	Kasey Kahne	2283	-136
13	Carl Edwards	2282	-137
14	Brad Keselowski	1041	-1378
15	Jamie McMurray	1007	-1412
16	Martin Truex, Jr.	998	-1421
17	Paul Menard	949	-1470
18	Aric Almirola	913	-1506
19	Ricky Stenhouse, Jr.	909	-1510
20	Jeff Burton	906	-1513

2011-2015 ('14-'15 Playoffs) & 2016 Playoffs

How did Dale Earnhardt Jr. win? Earnhardt Jr. was winless throughout the entire 2013 season. His average finish during the season was 5th best and during the playoff, his average finish was 8.5, good enough for 4th best. Earnhardt Jr. finished the regular season in 6th position and after the playoff point reset, he began the playoff tied for 13th (tied for last). He finished the first round in 11th position, 4th after the second and 4th after the third round. The three races were all won by drivers who were still eligible for the championship, so Earnhardt Jr. qualified for the final four by having the highest point total in round three by a driver without a win. Getting into the final race meant that all points were reset, and it was winner take all. Earnhardt Jr. finished 3rd during the final race, good enough to win the championship. The other three drivers finished in 9th, 10th and 11th.

There were 13 unique winners in 2013 but with Brian Vickers not qualifying, four drivers secured spots in the playoff because of their points. There were no ties in any of the rounds of the playoff.

2011-2015_ ('14-'15 Playoffs)				2016_Playoffs			
Fin	Driver	Points	Diff.	Fin	Driver	Points	Diff.
1	Dale Earnhardt, Jr.	5041		1	Dale Earnhardt, Jr.	5038	
2	Jimmie Johnson	5035	-6	2	Jimmie Johnson	5032	-6
3	Kevin Harvick	5034	-7	3	Kevin Harvick	5031	-7
4	Jeff Gordon	5033	-8	4	Jeff Gordon	5030	-8
5	Matt Kenseth	2400	-2641	5	Matt Kenseth	2370	-2668
6	Kyle Busch	2364	-2677	6	Kyle Busch	2334	-2704
7	Clint Bowyer	2336	-2705	7	Clint Bowyer	2306	-2732
8	Joey Logano	2323	-2718	8	Joey Logano	2293	-2745
9	Greg Biffle	2321	-2720	9	Greg Biffle	2291	-2747
10	Martin Truex, Jr.	2310	-2731	10	Martin Truex, Jr.	2280	-2758
11	Kurt Busch	2309	-2732	11	Kurt Busch	2279	-2759
12	Ryan Newman	2289	-2752	12	Ryan Newman	2259	-2779
13	Kasey Kahne	2289	-2752	13	Kasey Kahne	2259	-2779
14	Carl Edwards	2282	-2759	14	Carl Edwards	2252	-2786
15	David Ragan	2147	-2894	15	David Ragan	2122	-2916
16	Tony Stewart	2003	-3038	16	Tony Stewart	2003	-3035
17	Brad Keselowski	1041	-4000	17	Brad Keselowski	936	-4102
18	Jamie McMurray	1007	-4034	18	Jamie McMurray	899	-4139
19	Paul Menard	949	-4092	19	Paul Menard	844	-4194
20	Aric Almirola	913	-4128	20	Aric Almirola	805	-4233

Driver	Top4s	Top10s	Top20s	AvgFin	FirstPlaceFinishes
Jimmie Johnson	6	6	6	1.33	4
Kevin Harvick	6	6	6	2.83	0
Matt Kenseth	4	6	6	3.17	0
Dale Earnhardt, Jr.	4	6	6	3.33	2
Kyle Busch	2	6	6	5.00	0
Jeff Gordon	2	6	6	5.50	0
Clint Bowyer	0	6	6	7.17	0
Joey Logano	0	6	6	8.33	0
Greg Biffle	0	5	6	9.50	0
Kurt Busch	0	4	6	10.00	0
Carl Edwards	0	1	6	11.67	0
Kasey Kahne	0	0	6	12.00	0
Ryan Newman	0	0	6	12.67	0
Martin Truex, Jr.	0	2	6	14.00	0
Brad Keselowski	0	0	6	14.50	0
Jamie McMurray	0	0	6	16.00	0
Paul Menard	0	0	6	17.67	0
Aric Almirola	0	0	6	18.67	0
Jeff Burton	0	0	4	20.00	0
Ricky Stenhouse, Jr.	0	0	4	20.17	0
David Ragan	0	0	2	22.83	0
Tony Stewart	0	0	2	26.17	0

2014

	1975-2003	2004-2006_Playoffs	2007-2010_Playoffs	2011-2015_ ('11-'13 Playoffs)	2011-2015_ ('14-'15 Playoffs)	2016_Playoffs	Recognized Champion
2014	Jeff Gordon	Joey Logano	Kevin Harvick	Joey Logano	Kevin Harvick	Kevin Harvick	Kevin Harvick

- Kevin Harvick had the highest average finish (1.83) in the playoffs, finishing 1st three different times
- Jeff Gordon had the best regular season and overall season average finish of 10 and 10.39, respectively
- Joey Logano had the best average finish in the playoff of 6.40
- Denny Hamlin's average year end finish standard deviation was 5.79. The average for the 56 drivers was 1.31

Biggest Benefactor:

- Gordon – He won the championship in the *1975-2003* system
- Logano – He would have been a champion two separate times, once in the *2004-2006_Playoffs* and again in the *2011-2015_ ('11-'13 Playoffs)*
- Ryan Newman – He was winless during the season but managed a 2nd place finish in the *2011-2015_ ('14-'15 Playoffs)* and *2016_Playoffs* systems.
- Hamlin – Even without a playoff win, Hamlin finished 3rd in the *2011-2015_ ('14-'15 Playoffs)* and *2016_Playoffs* systems. The best he did in other systems was 15th, three times.
- A.J. Allmendinger – Due to his win in the regular season, he makes the playoff and finishes 13th in *2011-2015_ ('14-'15 Playoffs)* and *2016_Playoffs*. He finished 22nd in the other four systems
- Aric Almirola – Due to his win in the regular season, he makes the playoff and finishes 16th in *2011-2015_ ('14-'15 Playoffs)* and *2016_Playoffs*. He finished 24th in the other four systems

Biggest Losers:

- Harvick – He is recognized as the '14 champion, but would have finished 2nd twice and 4th in other systems

1975-2003

How did Jeff Gordon win? Gordon's average finish was 10.39, which was 0.94 better than runner up Joey Logano. The average finish for the top-20 was 15.60. Gordon had four wins, which was third behind Kevin Harvick (5), Logano (5) and Brad Keselowski (6).

1975-2003

Fin	Driver	Points	Diff.
1	Jeff Gordon	5114	
2	Joey Logano	4965	-149
3	Brad Keselowski	4886	-228
4	Kevin Harvick	4857	-257
5	Dale Earnhardt, Jr.	4806	-308
6	Matt Kenseth	4709	-405
7	Ryan Newman	4621	-493
8	Jimmie Johnson	4483	-631
9	Kyle Larson	4482	-632
10	Carl Edwards	4384	-730
11	Jamie McMurray	4259	-855
12	Greg Biffle	4177	-937
13	Kyle Busch	4164	-950
14	Clint Bowyer	4156	-958
15	Denny Hamlin	4105	-1009
16	Kasey Kahne	4088	-1026
17	Paul Menard	4017	-1097
18	Austin Dillon	4011	-1103
19	Kurt Busch	3945	-1169
20	Brian Vickers	3934	-1180

2004-2006 Playoffs

How did Joey Logano win? Logano entered the playoff in 4th place. During the playoff he had two wins and had an average finish of 6.4, which was 1.6 better than runner-up Kevin Harvick. Prior to the playoff, Logano had a 119-point lead, after the playoff point reset, that lead was cut to 15 and during the playoff, Harvick outscored Logano by 11.

2004-2006_Playoffs

Fin	Driver	Points	Diff.
1	Joey Logano	6577	
2	Kevin Harvick	6573	-4
3	Brad Keselowski	6481	-96
4	Jeff Gordon	6461	-116
5	Ryan Newman	6428	-149
6	Matt Kenseth	6387	-190
7	Dale Earnhardt, Jr.	6262	-315
8	Carl Edwards	6187	-390
9	Jimmie Johnson	6174	-403
10	Clint Bowyer	6038	-539
11	Kyle Larson	4482	-2095
12	Jamie McMurray	4259	-2318
13	Greg Biffle	4177	-2400
14	Kyle Busch	4169	-2408
15	Denny Hamlin	4110	-2467
16	Kasey Kahne	4093	-2484
17	Paul Menard	4017	-2560
18	Austin Dillon	4011	-2566
19	Kurt Busch	3950	-2627
20	Brian Vickers	3934	-2643

2007-2010 Playoffs

How did Kevin Harvick win? Harvick had three playoff wins and an average finish during the playoff of 8.0, second best to Joey Logano's 6.4. Harvick began the playoff ten points behind Logano. During the playoff, Harvick scored 16 more points than Logano. The move to bonus points for winning helped propel Harvick to a championship because during the *2004-2006 Playoffs*, Logano started the playoff with a 15-point lead but still won because Harvick only scored 11 more points than Logano.

