

REVIEW

# SB halftime show a hip-hop triumph

Melissa Ruggieri  
USA TODAY

It wasn't a clash of the hip-hop titans, but a formidable alliance storming the Super Bowl 56 halftime stage.

From Mary J. Blige's confirmation as one of music's undisputed queens ("Family Affair") to Eminem's loquacious rumblyngs ("Lose Yourself"), rap arrived at Inglewood's SoFi Stadium in potent fashion Sunday night.

The rest of this all-star cast — California natives Snoop Dogg, Kendrick Lamar and the emperor among them, Dr. Dre — rolled through liquid rhymes ("California Love," "Still D.R.E.," complete with controversial "still not lovin' the police" lyric) with cool precision.

Snoop, 50, who last week was sued by a former backup dancer alleging sexual assault, kicked it off in typical languid style with a black-clad Dr. Dre for "The Next Episode." The duo stood atop a set of white rooms, an array of kinetic dancers sprawled below on the field and a row of cars.

Former N.W.A. member Dre, who turns 57 on Feb. 18, returned later to play a white piano, the quiet maestro driving this production.

This already-loaded lineup didn't need any guests, so the surprise inclusion of 50 Cent to drop "In Da Club" was cool, but unnecessary, and diminished the momentum.

While it was a bit disconcerting seeing the halftime show performed in daylight, this team of pros still brought the drama — notably Blige, 51, on her own "No More Drama," which included a fe-



Mary J. Blige performed "No More Drama" during the halftime show for Super Bowl 56 at SoFi Stadium. MARK J. REBILAS/USA TODAY SPORTS

ral scream as she strode in her thigh-high white boots and ended the song flat on her back.

Lamar, who received the least amount of time in the 13-minute presentation, spat "Alright" alongside a cadre of dancers wearing Dre sashes, while

Eminem, 49, scurried back and forth during "Lose Yourself," hoodie pulled up, alongside a live band — including Anderson .Paak on drums — as Blige and 50 Cent nodded to the music from a nearby couch.

Eminem also kneeled at the end of

his performance in symbolic solidarity with former NFL quarterback Colin Kaepernick.

The quick performance by Lamar, 34, and the single full song performed by Eminem indicated the problem with trying to stuff too much into extremely limited time (no wonder the rumored Tupac hologram appearance never materialized).

But while these rhyme-hurlers aren't the first major hip-hop names involved in a Super Bowl halftime show, they are undeniably the most potent cluster to share the marquee in one setting.

Throughout halftime history, a parade of rap stars including Queen Latifah, Nelly, Big Boi, Missy Elliott, Travis Scott and Nicki Minaj have popped up onstage with assorted pop and rock performers. But this is the first time that rap is the centerpiece of the halftime spectacle, which typically reaches — or exceeds — 100 million viewers.

As rap continues its chart dominance, this surely won't be the last time the genre is granted the halftime spotlight. Between young superstars such as Lil Nas X and Kodak Black and still-vital veterans Ye (imagine the drama!) and Jay-Z, whose Roc Nation helps produce the halftime shows, the bench is deep.

Sunday's headliners boast a collective 44 Grammys (15 for Eminem, 13 for Lamar, nine for Blige and seven for Dr. Dre; Snoop Dogg has been nominated more than a dozen times but has never won).

Their legacy is immense and their stage was well deserved.

Contributing: Bryan Alexander

MEN'S COLLEGE BASKETBALL

## Gonzaga keeps hold of No. 1 spot

Eddie Timanus  
USA TODAY

Upsets were plentiful in men's college basketball this past week. But Gonzaga avoided any potential traps and strengthened its hold on the No. 1 ranking in the Ferris Mowers Men's Basketball Coaches Poll released Monday.

The Bulldogs ran their winning streak to 14 games with Saturday night's victory against then-No. 22 Saint Mary's. The Zags claim 30 of the 32 first-place votes this week.

Auburn dropped its first SEC game loss of the season during the week, an overtime decision at Arkansas, but retains the No. 2 ranking. The Tigers also keep the remaining pair of first-place nods, helping them ahead of surging Kentucky by three poll points. UK is fol-



**Drew Timme leads Gonzaga past Saint Mary's and Kyle Bowen.**

JAMES SNOOK/USA TODAY

lowed at No. 4 by another set of Wildcats, Arizona.

It was a week of mixed results for several other notable powers. Duke moves up a spot to round out the top five despite a loss to Virginia. No. 6 Kansas also gains a couple of positions but also

dropped a midweek Big 12 contest to Texas. Purdue slips four places to No. 7 after narrowly avoiding a two-loss week Sunday. Baylor is back up to No. 8, and Big East leaders Providence and Villanova complete the top 10.

