

Welcome to the start of the Chase for the Sprint Cup. It is now crunch time for the 12 drivers who made the cut as well as fantasy owners looking to capture their own victory. Of the 10 tracks that make up the Chase schedule, eight of them have hosted races earlier in the season. I have compiled a table with the results of those eight events and ranked the top-26 drivers by their average finish. Check out my 2009 Average Finish at Chase Tracks Table here.

One thing you will notice right away is how many of the top drivers fared poorly at Talladega Superspeedway. We know anything can happen there. Things also got a little messy at Lowe's Motor Speedway. For owners in allocation formats, like Yahoo!, these are two races where you can conserve your remaining starts for the top drivers.

Starting position is huge at New Hampshire Motor Speedway. There have been a total of 29 Sprint Cup races runs held here, the winner has started 15th or better 21 times. Over the last three years (seven races), five winners have started 11th or better. The other two winners, Kurt Busch in June of last year and Joey Logano in this year's June race, came from the middle of the pack but picked up their wins when the race was called early due to rain.

New Hampshire is essentially a bigger version of Martinsville Speedway, but the most recent race held there was back in March. Richmond International Raceway is also a flat race track so last week's results are far more relevant. Fantasy owners should set their lineups simply based on who's hot entering the Chase.

Here's an explanation of the highlighted text in the rankings. Download a printer-friendly version here.

* Y! A/B/C - The top options in the Yahoo! Fantasy Auto Racing game by driver list.

* Strong qualifier - History of winning poles or qualifying inside the top-five.

* Good qualifier - History of qualifying inside the top-10.

* Value play - Good recent history at this week's track. Drivers to consider as low-rent salary cap options or alternative options in allocation formats.

* Risky play - Good overall history at this week's track but poor recent finishes.

1. Jimmie Johnson... Good qualifier. Average finish of 6.3 over the last five Loudon races, all top-10 finishes. Started third or fourth in three of his last four attempts at NH, led over 90 laps in the last two. Average running position of 5.0 in June. Two-time winner ('03 sweep). Y!-A1
2. Tony Stewart... Last nine races at Loudon: only one finish worse than 13th, laps led in seven. Finished fifth in June. Average finish of 3.8 over the last four September races at NH. Two-time winner ('00, '05). Y!-B1
3. Denny Hamlin... Good qualifier. Seven career starts at Loudon: average finish of 8.3, has never finished worse than 15th, which he did in June. Average finish of 8.5 in '08 NH races. Has never started worse than 14th. Won in '07. Y!-B2
4. Mark Martin... Started 11th, finished 14th in June race at Loudon, average running position: 9.0- first start at NH since '06. Y!-A2
5. Kurt Busch... Started fourth, finished third in June. Average finish of 3.5 last year at Loudon, including a win. Three-time winner ('04 sweep, 06/08) Y!-B3
6. Jeff Gordon... Started and finished second in June, led 62 laps. Average finish of 12.5 in '08 Loudon races. Runner-up in both '07 races. Owns 11 finishes of first, second or third in 29 career starts. Three-time winner ('97, '98). Y!-A3