Harvick had one more win than Logano and started the playoff only behind by ten instead of 15 resulting in ten more points than Logano compared to the *2004-2006 Playoffs*.

2007-2010_Playoffs			
Fin	Driver	Points	Diff.
1	Kevin Harvick	6588	
2	Joey Logano	6582	-6
3	Brad Keselowski	6491	-97
4	Jeff Gordon	6446	-142
5	Ryan Newman	6418	-170
6	Matt Kenseth	6362	-226
7	Dale Earnhardt, Jr.	6252	-336
8	Carl Edwards	6192	-396
9	Jimmie Johnson	6179	-409
10	Greg Biffle	6055	-533
11	Clint Bowyer	6033	-555
12	Kasey Kahne	6018	-570
13	Kyle Larson	4482	-2106
14	Jamie McMurray	4259	-2329
15	Kyle Busch	4174	-2414
16	Denny Hamlin	4115	-2473
17	Paul Menard	4017	-2571
18	Austin Dillon	4011	-2577
19	Kurt Busch	3955	-2633
20	Brian Vickers	3934	-2654

2011-2015 ('11-'13 Playoffs)

How did Joey Logano win? Logano had three regular season wins, two playoff wins, his average finish during the playoff was 6.4 and he outscored all other drivers during the playoff. To begin the playoff, Logano started tied for 2nd, three points behind Brad Keselowski and three points ahead of Kevin Harvick. During the playoff, Logano outscored Harvick by four points, extending his lead.

Kasey Kahne ended the regular season 13th place and Kyle Busch ended the regular season in 17th. Both qualified for the playoffs because they each had a win during the regular season.

2011-2015_('11-'13 Playoffs)			
Fin	Driver	Points	Diff.
1	Joey Logano	2396	
2	Kevin Harvick	2389	-7
3	Brad Keselowski	2361	-35
4	Ryan Newman	2353	-43
5	Jeff Gordon	2348	-48
6	Matt Kenseth	2334	-62
7	Dale Earnhardt, Jr.	2301	-95
8	Carl Edwards	2288	-108
9	Kyle Busch	2282	-114
10	Jimmie Johnson	2274	-122
11	Greg Biffle	2247	-149
12	Kasey Kahne	2231	-165
13	Kyle Larson	1080	-1316
14	Jamie McMurray	1014	-1382
15	Denny Hamlin	987	-1409
16	Clint Bowyer	979	-1417
17	Austin Dillon	958	-1438
18	Paul Menard	944	-1452
19	Brian Vickers	921	-1475
20	Kurt Busch	911	-1485

2011-2015 ('14-'15 Playoffs) & 2016 Playoffs

How did Kevin Harvick win? Harvick had two regular season wins and three playoff wins including the last race of the year. His average finish during the season was 6th and during the playoff, Harvick had the 2nd best average finish. His average finish during the playoff was 4.92 better than his average during the season. Harvick finished the regular season 7th in points and after the playoff point reset, he began the playoff tied for 6th. After the first round, Harvick was 3rd in points. He had a win during round two which secured his spot in the third round. Harvick won again in the third round which put him in the final four. He won back to back races to close out the 2014 season winning Harvick the championship. Ryan Newman finished in 2nd during the final race of the year.

There were 13 unique winners during the 2014 season, which meant that there were three drivers who qualified based on their points. Kevin Harvick and Jeff Gordon were tied after the third round of the playoff. Harvick won a race during the round which automatically qualified him for the final four. Gordon's best finish during the round was 2nd.

2011-2015_ ('14-'15 Playoffs)				2016_Playoffs			
Fin	Driver	Points	Diff.	Fin	Driver	Points	Diff.
1	Kevin Harvick	5043		1	Kevin Harvick	5040	
2	Ryan Newman	5042	-1	2	Ryan Newman	5039	-1
3	Denny Hamlin	5037	-6	3	Denny Hamlin	5034	-6
4	Joey Logano	5028	-15	4	Joey Logano	5025	-15
5	Brad Keselowski	2361	-2682	5	Brad Keselowski	2331	-2709
6	Jeff Gordon	2348	-2695	6	Jeff Gordon	2318	-2722
7	Matt Kenseth	2334	-2709	7	Matt Kenseth	2304	-2736
8	Dale Earnhardt, Jr.	2301	-2742	8	Dale Earnhardt, Jr.	2271	-2769
9	Carl Edwards	2288	-2755	9	Carl Edwards	2258	-2782
10	Kyle Busch	2285	-2758	10	Kyle Busch	2255	-2785
11	Jimmie Johnson	2274	-2769	11	Jimmie Johnson	2244	-2796
12	Kurt Busch	2263	-2780	12	Kurt Busch	2235	-2805
13	A.J. Allmendinger	2260	-2783	13	A.J. Allmendinger	2230	-2810
14	Greg Biffle	2247	-2796	14	Greg Biffle	2218	-2822
15	Kasey Kahne	2234	-2809	15	Kasey Kahne	2204	-2836
16	Aric Almirola	2195	-2848	16	Aric Almirola	2166	-2874
17	Kyle Larson	1080	-3963	17	Kyle Larson	975	-4065
18	Jamie McMurray	1014	-4029	18	Jamie McMurray	908	-4132
19	Clint Bowyer	979	-4064	19	Clint Bowyer	879	-4161
20	Austin Dillon	958	-4085	20	Austin Dillon	850	-4190

Driver	Top4s	Top10s	Top20s	AvgFin	FirstPlaceFinishes
Kevin Harvick	6	6	6	1.83	3
Joey Logano	6	6	6	2.33	2
Brad Keselowski	4	6	6	3.67	0
Ryan Newman	3	6	6	4.17	0
Jeff Gordon	3	6	6	4.33	1
Matt Kenseth	0	6	6	6.33	0
Dale Earnhardt, Jr.	0	6	6	7.00	0
Carl Edwards	0	6	6	8.67	0
Jimmie Johnson	0	4	6	9.67	0
Denny Hamlin	2	2	6	11.17	0
Kyle Busch	0	3	6	11.83	0
Greg Biffle	0	1	6	12.33	0
Kyle Larson	0	1	6	13.33	0
Kasey Kahne	0	0	6	14.33	0
Jamie McMurray	0	0	6	14.50	0
Clint Bowyer	0	1	6	14.83	0
Kurt Busch	0	0	6	16.83	0
Austin Dillon	0	0	6	18.50	0
Paul Menard	0	0	4	18.50	0
A.J. Allmendinger	0	0	2	19.00	0
Brian Vickers	0	0	4	20.50	0
Aric Almirola	0	0	2	21.33	0

2015

	1975-2003	2004-2006_Playoffs	2007-2010_Playoffs	2011-2015_('11-'13 Playoffs)	2011-2015_('14-'15 Playoffs)	2016_Playoffs	Recognized Champion
2015	Kevin Harvick	Joey Logano	Joey Logano	Carl Edwards	Kyle Busch	Kyle Busch	Kyle Busch

- Kyle Busch missed the first 11 races of the season
- Matt Kenseth missed two playoff races during round three which he qualified for
- Kevin Harvick had the highest average finish (2.5) in the playoffs, finishing 1st once
- Harvick had the best regular season and overall season average finish of 7.69 and 8.67, respectively
- Jeff Gordon had the best average finish in the playoff of 7.60
- Kyle Busch's average year end finish standard deviation was 9.32. The average for the 51 drivers was 0.94

Biggest Benefactor:

- Busch – With four wins during the regular season in only 15 races, he qualified for *2011-2015_('14-'15 Playoffs)* and *2016_Playoffs*. His win in the last race of year secured a championship. In other systems, he would have had three 21st place finishes and one 20th.
- Carl Edwards – Had the *2011-2015_('11-'13 Playoffs)* been around in 2015, Edwards would have a championship.
- Joey Logano – He is recognized as the 6th place finisher in the '15 season but would have won two separate championships, one in *2004-2006_Playoffs* and another in *2007-2010_Playoffs*
- Gordon – By far the most interesting case that has occurred in this analysis. Gordon finished 8th in the *1975-2003* system. He finished 11th in the *2004-2006_Playoffs* system, missing the playoff 29 points. However, when the playoff expanded to include the top 12 drivers, he snuck in and finished 2nd in the *2007-2010_Playoffs system*. Due to the point system changing, he ended up finishing 13th and missing the playoff in the *2011-2015_('11-'13 Playoffs)*. Lastly, although he didn't have a regular season win, the expansion to 16 drivers in the playoff helped him in the *2011-2015_('14-'15 Playoffs)* and *2016_Playoffs* systems and his playoff win allowed him to finish 3rd in both those systems
- Austin Dillon – While he has a recognized 21st place finish, he would have finished 20th in three other systems

Biggest Losers:

- The field sans Kyle Busch – He made the playoff based on winning in the regular season. He would have never made it on points finishing 21st for the year in points (not including the playoff). Had he not been included, all drivers in the top-20 finish a position better with Harvick winning the recognized championship with Dillon claiming a top-20 spot

1975-2003

How did Kevin Harvick win? Harvick finished the season with an average finish of 8.67, which was 0.50 better than Joey Logano. The average finish for the top-20 was 14.34. Harvick also finished the year tied for fifth in wins with three.