Tennessee equals Villanova for the biggest jump of the week, climbing five positions to No. 13 thanks to a four-game winning streak. Houston plunges eight places to No. 15 following a pair of losses in the American Athletic Conference.

Murray State rises to No. 21, its highest position since reaching No. 7 during the 2011-12 campaign. Mountain West leader Wyoming joins the poll at No. 22, its first appearance since January 2013. Arkansas also enters, tied for 24th with Connecticut.

Saint Mary's and Wake Forest are this week's dropouts.

## FERRIS MOWERS COACHES POLL

POWERED BY USA TODAY SPORTS

	W-L	Pts	LW
1 Gonzaga (30)	21-2	798	1
2 Auburn (2)	23-2	734	2
3 Kentucky	21-4	731	4
4 Arizona	22-2	725	5
5 Duke	21-4	631	6
6 Kansas	20-4	603	8
7 Purdue	22-4	596	3
8 Baylor	21-4	583	10
9 Providence	21-2	577	11
10 Villanova	19-6	475	15
11 Texas Tech	19-6	451	9
12 Illinois	18-6	441	13
13 Tennessee	18-6	360	18
14 UCLA	17-5	358	12
15 Houston	20-4	351	7
16 Wisconsin	19-5	328	14
17 Southern California	21-4	288	21
18 Ohio State	15-6	278	16
19 Michigan State	18-6	244	17
20 Texas	18-7	170	20
21 Murray State	24-2	105	24
22 Wyoming	21-3	94	26
23 Marquette	16-9	87	19
24 Arkansas	19-6	68	30
24 Connecticut	17-7	68	23

Dropped out: No. 22 Saint Mary's 20-6; No. 25 Wake Forest 20-6. Others receiving votes: Alabama 16-9 55; Saint Mary's 20-6 45; Colorado St. 20-3 33; Xavier 17-7 20; Notre Dame 18-7 18; Wake Forest 20-6 16; Miami (Florida) 18-7 14; LSU 18-7 8; Loyola-Chicago 19-5 7; Southern Methodist 18-5 7; Rutgers 15-9 6; Boise State 19-6 6; Seton Hall 15-8 6; Davidson 20-4 4; San Francisco 21-6 3; Iowa State 16-9 2; North Carolina 18-7 2; Iowa 17-2 2; Missouri St. 19-8 1; Texas Christian 16-6 1. The Ferris Mowers board of coaches is made up of 32 head coaches at Division I institutions. All are members of the National Association of Basketball Coaches.

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# 'Like a gut punch': Wallace crushed after a runner-up finish

Michelle R. Martinelli

For The Win | USA TODAY Network

DAYTONA BEACH, Fla. — Bubba Wallace was devastatingly close, painfully close.

And he felt the agony of defeat immediately, finishing the Daytona 500 on Sunday as the runner-up for the second time in his NASCAR Cup Series career.

Wallace missed out on what could have been his second consecutive superspeedway victory by just 0.036 seconds behind Cup rookie Austin Cindric in the 2022 season opener. It was the third-smallest margin of victory in Daytona 500 history, but in the No. 23 23XI Racing Toyota's driver's eyes, it's first or failure.

"Damn, I wanted to win that one," said Wallace, who's at the beginning of his fifth full-time Cup season and second with Michael Jordan and Denny Hamlin's team.

After parking his car on pit road with Cindric and the No. 2 Team Penske Ford team celebrating in the background, Wallace climbed halfway out of his car and sat in the opening of the driver's seat window, taking a moment to himself. His heartbroken emotions seemed to be building inside, as he held back welling tears in his eyes.

Speaking to the media afterward, he reiterated his dejected feelings.

"Going down the back, (I was like), 'Alright, pal, it can either end really bad or end really good,'" Wallace said he thought to himself on the last lap in overtime. "This could hurt or the victory could be sweet. I think I'd rather get wrecked out than finish second."

He was running among the top-5 drivers during that final trip around the 2.5-mile track. By the time he exited Turn 4 for one last push to the finish line, he was up to third.

"We were gonna turn and burn right there," Wallace's crew chief, Bootie Barker, said about the No. 23 team's approach to the two-lap shootout to close the race. "All out, take 'em out, whatever you've gotta do."

And when Team Penske's Ryan Blaney went to make a move on his teammate Cindric, who was leading the race, Wallace had an opportunity on the inside of the track. Cindric moved to the outside to throw a block on Blaney, but with an open lane on the inside, Wallace just couldn't get there.

