

NASCAR Sprint Cup Series – Daytona 500

Date: Feb.14, 2010
Event: The Daytona 500 (Race 1 of 36)
Series: NASCAR Sprint Cup Series
Location: Daytona International Speedway (2.5 mile tri-oval)
Winner: Jamie McMurray of Earnhardt Ganassi Racing
JGR Finish: Kyle Busch, No. 18 M&Ms Toyota (Started 7th, Finish 14th, running 208 of 208 laps)
Denny Hamlin, No. 11 FedEx Express Toyota (Started 25th, Finish 17th, running 208 of 208 laps)
Joey Logano, No. 20 Home Depot Toyota (Started 16th, Finish 20th, running 208 of 208 laps)

Joe Gibbs Racing opened the NASCAR Sprint Cup Series season with strong hopes for each of its three teams to race for the checkered flag in the Great American Race today at Daytona International Speedway.

When the Daytona 500 was over it was Kyle Busch who would lead JGR's three-team contingent with a 14th-place finish in the No. 18 M&Ms Toyota, while Denny Hamlin finished 17th in the No. 11 FedEx Express Toyota and Joey Logano brought the No. 20 Home Depot Toyota home in 20th position.

It appeared that Hamlin and Busch might have an opportunity on the race's first attempt for a green-white-checker finish, with the two lining up nose to tail in fifth and seventh position respectively on lap 199 with hopes of working together for a late run to the front. Unfortunately a near accident on that restart in front of the two teammates forced both to check-up and lose several positions. A caution came out a moment later for an unrelated accident, but the two had lost significant ground and when the race restarted for the final time on lap 207, neither was able to make a closing run.

Busch had started the race in the seventh position and spent the early portion of the racing working with crew chief Dave Rogers to find the proper handle on the car. With each stop it appeared the adjustments were working as Busch began racing near the front of the field around the midway point of the race and even leading three laps. Busch would remain in the hunt for a win throughout the second half of the race.

Meanwhile Hamlin and Logano each showed patience early as well;

with each staying toward the back of the lead pack of cars for much of the first half of the race. Hamlin began to make his move forward over the course of the final 50 laps of the race and appeared in position to compete for the victory before he and Busch were shuffled back on the late restart.

Logano would find his progress over the second half of the race hampered when his car began to overheat as a result of damage to the front end of the No. 20 following contact with the No. 17 of Matt Kenseth. The Home Depot crew was able to make repairs and keep the car on the lead lap, but Logano was forced to the rear of the field. In addition, the No. 20 also had several issues along pit road as neighboring teams boxed him in several times resulting in delays leaving pit road. Logano was also involved in a late-race incident when Bill Elliot got loose and turned up into him causing damage that required repairs. Quick work once again by the Home Depot crew kept him in the hunt over the race's final laps and Logano was able to make up several spots in the field to earn a 20th-place finish.

Jamie McMurray of Earnhardt-Ganassi Racing captured the win, while Dale Earnhardt, Jr. was second, Greg Biffle third, Clint Bowyer fourth, and David Reutimann rounded out the top-five. There were a total of nine cautions for 40 laps, as well as two red flag stoppages to repair a hole in the race track that first appeared between turns 1 and 2 a little over halfway through the race. Ten drivers failed to finish the race which was extended eight laps for two attempts at the green-white-checked finish.

The NASCAR Sprint Cup Series season heads west next week to Fontana, CA for the Auto Club 500 at Auto Club Speedway next Sunday, February 21 at 3 PM. Fox will provide live high-definition coverage of the race starting at 2 PM ET. Sirius NASCAR radio channel 128 and MRN Radio will also provide live coverage.