1975-2003

Fin	Driver	Points	Diff.
1	Kevin Harvick	5429	
2	Joey Logano	5273	-156
3	Brad Keselowski	4974	-455
4	Dale Earnhardt, Jr.	4905	-524
5	Martin Truex, Jr.	4769	-660
6	Jimmie Johnson	4762	-667
7	Denny Hamlin	4648	-781
8	Jeff Gordon	4574	-855
9	Carl Edwards	4563	-866
10	Kurt Busch	4494	-935
11	Matt Kenseth	4356	-1073
12	Jamie McMurray	4341	-1088
13	Ryan Newman	4260	-1169
14	Paul Menard	4069	-1360
15	Kasey Kahne	3998	-1431
16	Aric Almirola	3964	-1465
17	Clint Bowyer	3783	-1646
18	Greg Biffle	3763	-1666
19	Kyle Larson	3755	-1674
20	Austin Dillon	3643	-1786

2004-2006 Playoffs

How did Joey Logano win? Logano had three wins during the playoffs, but only had the 6th best average finish. Logano entered the playoff in 2nd place and he scored the highest amount of points during the playoff, besting Carl Edwards, who entered the playoff in 10th, by one point. Kevin Harvick began the playoff with a five-point lead over Logano, but during the playoff, Logano outscored Harvick by 22 points. Jeff Gordon who finished 11th, had the most points during the playoff, besting Logano by 34.

2004-2006_Playoffs

Fin	Driver	Points	Diff.
1	Joey Logano	6494	
2	Kevin Harvick	6477	-17
3	Carl Edwards	6453	-41
4	Brad Keselowski	6435	-59
5	Martin Truex, Jr.	6405	-89
6	Denny Hamlin	6366	-128
7	Kurt Busch	6342	-152
8	Dale Earnhardt, Jr.	6317	-177
9	Jimmie Johnson	6295	-199
10	Matt Kenseth	5979	-515
11	Jeff Gordon	4579	-1915
12	Jamie McMurray	4341	-2153
13	Ryan Newman	4260	-2234
14	Paul Menard	4069	-2425
15	Kasey Kahne	3998	-2496
16	Aric Almirola	3964	-2530
17	Clint Bowyer	3783	-2711
18	Greg Biffle	3763	-2731
19	Kyle Larson	3755	-2739
20	Austin Dillon	3643	-2851

2007-2010 Playoffs

How did Joey Logano win? Logano started the playoff 3rd, he had the 6th best average finish and scored the 2nd most points during the playoff. Logano had a 30-point lead over Gordon and a ten point lead over Carl Edwards. During the playoff, Gordon scored 24 more points than Logano, but still fell six points short. Logano expanded his lead on Edwards by scoring 16 more points during the playoff.

2007-2010_Playoffs

Fin	Driver	Points	Diff.
1	Joey Logano	6494	
2	Jeff Gordon	6488	-6
3	Carl Edwards	6468	-26
4	Kevin Harvick	6452	-42
5	Brad Keselowski	6410	-84
6	Martin Truex, Jr.	6395	-99
7	Denny Hamlin	6366	-128
8	Kurt Busch	6352	-142
9	Jimmie Johnson	6310	-184
10	Dale Earnhardt, Jr.	6302	-192
11	Jamie McMurray	6218	-276
12	Matt Kenseth	5999	-495
13	Ryan Newman	4260	-2234
14	Paul Menard	4069	-2425
15	Kasey Kahne	3998	-2496
16	Aric Almirola	3964	-2530
17	Clint Bowyer	3783	-2711
18	Greg Biffle	3763	-2731
19	Kyle Larson	3755	-2739
20	Austin Dillon	3643	-2851

2011-2015 ('11-'13 Playoffs)

How did Carl Edwards win? Logano had three regular season wins while Carl Edwards had 2. However, Edwards ended the season in 11th place in points so that means that he was not awarded six bonus points to start the playoff allowing Logano to get a 9-point head start. During the playoff, Logano win three time while Edwards recorded no wins. Edwards had the better average finish during the playoff, besting Logano by 2.3 and he outscored Logano during the playoff by 11 points.

2011-2015_('11-'13 Playoffs)

Fin	Driver	Points	Diff.
1	Carl Edwards	2362	
2	Joey Logano	2360	-2
3	Martin Truex, Jr.	2350	-12
4	Kevin Harvick	2349	-13
5	Brad Keselowski	2347	-15
6	Kurt Busch	2333	-29
7	Denny Hamlin	2327	-35
8	Jimmie Johnson	2315	-47
9	Ryan Newman	2314	-48
10	Dale Earnhardt, Jr.	2310	-52
11	Jamie McMurray	2295	-67
12	Matt Kenseth	2234	-128
13	Jeff Gordon	1110	-1252
14	Paul Menard	972	-1390
15	Aric Almirola	940	-1422
16	Kasey Kahne	939	-1423
17	Clint Bowyer	890	-1472
18	Kyle Larson	872	-1490
19	Greg Biffle	869	-1493
20	Kyle Busch	867	-1495

2011-2015 ('14-'15 Playoffs) & 2016 Playoffs

How did Kyle Busch win? Busch won four times in the regular season and won one race during the playoff which was the last race of the year. Busch missed the first 11 races of the year which meant he won a quarter of the regular season races he entered. His average finish during the season was 4th best (25 races) and during the playoff, he had the 4th best average finish. Busch finished the regular season in 25th position but because of his four wins, he qualified for the playoff. After the playoff point

reset, Busch started the playoff tied for 1st. Busch finished tied for 9th after the first round and after the second round, he was in 8th position, three points ahead of Ryan Newman who was cut after the round. Busch had three top-5s during round three securing his place in the final four. Busch won the final race of the season with Kevin Harvick coming in 2nd.

There were 11 unique winners in 2015 which allowed five drivers to qualify for the playoff based off their points. Dale Earnhardt Jr. and Jamie McMurray were tied after round one. Earnhardt Jr.'s best finish during round one was 3rd while McMurray's best finish was 4th. Earnhardt Jr. moved on to the second round of the playoffs.

Fin	Driver	Points	Diff.	2016_Playoffs			
				Fin	Driver	Points	Diff.
1	Kyle Busch	5043		1	Kyle Busch	5040	
2	Kevin Harvick	5042	-1	2	Kevin Harvick	5039	-1
3	Jeff Gordon	5038	-5	3	Jeff Gordon	5035	-5
4	Martin Truex, Jr.	5032	-11	4	Martin Truex, Jr.	5029	-11
5	Carl Edwards	2368	-2675	5	Carl Edwards	2338	-2702
6	Joey Logano	2360	-2683	6	Joey Logano	2330	-2710
7	Brad Keselowski	2347	-2696	7	Brad Keselowski	2317	-2723
8	Kurt Busch	2333	-2710	8	Kurt Busch	2303	-2737
9	Denny Hamlin	2327	-2716	9	Denny Hamlin	2297	-2743
10	Jimmie Johnson	2315	-2728	10	Jimmie Johnson	2286	-2754
11	Ryan Newman	2314	-2729	11	Ryan Newman	2284	-2756
12	Dale Earnhardt, Jr.	2310	-2733	12	Dale Earnhardt, Jr.	2280	-2760
13	Jamie McMurray	2295	-2748	13	Jamie McMurray	2265	-2775
14	Paul Menard	2262	-2781	14	Paul Menard	2232	-2808
15	Matt Kenseth	2234	-2809	15	Matt Kenseth	2212	-2828
16	Clint Bowyer	2174	-2869	16	Clint Bowyer	2153	-2887
17	Aric Almirola	940	-4103	17	Aric Almirola	839	-4201
18	Kasey Kahne	939	-4104	18	Kasey Kahne	839	-4201
19	Kyle Larson	872	-4171	19	Kyle Larson	770	-4270
20	Greg Biffle	869	-4174	20	Greg Biffle	761	-4279