"I felt like I had a really good chance to lose it, and to lose it means you've got a shot to win it," Cindric said.

"You talk about Brad (Keselowski), Ryan, Bubba — a lot of the guys that I was having to fend off there at the end of the race are guys that have been in



Bubba Wallace finished second in the 2022 Daytona 500 in one of the closest finishes in race history.

MIKE DINOVO/USA TODAY SPORTS

the sport for a while and have paid their dues and put themselves in position every time at these types of races."

This is the second time Wallace has been in this specific situation, finishing second to Austin Dillon in the 2018 Daytona 500. But he said this one came with "a total different emotion."

Wallace was a Cup rookie four years ago and said he "didn't know what (he) was doing" back then running up toward the front. This time, he "really thought we had it."

"I didn't have a fighting chance in the first time in 2018," Wallace said. "This one, being that close, it's just like a gut punch. So going from all the confidence in the world to literally having it ripped out from underneath you is a really (expletive) feeling."

Wallace being in contention at the end was far from a surprise. He now has four top-5 finishes at Daytona and was the runner-up in August in the 400-mile regular-season finale before earning his first Cup victory at Talladega Superspeedway in October.

"He definitely has a knack for (superspeedway races)," Barker said, noting it's instinctual and not something you can teach racers. "You gotta have good stuff, but Bubba's exceptional at these places."

23XI Racing director of competition Mike Wheeler praised Wallace's confidence and aggressiveness in the final laps not taking his foot off the gas. But second place, even one by 0.036 seconds, still isn't a win, and it stings, Barker said.

Wallace caught his first glimpse of the finish on the big screen while on pit road and couldn't help but look as it replayed.

"Ooooh, I don't want to see that," he said. "That sucks! God! That sucks!"



Austin Cindric and his team celebrate in victory lane Sunday after winning the Daytona 500. DAVID TUCKER/THE DAYTONA BEACH NEWS-JOURNAL

# Racer's dream: Cindric 'didn't make a mistake' in Daytona 500 win

Michelle R. Martinelli

For The Win | USA TODAY Network

DAYTONA BEACH, Fla. — For the past 3 1/2 months, Austin Cindric has been "haunted" by his performance in the NASCAR Xfinity Series championship race.

"Every moment of every day," he said of how often he thinks about losing a second consecutive championship in the second-tier series by 0.030 seconds to Daniel Hemric in November.

"I've never been in so much pain that I wanted to vomit. Never in my life have I been in so much pain, felt like I let so many people down that I've wanted to just throw up on the sport."

But in the 23-year-old rookie's debut as a full-time Cup Series driver, he found redemption, taking the checkered flag in the biggest race of his life, Sunday's Daytona 500, for his first win at NASCAR's highest level.

"This makes up for losing the championship last year," Cindric said. "It's a racer's dream, and so many people get close to it. And I feel very grateful and very proud to be able to pull it off."

Replacing Brad Keselowski — who became a driver-owner for Roush Fenway Keselowski Racing — in the No. 2 Team Penske Ford, Cindric edged Bubba Wallace by 0.036 seconds in the third-closest Daytona 500 finish.

It was Cindric's eighth Cup start, and he became the second-youngest Daytona 500 champ after 2011 winner Trevor Bayne, then 20. He led 21 laps.

He raced like, and beat, hard-charging Cup veterans in the final laps around the 2.5-mile track, elevated by his No. 2 Ford that was fast enough to finish second in his qualifying race Thursday and start fifth in "The Great American Race."

"If you looked at Austin this week

and the way he ran, he didn't make a mistake today," said team owner Roger Penske, who celebrated his 85th birthday Sunday. "He was up second, third, almost the entire race, and then at the end to be able to pull it off, (it) shows you the quality of kid he is and also the experience that he already has as a young man."

With multiple wrecks in the final 10 laps of the 200 go-rounds scheduled — fairly standard for the end of the Daytona 500 — NASCAR went to overtime and ended the race with a two-lap shootout.

Cindric clung to his lead from the inside lane after the final restart with teammate Ryan Blaney, Keselowski and Wallace among those chasing him. Coming out of Turn 4 on the last lap, Blaney moved to the top of the track to attempt to pass his teammate, but Cindric went with him and threw a block.

Blaney made contact with the outside wall as Wallace went to the inside, but they ran out of time to get around Cindric.

"I was able to get Austin in front and off of (Turn) 4, where we were good enough to make a move," Blaney said. "I got blocked and I ended up getting fenced."

