

The racing at Talladega Superspeedway is often times unpredictable and your fantasy lineup should reflect that this week. I've assembled another **Similar Track Tool** showing the best average finishers at the three restrictor plate races held earlier this season, Daytona's February and July events and the April race at Talladega in between.

<http://onpitrow.com/1/nascar-fantasy-tool-2009-average-finish-at-similar-tracks-daytona-and-talladega.html>

After reviewing the table several things jump out: Kurt Busch is the only driver to finish in the top-10 at all three plate races this season. David Ragan finished 12th or better in all three. Marcos Ambrose has an average finish of 9.0; Elliot Sadler had an average finish 11.3. Reed Sorenson finished ninth and 11th in the first two plate races, Brian Vickers finished eighth and seventh in the last two.

Plate racing and high speeds lead to damaged race cars, a fantasy lineup can account for this with some changeups in driver selection. Owners in allocation formats, such as Yahoo! Fantasy Auto Racing, can conserve remaining starts of top drivers by going with deeper picks for what always turns out to be a crapshoot of a race. For example, addition to having solid finishes in plate races David Ragan and teammate Matt Kenseth, winner of the this year's Daytona 500, will be using Ford's new FR9 engine. Either one is a good gamble this week.

For those hunting bonus points for top qualifiers I've added my top-three qualifiers to the weekly preview.

Chasing the pole at Talladega:

1. Martin Truex Jr.... Won the pole at the first Daytona race this year. Started third at Talladega in April and 10th at last year's AMP Energy 500. Also won the pole at Atlanta and has started inside the top-five in two of the last three races.
2. Jeff Gordon... Started second and third for the Daytona races; 14th at Talladega. Has qualified inside the top-10 for eight straight races.
3. Tony Stewart... Won the pole at the second Daytona race, fifth in the first one but 23rd at April race Talladega. Has started fifth in two of the last four races.

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.

\* 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.

1. Jimmie Johnson... Won at Talladega in '06, runner-up in both '07 races. Average finish of 11.0 last year. DNF (crash) in April race, average running position of 10th. Runner-up at Daytona in July. Y!-A1
2. Jeff Gordon... Six-time winner at Talladega ('07 sweep, '05, '04, '00, '96). Won both '07 races, average finish of 31.3 in the three races since. Average finish 26.0 in plate races this season. Y!-A2

3. Kurt Busch... Twelve top-10 finishes at Talladega in 17 career starts, led at least one lap in 13. Streak of seven straight finishes of eighth or better from '04-'07. Finished sixth in April race. Y!-B1
4. Tony Stewart... Won last year's AMP Energy 500, eighth-place 10/07. Finished 23rd in April race at Talladega. Won at Daytona in July. Y!-B2
5. Denny Hamlin... DNF (crash) in last year's AMP Energy 500, finished 22nd in April race at Talladega-- had an average running position of 10th. Finished third (4/08), fourth (10/07) and has led laps in all seven career starts at 'Dega. Finished third at Daytona in July. Y!-B3
6. Juan Pablo Montoya... Won the pole in the April race at Talladega, finished 20th. Runner-up 4/08. Led at least one lap in three straight Talladega races. Y!-B4
7. Ryan Newman... Minus last year's DNF at Talladega, average finish of 6.3 since '07. Finished third in April race, led 10 laps. Y!-B5
8. Mark Martin... Two-winner at Talladega ('97, '95). Started seventh, DNF (crash) in April race. Bad luck in the last two plate races: 43th and 38th. Y!-A3
9. Kyle Busch... Won in '08 at Talladega. Finished 15th in last year's AMP Energy 500, led 20 laps. 25th in April race, led 42 laps. Y!-A4
10. Clint Bowyer... Started fifth, completed only eight laps in March race at Talladega, average finish of 8.3 in the three previous races at 'Dega.
11. Kasey Kahne... Average finish of 14.0 in '07 races at Talladega, 31.6 in the three races since. Y!-B6
12. Brian Vickers... Won in '06 at Talladega, laps led in seven straight starts. Five finishes of eighth or better over the last seven races at 'Dega. Y!-B7
13. Matt Kenseth... Average finish of 5.0 in '06 races at Talladega, 24.8 in the five races since.
14. Carl Edwards... DNF (crash) in two straight races at Talladega. Finished fourth at Daytona in July.
15. Dale Earnhardt Jr.... Five-winner at Talladega ('04, '03, '02 sweep, '01). Won four straight, 10/01 through 4/03. Only one top-fives since, runner-up in April race. Four top-15s, four DNFs in the nine races since, laps led in eight. Y!-B8
16. Greg Biffle... DNFs in five of the last seven races at Talladega. Started second, finished seventh in April race, both career bests.
17. David Ragan... Average finish of 3.5 in '08 races at Talladega. Started 10th, finished 12th in April race.
18. Joey Logano... Started 22nd, finished ninth and led four laps in April race, first career start at Talladega. Finished third in the April Nationwide race, second in last year's ARCA race.
19. Marcos Ambrose... Started 34th, finished fourth in April race, first career start at Talladega. Y!-C1