Driver	Top4s	Top10s	Top20s	AvgFin	FirstPlaceFinishes
Kevin Harvick	6	6	6	2.50	1
Joey Logano	4	6	6	3.00	2
Carl Edwards	3	6	6	4.33	1
Martin Truex, Jr.	3	6	6	4.50	0
Brad Keselowski	2	6	6	5.17	0
Jeff Gordon	3	4	6	6.67	0
Denny Hamlin	0	6	6	7.50	0
Kurt Busch	0	6	6	7.83	0
Jimmie Johnson	0	6	6	8.67	0
Dale Earnhardt, Jr.	1	4	6	9.33	0
Ryan Newman	0	1	6	11.67	0
Jamie McMurray	0	0	6	12.00	0
Matt Kenseth	0	1	6	12.50	0
Paul Menard	0	0	6	14.00	0
Kyle Busch	2	2	3	14.17	2
Kasey Kahne	0	0	6	16.00	0
Aric Almirola	0	0	6	16.17	0
Clint Bowyer	0	0	6	16.67	0
Kyle Larson	0	0	6	18.83	0
Greg Biffle	0	0	6	18.83	0
Austin Dillon	0	0	3	20.50	0

2016

	1975-2003	2004-2006_Playoffs	2007-2010_Playoffs	2011-2015_('11-'13 Playoffs)	2011-2015_('14-'15 Playoffs)	2016_Playoffs	Recognized Champion
2016	Kevin Harvick	Joey Logano	Kyle Busch	Kyle Busch	Jimmie Johnson	Jimmie Johnson	Jimmie Johnson

- Tony Stewart missed the first eight races of the season due to a pre-season back injury.
- Joey Logano had the highest average finish (1.83) in the playoffs, finishing 1st once
- Kevin Harvick had the best regular season and overall season average finish of 8.46 and 9.92, respectively
- Kyle Busch had the best average finish in the playoff of 7.20
- Carl Edwards's average year end finish standard deviation was 3.21. The average for the 51 drivers was 1.06

Biggest Benefactor:

- Logano – He would have won the championship in the *2004-2006_Playoffs* system
- Busch – He would have won two championships, one in the *2007-2010_Playoffs* and the *2011-2015_('11-'13 Playoffs)*
- Harvick – In the *1975-2003* system, Harvick would have won the championship
- Brad Keselowski – The playoff didn't treat him well. He had no wins and his average finish was 4.63 worse than his season average. He has a recognized finish of 12th for the '16 season, but in the *1975-2003* system, he would have finished 4th.

Biggest Losers:

- Jimmie Johnson – He is the recognized champion for the '16 season, but in four other systems he would have had three 3rd place finishes and an 8th place finish in the *1975-2003* system
- Edwards – His only top fours came during the *2011-2015_('14-'15 Playoffs)* and *2016_Playoffs*. His best finish on the other four systems was 7th

1975-2003

How did Kevin Harvick win? Harvick had an average finish of 9.92, which was 0.61 better than runner up Joey Logano. Harvick was tied for second in wins with four. The average finish for the top-20 was 15.05.

1975-2003

Fin	Driver	Points	Diff.
1	Kevin Harvick	5161	
2	Joey Logano	5073	-88
3	Kyle Busch	5005	-156
4	Brad Keselowski	4897	-264
5	Denny Hamlin	4881	-280
6	Kurt Busch	4727	-434
7	Carl Edwards	4611	-550
8	Jimmie Johnson	4609	-552
9	Matt Kenseth	4578	-583
10	Martin Truex, Jr.	4574	-587
11	Chase Elliott	4487	-674
12	Kyle Larson	4339	-822
13	Austin Dillon	4213	-948
14	Jamie McMurray	4206	-955
15	Kasey Kahne	4173	-988
16	Ryan Newman	4137	-1024
17	A.J. Allmendinger	3949	-1212
18	Ryan Blaney	3920	-1241
19	Ricky Stenhouse, Jr.	3794	-1367
20	Trevor Bayne	3752	-1409

2004-2006 Playoffs

How did Joey Logano win? Logano had two wins and the second-best average finish during the playoff behind Kyle Busch. With that said, Logano entered the playoff in 3rd place with a 10-point lead over Busch. During the playoff, Logano outscored Busch by 18 points.

2004-2006_Playoffs

Fin	Driver	Points	Diff.
1	Joey Logano	6583	
2	Kyle Busch	6555	-28
3	Jimmie Johnson	6438	-145
4	Denny Hamlin	6419	-164
5	Kevin Harvick	6358	-225
6	Kurt Busch	6327	-256
7	Chase Elliott	6305	-278
8	Martin Truex, Jr.	6267	-316
9	Brad Keselowski	6264	-319
10	Carl Edwards	6214	-369
11	Matt Kenseth	4586	-1997
12	Kyle Larson	4344	-2239
13	Austin Dillon	4213	-2370
14	Jamie McMurray	4206	-2377
15	Kasey Kahne	4173	-2410
16	Ryan Newman	4137	-2446
17	A.J. Allmendinger	3949	-2634
18	Ryan Blaney	3920	-2663
19	Ricky Stenhouse, Jr.	3794	-2789
20	Trevor Bayne	3752	-2831

2007-2010 Playoffs

How did Kyle Busch win? Busch had four regular season wins, no playoff wins but his average finish during the playoff was best at 7.2, which was 0.30 better than Joey Logano. Logano outscored Busch during the playoff by 28 points. What allowed Busch to win was that because of his four regular season wins, he started the playoff with 40 bonus points, 30 points better than Logano. Whereas in the *2004-2006_Playoffs*, Logano started the playoffs with a ten-point lead over Busch

2007-2010_Playoffs

Fin	Driver	Points	Diff.
1	Kyle Busch	6565	
2	Joey Logano	6563	-2
3	Jimmie Johnson	6463	-102
4	Matt Kenseth	6462	-103
5	Denny Hamlin	6414	-151
6	Kevin Harvick	6338	-227
7	Kurt Busch	6317	-248
8	Chase Elliott	6300	-265
9	Martin Truex, Jr.	6282	-283
10	Brad Keselowski	6259	-306
11	Carl Edwards	6214	-351
12	Austin Dillon	6085	-480
13	Kyle Larson	4349	-2216
14	Jamie McMurray	4206	-2359
15	Kasey Kahne	4173	-2392
16	Ryan Newman	4137	-2428
17	A.J. Allmendinger	3949	-2616
18	Ryan Blaney	3920	-2645
19	Ricky Stenhouse, Jr.	3794	-2771
20	Trevor Bayne	3752	-2813

2011-2015 ('11-'13 Playoffs)

How did Kyle Busch win? Busch won four regular season races which was tied for first. Busch started the playoff with a nine-point lead over Joey Logano. During the playoff, Busch had a better average finish than Logano even though Logano won two playoff races compared to zero for Busch. Logano outscored Busch by four points during the playoff.

Matt Kenseth ended the regular season 13th in points while Kyle Larson ended the regular season 14th in points. However, they both won at least one race unlike the two drivers finishing ahead of them.

2011-2015_('11-'13 Playoffs)			
Fin	Driver	Points	Diff.
1	Kyle Busch	2388	
2	Joey Logano	2383	-5
3	Jimmie Johnson	2357	-31
4	Matt Kenseth	2354	-34
5	Denny Hamlin	2350	-38
6	Kurt Busch	2326	-62
7	Kevin Harvick	2319	-69
8	Chase Elliott	2315	-73
9	Kyle Larson	2315	-73
10	Martin Truex, Jr.	2301	-87
11	Brad Keselowski	2297	-91
12	Carl Edwards	2286	-102
13	Jamie McMurray	1015	-1373
14	Austin Dillon	1009	-1379
15	Kasey Kahne	1005	-1383
16	Ryan Newman	1000	-1388
17	A.J. Allmendinger	936	-1452
18	Ryan Blaney	920	-1468
19	Ricky Stenhouse, Jr.	880	-1508
20	Trevor Bayne	870	-1518

2011-2015 ('14-'15 Playoffs) & 2016 Playoffs

How did Jimmie Johnson win? Johnson had two regular season wins and three playoff wins including the last race of the year. He had the 10th best average finish during the season and during the playoff, his average finish was tied for the 4th best. Johnson finished the regular season in 9th position and after the playoff point reset, he began the playoff tied for 4th. After the first round of the playoff, Johnson finished 7th. Johnson won a race in the second round and the third round so by timely wins, he was able to reach the final four. His 4th win of the playoff came during the final race of the year which won him the championship.

There were 13 unique winners during the 2016 which means there were three drivers who qualified for the playoff based on their points. Denny Hamlin and Austin Dillon were tied after the second round of the playoff. Hamlin's best finish was 3rd and Dillon's best finish was 6th which means Hamlin moved on to the third round.