Confident going into the weekend, Cindric said he knew he had a car capable of winning. NASCAR's second-longest oval breeds chaos, and simply being in the wrong place at the wrong time can shatter very realistic shots at winning the Daytona 500.

"I did not pack an extra set of clothes, by the way, so I'm not that confident," Cindric said, laughing about how his expectations influenced his weekend wardrobe.

"I'll be re-wearing my clothes from (Sunday on Monday), and I will have fresh underwear," he joked. "So that's a win."

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**Responses Due:**  
Thursday, March 24th, 2022 2:00 PM CST

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**AMMUNITION, WEAPONS, AND POLICE GEAR**

**Lead Agency:**  
Region 14 ESC

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**ATHLETIC EQUIPMENT, TEAM, CHEER AND BAND UNIFORMS. HELMET RECONDITIONING/ RECERTIFICATION**

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Region 14 ESC

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**AUCTION SERVICES**

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Region 14 ESC

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**BUSINESS PROCESS AUTOMATION SOLUTIONS AND SERVICES**

**Lead Agency:**  
Region 14 ESC

**Responses Due:**  
Thursday, April 7th, 2022 2:00 PM CST

**Addendum #1:**  
*Response Due Date Changed*

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**CAPITAL BUILDING & BOND PROGRAM MANAGEMENT SOFTWARE**

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**CENTRAL PLANT AS-A-SERVICE PROGRAM**

**Lead Agency:**  
Region 14 ESC

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**DIGITAL HEALTHCARE GUIDANCE – DIABETES**

**Lead Agency:**  
Region 14 ESC

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**DIGITAL HEALTHCARE GUIDANCE – HYPERTENSION AND HEART DISEASE**

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**DIGITAL HEALTHCARE GUIDANCE - MENTAL HEALTH**

**Lead Agency:**  
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**DRAPERY RESTORATION SERVICES**

**Lead Agency:**  
Region 14 ESC

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**EDUCATIONAL CARPETS AND MATS**

**Lead Agency:**  
Region 14 ESC

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**ELECTRICAL & POWER SERVICES**

**Lead Agency:**  
Region 14 ESC

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**ENVIRONMENTAL SPILL RESPONSE, SECONDARY SPILL CONTAINMENT SOLUTIONS**

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Region 14 ESC

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**FIXED AND VEHICLE LICENSE PLATE RECOGNITION**

**Lead Agency:**  
Region 14 ESC

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**GLASS**

**Lead Agency:**  
Region 14 ESC

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**LOCKERS, BLEACHERS, TEAM BENCHES, GYMNASIUM SEATING AND RELATED PRODUCTS AND SERVICES**

**Lead Agency:**  
Region 14 ESC

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**PLUMBING SUPPLIES, HVAC PRODUCTS AND BUILDING SUPPLIES**

**Lead Agency:**  
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**PRIVACY PODS AND FURNITURE BOOTH**

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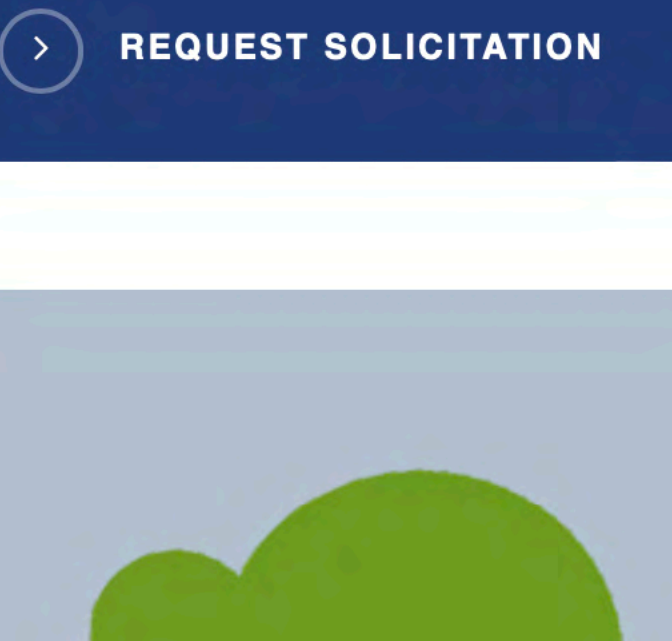
**STRATEGIC ENROLLMENT MANAGEMENT, POSITIVE CLASSROOM, AND TEACHER COACHING SOLUTIONS**

**Lead Agency:**  
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**SYSTEMS AND INFORMATION MANAGEMENT SOFTWARE**

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**TRAFFIC CONTROL, ENFORCEMENT, & SIGNAL PREEMPTION EQUIPMENT**

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