

For immediate release

MALSAM, NASCAR TRUCK SERIES RETURN TO ACTION IN DAYTONA

DAYTONA, Fla. — (Feb. 10, 2010) New team, new number, new boss, new rules and a new track.

For Tayler Malsam's sophomore season racing in NASCAR's Camping World Truck Series, the only thing that's the same is his desire.

"It's still the same deal, I want to win pretty bad," Malsam said. "The earlier in the season the better preferably."

Malsam, who wrapped up a solid 2009 season No. 12 in points and the runner-up for rookie-of-the-year honors, and the NASCAR truck series returns to action in the NextEra Energy Resources 250 on Friday, Feb. 12 at Daytona International Speedway.

The race will be televised on SPEED at 5 p.m. (PT).

The 20-year-old Sammamish, Wash., native secured the most coveted ride in the NASCAR truck series during the off-season, joining the start-up team owned by 2009 Nationwide Series champion and Joe Gibbs Racing NASCAR Cup series driver Kyle Busch.

Winning at the highest level is something Busch is very familiar with. The 24-year-old from Las Vegas has 62 career wins in NASCAR's top three series with 16 coming in the truck series including five straight in 2009.

"I definitely have a lot more on the line with Kyle as my boss," said Malsam about joining KBM. "I have to be more prepared than last year ... I know he wants to win every weekend."

Although Kyle Busch Motorsports has had a late-model racing program since 2007, in mid-January Busch announced Malsam would join KBM to compete in NASCAR's truck series. Malsam will drive the full 25-race schedule in the No. 56 Toyota Tundra while Busch and San Diego native Brian Ickler will split time in the No. 18 Toyota for KBM.

To help guide his start-up operation, Busch hired championship crew chief Rick Ren as KBM's director of competition. With 27 truck series victories as a crew chief, winning titles in 2007 and 2009 with driver Ron Hornaday Jr., Ren knows what it takes to be successful in the highly competitive truck series.

To be where we need to be, (at Daytona) I'd like to have a top-10 qualifying run with (Tayler) and a top-10 finish," Ren said. "Tayler, who we're going to work really hard with to have a good year this year, needs to start off the season with a top-10 finish."

Another new face at KBM is Dan Stillman, who will be Malsam's crew chief this season. Stillman had five Nationwide Series wins as crew chief for series runner-up Carl Edwards in 2009.

In the relatively short time between his hiring and the team loading out for Daytona, Malsam said he started building working relationships with Ren and Stillman that will help him achieve his goals.

"(Stillman's) strong suit last year was short tracks and that's where I lacked some in my skills," Malsam said. "(Ren's) an awesome guy — a smart, smart guy who knows a lot about what's going on in the truck series. It's cool to see how a championship crew chief does it."

Malsam has 27 career starts in the NASCAR truck series, two in 2008 and the full 25-race schedule last season. Driving the No. 81 Toyota for Randy Moss Motorsports, Malsam completed 95 percent of the laps during the 2009 season and recorded a career-best fifth place at Gateway International Raceway in September.

Malsam, who splits time between residences in Mooresville, N.C. and Mill Creek, Wash., also had 10 top-10 finishes — including his first in the season-opening race at Daytona.

"I've run one ARCA race and one truck race (at Daytona)," said Malsam. "It's easier than a lot of tracks, but it's tougher, too. You pretty much run flat-out, but you still have to drive it. It's bumpy and the draft throws you around everywhere."

Malsam had to fight for his top-10 at Daytona after missing his pit stall during a stop early in the race — a mistake repeated two days later by Dale Earnhardt Jr. in the Daytona 500.

NASCAR returned to traditional fuel-and-tire pit stops for 2010 after experimenting with split stops last season as a cost-savings measure. Doubling the number of pit stops last year created confusion and scrambled teams' strategies without leading to appreciable savings.

Another new wrinkle Malsam will face in 2010 is NASCAR's introduction of double-file restarts in the truck series. Side-by-side restarts after cautions were first used last season in the Cup and Nationwide series as a way to create closer racing and increase fan interest.

"I think that going back to the old pit rules and the double-file restarts will make it better for the fans," Malsam said. "The restarts may cause more crashes early in the year, but it'll turn into good racing."

One change NASCAR made won't affect Malsam for at least four races — and he hopes not at all. The number of guaranteed starting slots for each race was reduced to the top 25 in points, down from 30, in an effort to encourage more teams to try to make the 36-truck starting fields.

Malsam, along with 24 other drivers, will be locked in for the first four races based on 2009 owner's points; after that the lock-in will be based on 2010 points. Although Malsam's No. 56 didn't race last season, KBM purchased the points, and some equipment, from the now-defunct Xpress Motorsports.

Along with the procedural changes, the truck series will make stops at two different venues this year, Pocono and Darlington.

In August the truck series returns for the first time since 2004 to Darlington Raceway for the Too Tough to Tame 200. Malsam, who has tested but not raced at the 1.366-mile South Carolina track known as the Lady in Black, said "It's a pretty intense racetrack — that'll be a good race."

Malsam will be able to draw on the experience he garnered in a pair of ARCA races when the series will make its inaugural stop at Pennsylvania's Pocono Raceway for the Pocono Mountains 125 in late July.

About One Eighty

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