2011-2015_ ('14-'15 Playoffs)				2016_Playoffs			
Fin	Driver	Points	Diff.	Fin	Driver	Points	Diff.
1	Jimmie Johnson	5043		1	Jimmie Johnson	5040	
2	Joey Logano	5040	-3	2	Joey Logano	5037	-3
3	Kyle Busch	5038	-5	3	Kyle Busch	5035	-5
4	Carl Edwards	5010	-33	4	Carl Edwards	5007	-33
5	Matt Kenseth	2360	-2683	5	Matt Kenseth	2330	-2710
6	Denny Hamlin	2350	-2693	6	Denny Hamlin	2320	-2720
7	Kurt Busch	2326	-2717	7	Kurt Busch	2296	-2744
8	Kevin Harvick	2319	-2724	8	Kevin Harvick	2289	-2751
9	Kyle Larson	2318	-2725	9	Kyle Larson	2288	-2752
10	Chase Elliott	2315	-2728	10	Chase Elliott	2285	-2755
11	Martin Truex, Jr.	2301	-2742	11	Martin Truex, Jr.	2271	-2769
12	Brad Keselowski	2297	-2746	12	Brad Keselowski	2267	-2773
13	Jamie McMurray	2261	-2782	13	Jamie McMurray	2231	-2809
14	Austin Dillon	2253	-2790	14	Austin Dillon	2223	-2817
15	Tony Stewart	2241	-2802	15	Tony Stewart	2211	-2829
16	Chris Buescher	2199	-2844	16	Chris Buescher	2169	-2871
17	Kasey Kahne	1005	-4038	17	Kasey Kahne	898	-4142
18	Ryan Newman	1000	-4043	18	Ryan Newman	895	-4145
19	A.J. Allmendinger	936	-4107	19	A.J. Allmendinger	830	-4210
20	Ryan Blaney	920	-4123	20	Ryan Blaney	812	-4228

Driver	Top4s	Top10s	Top20s	AvgFin	FirstPlaceFinishes
Joey Logano	6	6	6	1.83	1
Kyle Busch	6	6	6	2.17	2
Jimmie Johnson	5	6	6	3.17	2
Denny Hamlin	1	6	6	5.17	0
Kevin Harvick	1	6	6	5.83	1
Matt Kenseth	2	5	6	6.33	0
Kurt Busch	0	6	6	6.50	0
Carl Edwards	2	4	6	8.00	0
Chase Elliott	0	5	6	9.00	0
Brad Keselowski	1	3	6	9.67	0
Martin Truex, Jr.	0	4	6	9.83	0
Kyle Larson	0	3	6	10.50	0
Austin Dillon	0	0	6	13.33	0
Jamie McMurray	0	0	6	13.50	0
Kasey Kahne	0	0	6	15.67	0
Ryan Newman	0	0	6	16.67	0
A.J. Allmendinger	0	0	6	17.67	0
Ryan Blaney	0	0	6	18.67	0
Ricky Stenhouse, Jr.	0	0	4	19.67	0
Trevor Bayne	0	0	4	20.67	0
Tony Stewart	0	0	2	22.67	0
Chris Buescher	0	0	2	24.00	0

2017

	1975-2003	2004-2006_Playoffs	2007-2010_Playoffs	2011-2015_ ('11-'13 Playoffs)	2011-2015_ ('14-'15 Playoffs)	2016_Playoffs	Recognized Champion
2017	Martin Truex Jr.	Martin Truex Jr.	Martin Truex Jr.	Martin Truex Jr.	Martin Truex Jr.	Martin Truex Jr.	Martin Truex Jr.

- Martin Truex Jr. won in all six systems, the only driver to do so between 2001-2019
- With the introduction of Stage racing, there are now technically seven different playoff systems but only the original six will be discussed except in certain circumstances
- Truex Jr. had the highest average finish (1.00) in the playoffs, finishing 1st seven different times
- Truex Jr. had the best average finish in the regular season, the playoff and the overall season of 11.38, 4.30 and 9.42, respectively
- Ryan Blaney's average year end finish standard deviation was 5.47. The average for the 48 drivers was 1.24

Biggest Benefactor:

- Joey Logano – He would have finished 8th in the *2011-2015_('14-'15 Playoffs) and 2016_Playoffs* systems instead of his recognized 17th place finish for the '16 season
- Blaney – He didn't have a playoff win, but based on points, he would have finished 4th in the *2011-2015_('14-'15 Playoffs) and 2016_Playoffs* systems
- Chase Elliott – With no wins during the entire season, he would have finished 2nd in the *2011-2015_('14-'15 Playoffs) and 2016_Playoffs* systems

Biggest Losers:

- Kyle Busch – He is recognized with a 2nd place finish for the '17 season but in the other systems he had two 3rd place finishes, a 4th and two 5th place finishes
- Matt Kenseth – He was winless during the season but has a recognized 7th place finish for the '16 season. In four other systems, he would have finished outside of the top ten and in the *2011-2015_('14-'15 Playoffs) and 2016_Playoffs*, he would have missed the playoff finishing 17th

1975-2003

How did Martin Truex Jr. win? Truex Jr. had the best average finish and he was tied for first with wins. His average finish was 9.42, which was 2.11 better than runner up Kyle Busch. During the last ten races of the year, his average finish was 4.30. 37th was his worst finish, which was also tied for first.

1975-2003

Fin	Driver	Points	Diff.
1	Martin Truex, Jr.	5293	
2	Kyle Busch	5014	-279
3	Kevin Harvick	4887	-406
4	Denny Hamlin	4808	-485
5	Chase Elliott	4749	-544
6	Brad Keselowski	4716	-577
7	Kyle Larson	4642	-651
8	Matt Kenseth	4510	-783
9	Jamie McMurray	4383	-910
10	Joey Logano	4320	-973
11	Ryan Newman	4297	-996
12	Clint Bowyer	4261	-1032
13	Kurt Busch	4217	-1076
14	Daniel Suarez	4197	-1096
15	Jimmie Johnson	4187	-1106
16	Ryan Blaney	4134	-1159
17	Ricky Stenhouse, Jr.	4116	-1177
18	Erik Jones	4019	-1274
19	Austin Dillon	3908	-1385
20	Kasey Kahne	3838	-1455

2004-2006 Playoffs

How did Martin Truex Jr. win? Truex Jr. had an average finish during the playoff of 4.3 with four wins. He had nine top-5s and 23rd place finish. He entered the playoff in 1st, 57 points better than Kyle Busch who entered the playoff in 2nd and 400 points better than Brad Keselowski who was the runner-up. During the playoff, Truex Jr. had 1,674 points, 202 points better than Keselowski.

2004-2006_Playoffs

Fin	Driver	Points	Diff.
1	Martin Truex, Jr.	6724	
2	Brad Keselowski	6492	-232
3	Kyle Busch	6482	-242
4	Chase Elliott	6479	-245
5	Kevin Harvick	6452	-272
6	Denny Hamlin	6387	-337
7	Kyle Larson	6171	-553
8	Jamie McMurray	6139	-585
9	Ryan Newman	6100	-624
10	Clint Bowyer	6093	-631
11	Matt Kenseth	4515	-2209
12	Joey Logano	4322	-2402
13	Kurt Busch	4222	-2502
14	Jimmie Johnson	4202	-2522
15	Daniel Suarez	4197	-2527
16	Ryan Blaney	4139	-2585
17	Ricky Stenhouse, Jr.	4126	-2598
18	Erik Jones	4019	-2705
19	Austin Dillon	3913	-2811
20	Kasey Kahne	3843	-2881

2007-2010 Playoffs

How did Martin Truex Jr. win? Truex Jr. had four regular season wins, four playoff wins, his average finish during the playoffs was 4.3, which was 3.8 better than runner-up Brad Keselowski. During the playoffs, Truex Jr. had nine top-5 and a 23rd place finish. Truex Jr. started the playoff tied for 1st and had a 20-point lead over Keselowski. During the playoff, Truex Jr. led all drivers in points while outscoring Keselowski by 217 points.

2007-2010_Playoffs

Fin	Driver	Points	Diff.
1	Martin Truex, Jr.	6734	
2	Brad Keselowski	6497	-237
3	Kyle Busch	6472	-262
4	Chase Elliott	6454	-280
5	Kevin Harvick	6432	-302
6	Denny Hamlin	6377	-357
7	Matt Kenseth	6376	-358
8	Kyle Larson	6171	-563
9	Jamie McMurray	6124	-610
10	Ryan Newman	6100	-634
11	Clint Bowyer	6088	-646
12	Kurt Busch	6068	-666
13	Joey Logano	4324	-2410
14	Jimmie Johnson	4217	-2517
15	Daniel Suarez	4197	-2537
16	Ryan Blaney	4144	-2590
17	Ricky Stenhouse, Jr.	4136	-2598
18	Erik Jones	4019	-2715
19	Austin Dillon	3918	-2816
20	Kasey Kahne	3848	-2886

2011-2015 ('11-'13 Playoffs)

How did Martin Truex Jr. win? Truex Jr. had four regular season wins, four playoff wins, his average finish during the playoffs was 4.3, which was 3.8 better than runner-up Brad Keselowski. During the playoffs, Truex Jr. had nine top-5 and a 23rd place finish. Truex Jr. started the playoff with a 6-point lead over Keselowski which was extended by another 49 points. Truex Jr. outscored all other drivers during the playoff.

