

NASCAR Sprint Cup Series - Homestead

Date: November 20, 2011
Event: Ford 400 (Race 36 of 36)
Series: NASCAR Sprint Cup Series
Location: Homestead-Miami Speedway (1.5-Mile Oval)
Winner: Tony Stewart of Stewart-Haas Racing
JGR Finish: Denny Hamlin, (Started 10th, Finished 9th/Running 267 of 267 laps)
Joey Logano, (Started 32nd, Finished 19th/ Running, 267 of 267 laps)
Kyle Busch (Started 19th, Finished 23rd /Running, 266 of 267 laps)

Denny Hamlin led Joe Gibbs Racing with a ninth-place finish in yesterday's NASCAR Sprint Cup Series season finale at Homestead-Miami Speedway. Meanwhile Joey Logano finished the day in 19th and a late stop for fuel left Kyle Busch in 23rd.

Hamlin started the No. 11 FedEx Express Toyota from the 10th position and battled tight conditions through the early going, but crew chief Mike Ford and the FedEx crew were able to make adjustments to help the No. 11 Camry turn better in the corners. Rain on lap 110 would force NASCAR to red flag the race with Hamlin in the 13th position. The red flag would last just over an hour and a great pit stop to follow allowed Hamlin to restart in the top 10. He would race his way up into the top five on the next run and was the fastest car on the track at one point. Pit strategy would call for a four-tire stop with just over 100 laps remaining leaving Hamlin to restart back outside of the top ten. He would manage to drive his way back toward the top ten over the next 30 laps. Rain would bring another caution with just over 50 laps remaining and Hamlin would come back down pit road for fuel and tires. He would restart 13th when the race would restart with 37 to go and was able to drive his way up to ninth for the checkered flag.

Logano started the No. 20 Home Depot Toyota in the 32nd position and battled tight conditions throughout the early portion of the race.

Crew chief Greg Zipadelli and The Home Depot crew would make adjustments to his Camry during early pit stops and when rain stopped the race on lap 110 he had driven up to just outside the top 20. A great pit stop once the red flag was lifted put Logano inside the top 15 and he would race way up toward the top 10 over the next 100 laps. Logano would get four tires on a pit stop with just over 100 laps remaining and with many up front taking just two he would be left to restart 15th. Unfortunately the No. 20 Camry would suddenly prove tight in the center of the turn and loose on the exit. The shift in handling conditions caused Logano to fall back to 18th over the course of the next run. Rain brought another caution with just over 50 laps remaining and the 20 car would come down pit road for tires and fuel leaving him to restart in 22nd with 37 to go. He would manage to drive his way inside the top 20 for a 19th-place finish.

Busch qualified the No. 18 Interstate Batteries Toyota in the 19th position and was able to race his way toward the top ten through the early going despite battling tight conditions. He would make his way inside the top 10 when rain stopped the race on lap 110. The red flag conditions would last for just over an hour as they dried the track and a solid pit stop allowed him to restart in the sixth position. He would battle for a top five spot over the next portion of the race. The team would elect to take four tires on a pit stop with just over 100 laps remaining leaving him to restart outside the top ten after several leaders decided to take just two. Busch would still manage to settle into the 11th position over the course of the next run. Rain would bring another caution with just over 50 laps remaining and the 18 team would make the decision to remain out on the track. That left Busch as the leader on the restart with 37 laps remaining, but with older tires than most of the other leaders he was unable to hold onto the lead and would fall back into the sixth spot. Unfortunately the race would remain green until the end and with no caution Busch was forced to come down pit road for a final splash of gas. It would result in the No. 18 Camry falling a lap of the pace. Busch would go on to finish 23rd.

Tony Stewart captured the victory, with Carl Edwards second, Martin Truex, Jr. third, Matt Kenseth fourth, and Jeff Gordon rounded out the

top-five. There were eight cautions for a total of 54 laps, including one red flag stop due to rain that lasted over an hour. There were also 26 lead changes among 15 different drivers over the course of the 267-lap race.

Stewart's victory clinched his third NASCAR Sprint Cup Series Championship, while Edwards, although tied in points, finished second based upon the first tie-breaker which is total wins. Stewart record five wins in 2011, all of which came in the Chase, while Edwards had just one.

Joe Gibbs Racing appreciates all the support throughout this season. The team will be hard at work this offseason in preparation for next year, which will start with "The Great American Race" – The Daytona 500 – on Sunday, February 26, 2012.