7. Kyle Busch... Finished seventh in June race at Loudon. Average finish of 29.5 in '08 NH races, 7.5 in '07- led laps in both. Won in '06. Y!-A4
8. Kasey Kahne... Started 13th, finished 10th in June. Started 13th, finished 11th in last year's Sylvania 300. Y!-B4
9. Greg Biffle... Finished 18th in June race at Loudon. Won last year's Sylvania 300. Average finish of 4.5 in the last four September NH races.
10. Brian Vickers... Risky play. Finished 35th in June (accident) and in last year's Sylvania 300. 11 career starts: 21.0 average finish. Y!-B5
11. Juan Pablo Montoya... Finished a career-best 12th in June race at Loudon. Y!-B6
12. Ryan Newman... Average running position of 17th in June race at Loudon, finished 29th and led 17 laps. DNF and 15th-place finish last year. Average finish of 9.5 in '07 races, led laps in both. Two-time winner ('02, '05). Y!-B7
13. Kevin Harvick... Finished a career-worst 34th in June race at Loudon. Average finish of 12.0 in '08 NH races. Won from the pole in '06.
14. Dale Earnhardt Jr.... Good qualifier. Finished 13th in June race at Loudon, fifth in last year's Sylvania 300- led 79 laps. Led laps in both '07 and '08 NH races- average finish of 12.3 in those four races. Started fourth and fifth last year. Y!-B8
15. David Reutimann... Strong value play. Has improved career-best finish at Loudon in each of his five starts. Finished a career-best fourth in June.
16. Carl Edwards... Risky play. Finished 19th in June race at Loudon, third in last year's Sylvania 300. Average finish of 12.5 in '07 NH races.
17. Jeff Burton... Finished 31st in June race at Loudon, worst finish since a blown engine in '03. Average finish of 10.5 in the 10 races in between. Four-time winner ('97-'00).
18. Matt Kenseth... Finished 22nd in June race at Loudon. DNF (accident) and 18th-place finish last year. Ten top-10 finishes in the prior 11 races ('02-'07).
19. Joey Logano... Won in rain-shortened June race at Loudon but an average running position of 21st. Started 40th, finished 32nd in last year's Sylvania 300. Won the pole, finished second in June Nationwide race. Won both '07 Camping World East Series races.
20. Sam Hornish Jr.... Strong value play. Started 26th, finished a career-best eighth in June race at Loudon- average running position of 13th. Average finish of 34.5 in '08 NH races. Y!-C1
21. Martin Truex Jr.... Strong value play. DNF in June race at Loudon, snapping a streak of four straight top-10 finishes- average finish of 4.75 in that span.
22. Marcos Ambrose... Finished 23rd in June race, first career start at Loudon. Finished 14th in last year's Nationwide race. Y!-C2
23. Clint Bowyer... Seven career starts at Loudon: one top-10 finish, a win from the pole in '07. Average finish of 23.6 in the six other NH races.
24. Casey Mears... Weak value play. Finished 11th in June race at Loudon, average running position of 20th.
25. Bobby Labonte... Weak value play. Finished 21st in June race at Loudon. Average finish of 11.5 in '08 NH races, 20.0 in '07. Y!-C3
26. Reed Sorenson... Weak value play. Seven career starts at Loudon: 18.0 average finish. Finished 17th in June race, 22nd in last year's Sylvania 300. Y!-C4
27. Elliott Sadler... Average finish of 25.2 over the last five starts at Loudon.
28. AJ Allmendinger... Finished 32nd in June race at Loudon, two DNFs in '08. Finished 33rd in lone '07 NH start.
29. Jamie McMurray... Three straight finishes of 33rd or worse at Loudon, average finish of 13.5 in '07 NH races.
30. David Ragan... DNFs (accidents) in two of his last three starts at Loudon. Average finish of 17.0 in '07 NH races. Finished sixth in last year's Nationwide race.
31. Michael Waltrip... Finished 24th in June race at Loudon, 25th in last year's Sylvania 300.
32. Robby Gordon... Won in '01. Finished 25th in June race at Loudon, 26th in both '07 NH races.

33. John Andretti... Finished 16th in June race at Loudon, average running position of 30th.
34. Erik Darnell... Finished sixth in June Nationwide race at Loudon, average finish of 5.0 in three Truck series races ('06-'08).
35. Aric Almirola... Average finish of 20.5 in '08 races at Loudon.
36. Paul Menard... Finished 30th in June race at Loudon. Average finish of 28.6 in five career NH starts.
37. David Stremme... Finished 28th in June race at Loudon. Average finish of 34.5 in '07 NH races.
38. Scott Speed... Finished 36th (DNF, accident) in June race, first career start at Loudon. Started fourth, finished eighth in June Nationwide race.
39. Joe Nemechek... DNFs in four of his last seven starts at Loudon. Won in '99.
40. Patrick Carpentier... DNF (accident) in June race at Loudon.
41. Dave Blaney... Start and parked in June race at Loudon.
42. David Gilliland... Start and parked in June race at Loudon.
43. Tony Raines... Start and parked in June race at Loudon.
44. Dexter Bean... No career starts at Loudon.
45. Mike Wallace... No Cup starts at Loudon since '05, average finish of 17.6 in eight Nationwide starts.
46. Derrike Cope... No Cup starts at Loudon since '03. DNF in June Nationwide race at Loudon.