Jimmie Johnson finished the regular season in 14th place and Ricky Stenhouse Jr. finished the season in 17th. Both drivers qualified for the playoff because even though there were drivers ahead of them with wins, Johnson had three and Stenhouse Jr. had two during the regular season.

2011-2015_ ('11-'13 Playoffs)

Fin	Driver	Points	Diff.
1	Martin Truex, Jr.	2429	
2	Brad Keselowski	2374	-55
3	Chase Elliott	2357	-72
4	Kyle Busch	2356	-73
5	Kevin Harvick	2349	-80
6	Denny Hamlin	2334	-95
7	Jimmie Johnson	2271	-158
8	Ricky Stenhouse, Jr.	2269	-160
9	Kyle Larson	2268	-161
10	Jamie McMurray	2265	-164
11	Clint Bowyer	2257	-172
12	Ryan Newman	2257	-172
13	Matt Kenseth	1086	-1343
14	Joey Logano	1027	-1402
15	Daniel Suarez	1005	-1424
16	Kurt Busch	1000	-1429
17	Ryan Blaney	977	-1452
18	Erik Jones	946	-1483
19	Austin Dillon	920	-1509
20	Kasey Kahne	893	-1536

2011-2015 ('14-'15 Playoffs) & 2016 Playoffs

How did Martin Truex Jr. win? Truex Jr. won four races during the regular season and four races during the playoff including the final race of the season. He had an average finish during the season of 9.42 and during the playoff, he had an average finish of 4.3, both were best of all drivers. He finished the regular season in 1st place and began the playoff tied for 1st with Kyle Larson. Truex Jr. won once during the first round and twice during round two. During the third round, he had finishes of 2nd, 2nd and 3rd, earning enough points to qualify for the final race. He won the final race with runner-up Chase Elliott finishing 5th.

There were 14 unique winners during the 2017 season, which allowed for two drivers to qualify for the playoff based on their points. There were no ties during any of the playoff rounds.

2011-2015_('14-'15 Playoffs)				2016_Playoffs			
Fin	Driver	Points	Diff.	Fin	Driver	Points	Diff.
1	Martin Truex, Jr.	5043		1	Martin Truex, Jr.	5040	
2	Chase Elliott	5039	-4	2	Chase Elliott	5036	-4
3	Brad Keselowski	5037	-6	3	Brad Keselowski	5034	-6
4	Ryan Blaney	5015	-28	4	Ryan Blaney	5012	-28
5	Kyle Busch	2356	-2687	5	Kyle Busch	2326	-2714
6	Kevin Harvick	2349	-2694	6	Kevin Harvick	2319	-2721
7	Denny Hamlin	2334	-2709	7	Denny Hamlin	2304	-2736
8	Joey Logano	2315	-2728	8	Joey Logano	2285	-2755
9	Austin Dillon	2282	-2761	9	Austin Dillon	2252	-2788
10	Jimmie Johnson	2280	-2763	10	Jimmie Johnson	2250	-2790
11	Ricky Stenhouse, Jr.	2275	-2768	11	Ricky Stenhouse, Jr.	2245	-2795
12	Kyle Larson	2268	-2775	12	Kyle Larson	2238	-2802
13	Jamie McMurray	2265	-2778	13	Jamie McMurray	2235	-2805
14	Kasey Kahne	2265	-2778	14	Kasey Kahne	2235	-2805
15	Ryan Newman	2257	-2786	15	Ryan Newman	2227	-2813
16	Kurt Busch	2246	-2797	16	Kurt Busch	2216	-2824
17	Matt Kenseth	1086	-3957	17	Matt Kenseth	978	-4062
18	Clint Bowyer	1019	-4024	18	Clint Bowyer	912	-4128
19	Daniel Suarez	1005	-4038	19	Daniel Suarez	897	-4143
20	Erik Jones	946	-4097	20	Erik Jones	841	-4199

Driver	Top4s	Top10s	Top20s	AvgFin	FirstPlaceFinishes
Martin Truex, Jr.	7	7	7	1.00	7
Brad Keselowski	6	7	7	3.00	0
Chase Elliott	5	7	7	3.33	0
Kyle Busch	5	7	7	3.67	0
Kevin Harvick	2	7	7	5.00	0
Denny Hamlin	1	7	7	6.00	0
Kyle Larson	0	5	7	9.17	0
Jamie McMurray	0	4	7	10.33	0
Joey Logano	0	3	7	10.83	0
Jimmie Johnson	0	4	7	11.67	0
Ryan Newman	0	2	7	12.00	0
Matt Kenseth	0	3	7	12.17	0
Ryan Blaney	2	3	7	12.17	0
Clint Bowyer	0	1	7	13.33	0
Ricky Stenhouse, Jr.	0	1	7	13.50	0
Kurt Busch	0	0	7	14.33	0
Austin Dillon	0	2	7	15.67	0
Daniel Suarez	0	0	7	16.17	0
Kasey Kahne	0	0	7	17.67	0
Erik Jones	0	0	7	18.67	0

2018

	1975-2003	2004-2006_Playoffs	2007-2010_Playoffs	2011-2015_('11-'13 Playoffs)	2011-2015_('14-'15 Playoffs)	2016_Playoffs	Recognized Champion
2018	Kyle Busch	Joey Logano	Joey Logano	Joey Logano	Joey Logano	Joey Logano	Joey Logano

- Joey Logano had the highest average finish (1.50) in the playoffs, finishing 1st five different times
- Kyle Busch had the best regular season and overall season average finish of 7.58 and 8.31, respectively
- Logano and Aric Almirola had the best average finish in the playoff of 8.6
- Almirola's average year end finish standard deviation was 3.16. The average for the 50 drivers was 0.75

Biggest Benefactor:

- Kyle Busch – He would have won a championship in the 1975-2003 system

- Brad Keselowski – He had a recognized 8th place finish during the '18 season. With that said, he had five 4th place finishes in other systems
- Daniel Suarez – He would have had three top-20 finishes in the *2011-2015_ ('11-'13 Playoffs)*, *2011-2015_ ('14-'15 Playoffs)* and *2016_Playoffs*

Biggest Losers:

- Joey Logano – He is realized as the champion of the '18 season but he would have finished 4th during the *1975-2003* system
- Martin Truex Jr. – He would have missed the final four in the *2011-2015_ ('14-'15 Playoffs)* and *2016_Playoffs* and finished 5th
- Almirola – He has a recognized finish of 5th for the '18 season, but in other system, he would have missed the top ten three different times

1975-2003

How did Kyle Busch win? Busch and Kevin Harvick both finished the season with eight wins. Busch had the better average finish than Harvick, besting him by 0.53. Busch was +173 better than Harvick when comparing their wins and the others finish in the same race. Harvick was penalized an adjusted amount of 216 point over the course of the season, twice during a race he won. Even without the penalties, Busch would still have won.

1975-2003

Fin	Driver	Points	Diff.
1	Kyle Busch	5403	
2	Kevin Harvick	5148	-255
3	Martin Truex, Jr.	5076	-327
4	Joey Logano	5015	-388
5	Kurt Busch	4777	-626
6	Denny Hamlin	4735	-668
7	Brad Keselowski	4702	-701
8	Kyle Larson	4632	-771
9	Aric Almirola	4610	-793
10	Chase Elliott	4580	-823
11	Clint Bowyer	4480	-923
12	Erik Jones	4432	-971
13	Ryan Blaney	4397	-1005
14	Jimmie Johnson	4139	-1264
15	Alex Bowman	4112	-1291
16	Ryan Newman	4058	-1345
17	Austin Dillon	4033	-1369
18	Jamie McMurray	3895	-1508
19	Ricky Stenhouse, Jr.	3863	-1540
20	Paul Menard	3812	-1591

2004-2006 Playoffs

How did Joey Logano win? Logano had two wins during the playoff and his average finish was 8.60, which was 0.50 better than runner-up Martin Truex Jr. Logano entered the playoff in 4th, one spot behind Truex Jr. During the playoff, Logan scored 47 more points than Truex Jr. and 61 more than Kyle Busch.

2004-2006_Playoffs

Fin	Driver	Points	Diff.
1	Joey Logano	6534	
2	Martin Truex, Jr.	6492	-42
3	Kyle Busch	6488	-46
4	Brad Keselowski	6398	-136
5	Kevin Harvick	6312	-222
6	Kyle Larson	6306	-228
7	Kurt Busch	6296	-238
8	Denny Hamlin	6294	-240
9	Clint Bowyer	6155	-379
10	Erik Jones	6101	-433
11	Aric Almirola	4615	-1919
12	Chase Elliott	4595	-1939
13	Ryan Blaney	4402	-2132
14	Jimmie Johnson	4139	-2395
15	Alex Bowman	4112	-2422
16	Ryan Newman	4058	-2476
17	Austin Dillon	4038	-2496
18	Jamie McMurray	3895	-2639
19	Ricky Stenhouse, Jr.	3863	-2671
20	Paul Menard	3812	-2722

2007-2010 Playoffs

How did Joey Logano win? Logano had one regular season win, two playoff wins and his average finish in the playoff was 8.6, which was 1.60 better than runner-up Kyle Busch. Logano started the playoff tied for 6th, 60 points behind Kevin Harvick. Logano led all drivers with 1,509 points in the playoff, 57 better than Martin Truex Jr. and 61 better than Busch.