20. Casey Mears... Average finish of 10.8 over the last four races at Talladega. Finished 16th in the April race.
21. Jeff Burton... Average finish of 8.6 over the last three races at Talladega, led laps in all three. Finished 10th in April race.
22. Elliott Sadler... Has led laps in 13 straight races at Talladega. Finished 10th in last year's AMP Energy 500, 19th in April race.
23. Brad Keselowski... Won 4/09 race, first career start at Talladega. Started ninth, won the April race- only led on the final lap. Finished ninth in the April Nationwide race. Y!-C2
24. David Reutimann... Three DNFs in five career starts at Talladega, average finish of 23.0 in the two completed races.
25. Paul Menard... Finished 14th 4/08, runner-up in last year's AMP Energy 500. Finished 13th in April race at Talladega, led laps in all three races.
26. Kevin Harvick... Has not finished better than 20th in the last four races at Talladega.
27. Regan Smith... Average finish of 19.5 in four career starts at Talladega. Has started fourth and sixth in his last two attempts. Finished 15th in April race. Y!-C3
28. Bobby Labonte... Won in '98. DNF (crash) in April race at Talladega. Finished sixth in last year's AMP Energy 500. Y!-C4
29. Michael Waltrip... Won in '03. Has led at least one lap in three straight races at Talladega. Average finish of 22.3 over the last races at 'Dega.
30. Martin Truex Jr.... Has crashed five times in nine career start at Talladega and in three straight.
31. AJ Allmendinger... DNF (crash) 4/08 race at Talladega. Started 38th, finished 35th in April race.
32. Jamie McMurray... DNFs (crash) in three of the last six races at Talladega.
33. Robby Gordon... Average finish of 9.5 in '08 races at Talladega. DNF (crash) in April race.
34. Reed Sorenson... Started 41st, finished 11th in April race at Talladega. DNF (engine) and 23rd-place finish last year.
35. Scott Speed... Started eighth, finished fifth and led a lap in April race, first career start at Talladega. Finished seventh and 23rd in two career ARCA races at 'Dega.
36. Sam Hornish Jr.... Started fourth, led three laps in April race at Talladega, DNF (crash).
37. Max Papis... Stared 42rd, finished 18th in April race, first career start at Talladega.
38. John Andretti... Started 40th, finished 27th in April race, first start at Talladega since '07.

39. David Stremme... DNFs (crash) in three of his last five starts at Talladega.
40. Robert Richardson Jr.... No career Cup starts at Talladega. Average finish of 18.0 in three career Nationwide starts at 'Dega.
41. Erik Darnell... No career Cup starts at Talladega. Started 24th, finished 13th in '05 ARCA race at 'Dega.
42. Joe Nemechek... Likely start and park. Average start of 8.3, finish of 16.6 in last three starts at Talladega.
43. Dave Blaney... Likely start and park. DNF (engine) in last year's AMP Energy 500.
44. Tony Raines... Likely start and park. DNF (crash) in last year's AMP Energy 500.