

Competition model for 2019 adds disqualifications, alters post-race inspection

NASCAR competition officials announced that post-race inspection for all three national series will have a new model for 2019, introducing a system where race-winning teams found in violation of the rule book would be disqualified.

The rules change signals a shift in a long-standing tradition of penalizing an offending race winner with fines, suspensions and/or points deductions, but allowing victories to stand. The new system also accelerates the timetable for thorough post-race technical inspections, which will now be conducted at the track soon after the checkered flag instead of midweek at the NASCAR Research & Development Center in Concord, North Carolina.

"I think for us, we're really looking at a total culture change," said Steve O'Donnell, NASCAR Executive Vice President and Chief Racing Development Officer. "We've been through a deterrence model where we've really worked with the race teams at the track and probably been more lenient than we should in terms of the number of times teams can go through inspection and pass, fail and there's almost incentive to try to get something by NASCAR, so we want to really reverse that trend."

"We're going to put it on the teams to bring their equipment right. When they come to the track, we'll be much less lenient as they go through technical inspection with stiffer penalties in terms of qualifying, and then ultimately during the race, obviously we want everyone to be racing straight up."

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The cars of the first-place and second-place finishers, plus at least one randomly selected car, will undergo post-race inspection at the track. Competition officials said they are targeting a time frame of approximately 90 minutes to two hours to complete the inspection and confirm the race winner.

Should one of those cars fail the post-race inspection, the driver and team would receive last-place points and the rest of the finishing order would move up. Disqualified teams also would be stripped of the benefits of playoff points, stage points and automatic postseason berths and playoff advancement.

NASCAR also unveiled several other competition and personnel updates for 2019:

O'Donnell announced that the "Generation 7" car in the Monster Energy

Series is scheduled to make its debut for the 2021 season and will be designed to feature new technologies and elements that showcase future production vehicles.

"There is a great deal of interest from our current and potential manufacturer partners to make the cars look even more like they do on the street," O'Donnell said. "This will be an exciting progression in our racing technology that began with the introduction of the 2019 rules package."

The NASCAR Gander Outdoors Truck Series will feature the "Triple Truck Challenge" this season, a bonus program that takes place at three consecutive races – Texas (June 7), Iowa (June 15) and Gateway (June 22). All drivers earning series points are eligible and drivers who win one of the three races receive a \$50,000 bonus. Winning two races nets a driver \$150,000 total (\$50,000 per race plus a \$50,000 bonus), while winning all three races results in a \$500,000 total prize (\$50,000 per race win, \$50,000 bonus for winning twice, plus a \$300,000 bonus for sweeping the Challenge races). Monster Energy Series and Xfinity Series drivers are not eligible to compete in the three races of the program.

NASCAR has implemented a model of series-specific inspectors. Each national series will have a dedicated team of officials who will specialize in inspections for their respective garages.

Qualifying procedures across all three national series remain the same for 2019, with the exception that the first round of 'group qualifying' for short track and intermediate tracks will shorten to 10 minutes in length (previously 15) and the breaks between sessions will be five minutes long (previously seven).

The national series driver participation guidelines remain mostly unchanged from 2018. Drivers with more than five years of full-time Monster Energy NASCAR Cup Series experience are eligible for a maximum of seven NASCAR Xfinity Series starts and five NASCAR Gander Outdoors Truck Series starts. Drivers who elect to accumulate Monster Energy Series points are not eligible to compete in any Dash 4 Cash or Triple Truck Challenge races, or the final eight races in either the



Xfinity Series or the Gander Outdoors Truck Series. In addition, drivers who earn points in the Xfinity Series are ineligible to compete in Triple Truck Challenge races and the Championship race for the Gander Outdoors Truck Series.

Ben Kennedy has been elevated to managing director of racing operations and international development. He previously served as general manager of the Gander Outdoors Truck Series. His new responsibilities will include initiatives aimed at growing the sport, including managing NA-

SCAR's growth on the international scene.

NASCAR introduced the assistant directors for each series – Kip Childress (Monster Energy Series), Seth Kramlich (Xfinity Series) and Jesse Dollevoet (Gander Outdoors Truck Series).

The 2019 NASCAR season kicks off with "Speedweeks" at Daytona International Speedway. The 10 days of activity in Florida culminates with the 61st running of the Daytona 500 on Sunday, Feb. 17 at 2:30 p.m. ET (FOX, MRN and SiriusXM NASCAR Radio).4



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