2007-2010_Playoffs

Fin	Driver	Points	Diff.
1	Joey Logano	6519	
2	Kyle Busch	6508	-11
3	Martin Truex, Jr.	6492	-27
4	Brad Keselowski	6418	-101
5	Chase Elliott	6380	-139
6	Kevin Harvick	6339	-180
7	Kyle Larson	6296	-223
8	Kurt Busch	6276	-243
9	Denny Hamlin	6269	-250
10	Ryan Blaney	6200	-319
11	Clint Bowyer	6160	-359
12	Erik Jones	6091	-428
13	Aric Almirola	4620	-1899
14	Jimmie Johnson	4139	-2380
15	Alex Bowman	4112	-2407
16	Ryan Newman	4058	-2461
17	Austin Dillon	4043	-2476
18	Jamie McMurray	3895	-2624
19	Ricky Stenhouse, Jr.	3863	-2656
20	Paul Menard	3812	-2707

2011-2015 ('11-'13 Playoffs)

How did Joey Logano win? Logano began the playoff behind the leader, Kevin Harvick by 18 points due to Harvick's seven regular season wins compared to Logano's 1. Logano won two playoff races and had the best average finish of 8.6, which tied him with Kyle Busch. During the playoff, Logano outscored Martin Truex Jr. by 12 points and Busch by 18 points.

Austin Dillon finished the season in 17th place, but with his win in the Daytona 500, he qualified because the drivers ahead of him in points didn't win during the regular season.

2011-2015_('11-'13 Playoffs)

Fin	Driver	Points	Diff.
1	Joey Logano	2372	
2	Martin Truex, Jr.	2369	-3
3	Kyle Busch	2369	-3
4	Brad Keselowski	2346	-26
5	Chase Elliott	2330	-42
6	Kevin Harvick	2327	-45
7	Kyle Larson	2314	-58
8	Kurt Busch	2311	-61
9	Denny Hamlin	2306	-66
10	Austin Dillon	2289	-83
11	Clint Bowyer	2272	-100
12	Erik Jones	2255	-117
13	Aric Almirola	1135	-1237
14	Ryan Blaney	1054	-1318
15	Jimmie Johnson	989	-1383
16	Alex Bowman	979	-1393
17	Ryan Newman	969	-1403
18	Jamie McMurray	908	-1464
19	Ricky Stenhouse, Jr.	898	-1474
20	Daniel Suarez	892	-1480

2011-2015 ('14-'15 Playoffs) & 2016 Playoffs

How did Joey Logano win? Logano had one regular season win and two playoff wins including the last race of the year. He had the 3rd best average finish during the season and during the playoff he had the best average finish. After the regular season, Logano was 4th in points and to begin the playoff, he was tied for 6th. He was in 4th place after the first round and 1st after the second round. During the third round, he secured his spot in the final four. All four playoff drivers finished in the top-5 in the final race with Logano coming out on top and winning the championship.

There were ten unique winners during the 2018 season, allowing for six other drivers to qualify for the playoff based on their points. There were no ties during any of the rounds of the playoff

2011-2015_('14-'15 Playoffs)

2016_Playoffs

Fin	Driver	Points	Diff.	Fin	Driver	Points	Diff.
1	Joey Logano	5043		1	Joey Logano	5040	
2	Kevin Harvick	5041	-2	2	Kevin Harvick	5038	-2
3	Kyle Busch	5040	-3	3	Kyle Busch	5037	-3
4	Brad Keselowski	5039	-4	4	Brad Keselowski	5036	-4
5	Martin Truex, Jr.	2369	-2674	5	Martin Truex, Jr.	2339	-2701
6	Aric Almirola	2360	-2683	6	Aric Almirola	2330	-2710
7	Chase Elliott	2333	-2710	7	Chase Elliott	2302	-2738
8	Kyle Larson	2314	-2729	8	Kyle Larson	2285	-2755
9	Kurt Busch	2311	-2732	9	Kurt Busch	2281	-2759
10	Denny Hamlin	2306	-2737	10	Denny Hamlin	2276	-2764
11	Austin Dillon	2292	-2751	11	Austin Dillon	2263	-2777
12	Ryan Blaney	2286	-2757	12	Ryan Blaney	2257	-2783
13	Jimmie Johnson	2282	-2761	13	Jimmie Johnson	2252	-2788
14	Clint Bowyer	2272	-2771	14	Clint Bowyer	2242	-2798
15	Erik Jones	2255	-2788	15	Erik Jones	2227	-2813
16	Alex Bowman	2247	-2796	16	Alex Bowman	2217	-2823
17	Ryan Newman	969	-4074	17	Ryan Newman	861	-4179
18	Jamie McMurray	908	-4135	18	Jamie McMurray	800	-4240
19	Ricky Stenhouse, Jr.	898	-4145	19	Ricky Stenhouse, Jr.	790	-4250
20	Daniel Suarez	892	-4151	20	Daniel Suarez	787	-4253

Driver	Top4s	Top10s	Top20s	AvgFin	FirstPlaceFinishes
Joey Logano	7	7	7	1.43	6
Kyle Busch	7	7	7	2.71	1
Martin Truex, Jr.	5	7	7	3.14	0
Kevin Harvick	4	7	7	3.71	0
Brad Keselowski	5	7	7	5.00	0
Chase Elliott	0	6	7	7.43	0
Kurt Busch	0	7	7	7.43	0
Kyle Larson	0	7	7	7.57	0
Aric Almirola	0	4	7	9.00	0
Denny Hamlin	0	6	7	9.00	0
Clint Bowyer	0	1	7	11.71	0
Ryan Blaney	0	2	7	12.00	0
Erik Jones	0	1	7	13.00	0
Austin Dillon	0	1	7	13.71	0
Jimmie Johnson	0	0	7	13.86	0
Alex Bowman	0	0	7	15.57	0
Ryan Newman	0	0	7	16.57	0
Jamie McMurray	0	0	7	18.29	0
Ricky Stenhouse, Jr.	0	0	7	18.86	0
Paul Menard	0	0	4	20.29	0
Daniel Suarez	0	0	3	20.57	0

2019

	1975-2003	2004-2006_Playoffs	2007-2010_Playoffs	2011-2015_('11-'13 Playoffs)	2011-2015_('14-'15 Playoffs)	2016_Playoffs	Recognized Champion
2019	Kyle Busch	Martin Truex Jr.	Martin Truex Jr.	Martin Truex Jr.	Martin Truex Jr.	Martin Truex Jr.	Kyle Busch

- Martin Truex Jr. had the highest average finish (1.43) in the playoffs, finishing 1st five different times
- Kyle Busch had the best regular season and overall season average finish of 8.15 and 8.94, respectively
- Truex Jr. had the best average finish in the playoff of 5.8
- Ryan Blaney's average year end finish standard deviation was 2.92. The average for the 40 drivers was 0.49

Biggest Benefactor:

- Truex Jr. – He would have won five different times and is the recognized 2nd place finisher for the '19 season
- Ryan Newman – He would have had a 10th place finish in the *2011-2015_('11-'13 Playoffs)*
- Erik Jones – He would have finished 10th in the *2006-2006_Playoffs*
- Blaney – Recognized as the 6th place finisher in the '19 season, he would have finished 4th in the *2011-2015_('14-'15 Playoffs) and 2016_Playoffs*

Biggest Losers:

- Busch – He is the recognized champion of the '19 season, but in other systems he would have had three 4th place finishes and two 5th place finishes
- Kyle Larson – He is the recognized 6th place finisher for the '19 season, but in other systems, he would have missed the top ten four different times

1975-2003

Why did Kyle Busch win? Busch had an average finish of 8.94, which was 0.53 better than Denny Hamlin and 0.81 better than Martin Truex Jr. The average for the top-20 was 13.88. Hamlin and Truex Jr. both had more wins than Busch during the season. The consistency of high finishes was enough for Busch to win.

1975-2003

Fin	Driver	Points	Diff.
1	Kyle Busch	5313	
2	Denny Hamlin	5193	-120
3	Martin Truex, Jr.	5156	-157
4	Kevin Harvick	5107	-206
5	Joey Logano	4988	-325
6	Brad Keselowski	4760	-553
7	Kurt Busch	4617	-696
8	Ryan Blaney	4598	-715
9	Chase Elliott	4473	-840
10	Alex Bowman	4450	-863
11	Kyle Larson	4431	-882
12	William Byron	4428	-885
13	Clint Bowyer	4390	-923
14	Ryan Newman	4368	-945
15	Aric Almirola	4308	-1005
16	Erik Jones	4305	-1008
17	Daniel Suarez	4207	-1106
18	Paul Menard	4109	-1204
19	Jimmie Johnson	4091	-1222
20	Chris Buescher	3971	-1342

2004-2006 Playoffs

How did Martin Truex Jr. win? Truex Jr. won three times during the playoff and had an average finish of 5.80, which was 0.10 better than runner-up Kevin Harvick. Furthermore, Truex Jr. had nine top-10s and a 26th place finish. He entered the playoff in 4th place and scored 44 more points than Harvick and 114 points more than Denny Hamlin, who finished 3rd.

