

Toyota Drivers Battle at Bristol and Brainerd

August 20, 2018



Toyota drivers captured victories in ARCA and POWRi competition over the weekend, while battles took place in NASCAR at the Bristol Motor Speedway short track and the Countdown to the Championship picture continued to take formation as NHRA competed in Brainerd, Minnesota.

NASCAR

Short track racing was on full display on Saturday as the Monster Energy NASCAR Cup Series (MENCs) took to Bristol Motor Speedway. Camry driver Erik Jones was the highest-finishing Toyota driver as the No. 20 Camry finished fifth.

For Jones, the fifth-place showing was his third top-five finish in his last four races.

“We were a little bit tight on the short run,” said Jones. “It was good on the long run – about 80, 60 laps in we were pretty good, but just didn’t have enough. It felt like we were having to hustle really hard all night – harder than you really should to be good here. The Sport Clips Camry was alright. We got up there and contended for a bit. Restarted second, that’s all you can ask for – having a shot. Just didn’t have enough. This is a good day for us. Bristol is a good spot for us and happy to run in the top five, but obviously want to go and contend for the win.”

Toyota driver Kyle Busch started in the third position, but an accident on lap two sent him two laps down. Busch fought through the field to break into the top two in the night's final stage, but finished 20th.

“That was just me and this team and never giving up and being able to drive up through the field like that,” said Busch. “This M&M's Camry was fast, even torn up and wrecked and everything else, it was fast.”

In Friday night's NASCAR Xfinity Series (NXS) race, Christopher Bell finished in the runner-up spot after battling with fellow dirt-track racer Kyle Larson. Bell led a total of 18 laps (of 310) at the half-mile short track.

“I thought we had a shot at him if it stayed green,” said Bell. “Heck, even with the yellow, I thought we were still going to have a shot at him, but that second to last run when I was leading some laps – me and Kyle (Larson) were really equal, I told my crew chief Jason (Ratcliff) that I couldn't afford to be any looser and he tightened up for the last run and just tightening it up and restarting on the bottom and then lost track position. I just couldn't ever get back up there to challenge him. I wasn't good enough to pass those guys. We got a couple bad restart lines which put us back in the field, but the most important one there on the green-white-checker, we got the right restart line so that's all that matters.”

The NASCAR Camping World Truck Series (NCWTS) completed their regular season during Thursday night's race at Bristol Motor Speedway. As the series prepares to start their Playoffs next weekend at Canada's Canadian Tire Motorsport Park, two Toyota Tundra drivers in Noah Gragson and Brett Moffitt will be among the eight contending for this year's championship.

For Gragson, it will be his first time in the NCWTS Playoffs. He is excited about all of the Playoffs tracks on the schedule.

“I feel like we'll be good at the road course, Canada,” said Gragson. “I feel really confident about the selection of tracks within the playoffs. You have the road course, which I feel really confident about – finished second there last year – Talladega, that's kind of a wild card. We got Vegas, that's my hometown, so that's a really good one and then the three after that – Martinsville, Texas, Phoenix – I'm really pumped up. We sat on the pole at Texas, almost won last year and Phoenix and won last year at Martinsville. Just got to keep on working hard to get to Homestead and really excited for the tracks coming up.”

NHRA

Toyota driver Antron Brown advanced to the Top Fuel finals before falling to Billy Torrence on a hole-shot at the Lucas Oil NHRA Nationals at Brainerd International Raceway. It marked the third final round appearance for Brown in the last five events.

J.R. Todd drove his DHL Toyota Camry to the Funny Car semifinals. Brown and Todd clinched their berths in NHRA's Countdown to the Championship this weekend, joining the previously qualified Doug Kalitta.

ARCA

Toyota driver Christian Eckes won the ARCA race at one of two dirt tracks the series competes on annually in Springfield, Illinois.

The win was Eckes second ARCA Racing Series win of 2018 – having won at Salem earlier this season.

Through 15 ARCA Series races this season, Toyota drivers have come away victorious in 14 of them.

POWRi

Kevin Thomas Jr. won Saturday night's POWRi Lucas Oil National Midget League feature at Macon Speedway. The win was the third for Thomas Jr. with Toyota power this season and the fourth for Petry Motorsports, which also captured a second podium finish with Jerry Coons, Jr., who placed third.

Zach Daum took the win in Sunday night's race in Wisconsin. He led Tucker Klaasmeyer and Jason McDougal across the finish line in a Toyota one-two-three finish at Angell Park Speedway.

Overall, it was the 29th and 30th national midget feature win for a Toyota-powered driver in 2018.

IMSA

3GT Racing drivers Dominik Baumann and Kyle Marcelli claimed their second victory of the season in the No. 14 Lexus RC F GT3 in Sunday's race at Virginia International Raceway (VIR) in the IMSA WeatherTech SportsCar Championship GTD class. The team previously earned their first class win at Mid-Ohio Sports Car Course in May, marking the first North American victory for the Lexus RC F GT3.

"It's just a great feeling," said Dominik Baumann. "It's the first year for me in IMSA with the team and everything. All of the tracks are new for me so it's always a new challenge going to all of the race tracks and learning them from the first practice on every week. Just a great feeling to win today. It was a good day."

What's Next

The Monster Energy NASCAR Cup Series is off this weekend for the final time this season. The NASCAR Xfinity Series heads to Road America for a Saturday showdown on August 25 at 3 p.m. ET on NBCSN. The NASCAR Camping World Truck Series heads to Canadian Tire Motorsport Park for its first Playoff contest of the year. The Trucks are slated to race on Sunday, August 26 at 2:30 p.m. ET on FS1.

The NASCAR K&N Pro Series East and West series' combine for a race on Friday, August 24 at Gateway Motorsports Park. The race will air tape-delayed on Thursday, August 30 at 6 p.m. ET on NBCSN.

The ARCA Racing Series is in action on Saturday, August 25 at 3 p.m. ET on MAVTV at Berlin Raceway.

USAC Racing will race four times this week at Kokomo Speedway in Kokomo, Indiana beginning Wednesday, August 22 and going through Saturday, August 25.