2004-2006_Playoffs

Fin	Driver	Points	Diff.
1	Martin Truex, Jr.	6636	
2	Kevin Harvick	6587	-49
3	Denny Hamlin	6532	-104
4	Kyle Busch	6451	-185
5	Joey Logano	6375	-261
6	Ryan Blaney	6364	-272
7	Brad Keselowski	6308	-328
8	Kurt Busch	6193	-443
9	Chase Elliott	6151	-485
10	Erik Jones	6040	-596
11	Alex Bowman	4455	-2181
12	Kyle Larson	4436	-2200
13	William Byron	4428	-2208
14	Clint Bowyer	4390	-2246
15	Ryan Newman	4368	-2268
16	Aric Almirola	4308	-2328
17	Daniel Suarez	4207	-2429
18	Paul Menard	4109	-2527
19	Jimmie Johnson	4091	-2545
20	Chris Buescher	3971	-2665

2007-2010 Playoffs

How did Martin Truex Jr. win? Truex Jr. won four regular season races, three playoff races, led all drivers with an average finish in the playoff of 5.80 and led all drivers in points during the playoff, scoring 1,616. Truex Jr. began the playoffs tied for 1st, ten points ahead of Kevin Harvick. He outscored Harvick in the playoff by 54.

2007-2010_Playoffs

Fin	Driver	Points	Diff.
1	Martin Truex, Jr.	6656	
2	Kevin Harvick	6592	-64
3	Denny Hamlin	6537	-119
4	Kyle Busch	6446	-210
5	Ryan Blaney	6364	-292
6	Joey Logano	6355	-301
7	Brad Keselowski	6313	-343
8	Alex Bowman	6241	-415
9	William Byron	6200	-456
10	Kurt Busch	6183	-473
11	Chase Elliott	6161	-495
12	Erik Jones	6040	-616
13	Kyle Larson	4441	-2215
14	Clint Bowyer	4390	-2266
15	Ryan Newman	4368	-2288
16	Aric Almirola	4308	-2348
17	Daniel Suarez	4207	-2449
18	Paul Menard	4109	-2547
19	Jimmie Johnson	4091	-2565
20	Chris Buescher	3971	-2685

2011-2015 ('11-'13 Playoffs)

How did Martin Truex Jr. win? Truex Jr. won four regular season races, three playoff races, led all drivers with an average finish in the playoff of 5.80 and led all drivers in points during the playoff. Truex Jr. began the playoff tied for 1st, three points ahead of runner-up, Kevin Harvick. During the playoff, Truex Jr. outscored Harvick by ten points.

2011-2015_ ('11-'13 Playoffs)

Fin	Driver	Points	Diff.
1	Martin Truex, Jr.	2411	
2	Kevin Harvick	2398	-13
3	Denny Hamlin	2378	-33
4	Kyle Busch	2352	-59
5	Joey Logano	2335	-76
6	Brad Keselowski	2317	-94
7	Alex Bowman	2296	-115
8	William Byron	2283	-128
9	Kurt Busch	2282	-129
10	Ryan Newman	2280	-131
11	Chase Elliott	2266	-145
12	Erik Jones	2232	-179
13	Ryan Blaney	1111	-1300
14	Kyle Larson	1059	-1352
15	Clint Bowyer	1050	-1361
16	Aric Almirola	1039	-1372
17	Daniel Suarez	1005	-1406
18	Paul Menard	992	-1419
19	Jimmie Johnson	969	-1442
20	Chris Buescher	946	-1465

2011-2015 ('14-'15 Playoffs) & 2016 Playoffs

How did Martin Truex Jr. win? Truex Jr. had four wins during the regular season and three wins during the playoff. None of the four eligible drivers won the final race of the year. During the season, he had the 3rd best average finish but during the playoff, his average finish was best of all drivers. He finished the regular season in 4th position but once the playoff began, Truex Jr. was tied for 1st. Two wins during the first round moved him on to the second round. Truex Jr. finished the second round in 4th

position and with a win in the third round, he secured a spot in the final four. A 2nd place finish was good enough to win Truex Jr. a championship.

There were ten unique winners during the 2019 season, allowing six other drivers to qualify for the playoff based on their points. There were no ties in any of the rounds of the playoff.

2011-2015_('14-'15 Playoffs)				2016_Playoffs			
Fin	Driver	Points	Diff.	Fin	Driver	Points	Diff.
1	Martin Truex, Jr.	5042		1	Martin Truex, Jr.	5039	
2	Kevin Harvick	5040	-2	2	Kevin Harvick	5037	-2
3	Denny Hamlin	5034	-8	3	Denny Hamlin	5031	-8
4	Ryan Blaney	5033	-9	4	Ryan Blaney	5030	-9
5	Kyle Busch	2352	-2690	5	Kyle Busch	2322	-2717
6	Joey Logano	2335	-2707	6	Joey Logano	2305	-2734
7	Brad Keselowski	2317	-2725	7	Brad Keselowski	2287	-2752
8	Kyle Larson	2302	-2740	8	Kyle Larson	2272	-2767
9	Alex Bowman	2296	-2746	9	Alex Bowman	2266	-2773
10	William Byron	2283	-2759	10	William Byron	2253	-2786
11	Kurt Busch	2282	-2760	11	Kurt Busch	2252	-2787
12	Ryan Newman	2280	-2762	12	Ryan Newman	2250	-2789
13	Aric Almirola	2273	-2769	13	Aric Almirola	2243	-2796
14	Chase Elliott	2266	-2776	14	Chase Elliott	2236	-2803
15	Daniel Suarez	2240	-2802	15	Daniel Suarez	2210	-2829
16	Erik Jones	2235	-2807	16	Erik Jones	2205	-2834
17	Clint Bowyer	1050	-3992	17	Clint Bowyer	942	-4097
18	Paul Menard	992	-4050	18	Paul Menard	884	-4155
19	Jimmie Johnson	969	-4073	19	Jimmie Johnson	861	-4178
20	Chris Buescher	946	-4096	20	Chris Buescher	838	-4201

Driver	Top4s	Top10s	Top20s	AvgFin	FirstPlaceFinishes
Martin Truex, Jr.	7	7	7	1.43	5
Kevin Harvick	7	7	7	2.43	0
Denny Hamlin	7	7	7	3.00	0
Kyle Busch	5	7	7	3.43	2
Joey Logano	0	7	7	5.43	0
Ryan Blaney	2	6	7	6.57	0
Brad Keselowski	0	7	7	6.86	0
Alex Bowman	0	5	7	9.43	0
Kurt Busch	0	4	7	9.86	0
Kyle Larson	0	3	7	10.29	0
William Byron	0	4	7	10.43	0
Chase Elliott	0	3	7	11.14	0
Ryan Newman	0	1	7	13.29	0
Erik Jones	0	1	7	14.00	0
Clint Bowyer	0	1	7	14.14	0
Aric Almirola	0	0	7	14.71	0
Daniel Suarez	0	0	7	16.43	0
Paul Menard	0	0	7	18.14	0
Jimmie Johnson	0	0	7	18.86	0
Chris Buescher	0	0	7	20.00	0

What's Next?

Early on during the research and data analysis, it was clear that determining who had the “best season” was impossible from the data that was available. Since the points systems changed over the years, using points alone as a proxy would not work. Furthermore, since the number of races in a season varied, there would need to be a way to standardize the data regardless of the number of races. Basing the “best season” off certain metrics like wins or top tens misses the ability to determine best overall

season because the metric is too narrow. This paper is titled “Part 1” and the reason for that is there is enough work to be done to warrant two more parts.

The next step in the process is to determine which driver had the best season from 1975-2019. This question is not straightforward because there is need to standardize the data. Lastly, what is clear from the results of the research is that the NASCAR playoff system is flawed. Once the “best season” is determined, work will begin on creating a new point and playoff system that rewards the best driver while taking into consideration a few other factors.

Acknowledgments

Thank you to Frank P. from NascarReference.com. He provided guidance and redirected the initial question. At first, the genesis for this paper was based off the idea of back testing Stage racing. After some research and better understanding the problems that exist with the Stage rules, back testing wasn't a possibility. Frank suggested *“I think it would be more interesting figuring out how many championships were taken from drivers since they went to this cockamamie style of racing. Good luck with your research.”* From that point on, the research took a 180 and the quest to back test all different point and playoff systems simultaneously began.

References

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