

Cruzin' to Victory, NHRA Win Tops Weekend Racing

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Toyota Racing drivers triumphed in both NHRA Mello Yello Drag Racing Series and ARCA Racing Series action over the weekend, while the 2019 Toyota Corolla Hatchback continues to hold first in points after another podium finish in Formula DRIFT.

NASCAR

Camry driver Daniel Suárez scored his second-straight top-10 finish and was the top Toyota in Sunday's Monster Energy NASCAR Cup Series (MENCS) contest at Talladega Superspeedway, which was won by former Toyota driver Joey Logano.

Suárez led one lap (of 188) in Alabama, while his Joe Gibbs Racing teammate Denny Hamlin led 11 laps en route to a 14th-place finish in his Camry.

“We went out there to survive and tried to get a decent finish and that’s what we got,” said Suárez. “We have to keep working to get these race cars a little bit better. There were a lot of people who were having issues handling-wise – we were one of them as well.”

Kyle Busch finished 13th on the 2.66-mile track and continues to lead the MENCS point standings with a 30-point advantage over second place.

The day prior, Camry drivers Brandon Jones and Noah Gragson finished second and fourth, respectively, in the NASCAR Xfinity Series (NXS) race on the Alabama track in an event won by Spencer Gallagher.

“These last couple weeks have been such a confidence booster for myself and this team,” said Jones. “It’s meant so much to have this team help me out and get me where I need to be. I didn’t think second was going to be what we had, but I wish we could have gotten that one extra to be in victory lane today.”

With his finish, Jones moved up to eighth in the point standings, while Gragson tallied his second-consecutive top-five finish in just his second start in the NXS.

“I’m extremely pumped up to come here to fourth,” said Gragson. “It felt like I needed to be more aggressive there. I’m just learning. I’m not really used to these superspeedway races. I had a fast Switch Toyota Camry. We came up short, but, hey, I still had fun [and] learned a lot. Better than I thought I was going to finish, so I’m fired up.”

In NASCAR K&N Pro Series East action at Virginia’s Langley Speedway, Toyota driver Tyler Dippel claimed the victory, marking Toyota’s third-straight triumph of the season.

NHRA

Cruz Pedregon finished off a dominating performance in his Toyota Camry by defeating three drivers in the Funny Car finals to win the NHRA Four-Wide Nationals at zMAX Dragway in Charlotte on Sunday.

Pedregon’s win was the third-consecutive for a Camry in Funny Car competition this season.

“Our Snap-on Camry was really good all day,” said Pedregon, who passed Don Prudhomme for fifth all-time with his 36th-career Funny Car win. “We had three really good runs and earned lane choice for

each of the last two rounds. This might just be the sweetest win of my career. It shows you can be a single, independent team with no attachments to the big teams and if you hire the right people and have the funding you can win out here.”

Pedregon became the fourth different Toyota driver to win in NHRA in 2018.

In Top Fuel, Doug Kalitta narrowly missed earning his second win of the year and fell to Steve Torrence in the finals.

Formula DRIFT

Both Fredric Aasbø (third) and Ryan Tuerck (fourth) advanced to the Final 4 in Formula DRIFT’s second event of the year at Orlando Speed World on Saturday.

Aasbø piloted the 2019 Toyota Corolla Hatchback to a podium finish on the Orlando short track after he won

the season-opener in Long Beach.

“To debut a new car with back-to-back podium finishes is incredible,” said Aasbø. “These results say a lot about the whole team and are a credit to the fantastic support we get from Rockstar Energy Drink, Toyota and Nexen Tire.”

Aasbø eliminated his Toyota teammate Ken Gushi in the Great 8 before advancing to a Final 4 matchup with Chris Forsberg. The two former Formula D champions battled to an OMT (one more time), before Forsberg eliminated Aasbø in their second matchup.

“I knew Chris [Forsberg] would do well when I saw he was coming back onto Nexen tires this year,” explained Aasbø. “He’s really able to make the most of the power and I had a hard time chasing him down. He was on rails all day.”

Forsberg eliminated James Deane to win the event.

Aasbø continues to lead the Formula D point standings with a 19-point advantage over Deane. ‘The Norwegian Hammer’ now has finishes of sixth or better in nine of his last 10 contests.

ARCA

Toyota driver Zane Smith was triumphant in ARCA Racing Series action at Talladega on Friday to give Toyota its fourth-straight victory to open the 2018 ARCA season.

The victory was the second of the year for Smith, who sits second in the point standings.

Toyota drivers Michael Self and Sheldon Creed finished third and fourth, respectively, and Creed continues to lead in points.

What’s Next

All three NASCAR national series will compete at Delaware’s Dover International Speedway. The NASCAR Camping World Truck Series races on Friday, May 4 at 5:00 p.m. with television coverage on FS1. The NXS races on Saturday, May 5 at 1:30 p.m. and the MENCS on Sunday, May 6 at 2:00 p.m. televised on FS1.

In regional action, the NASCAR K&N Pro Series West will race at Arizona’s Tucson Speedway on Saturday, May 5 at 9:00 p.m. ET. The event will be tape delayed for broadcast on NBCSN on Wednesday, May 9 at 6:00 p.m. ET.

The NHRA Mello Yello Drag Racing Series next competes at Atlanta Dragway in suburban Atlanta from Friday to Sunday, May 4-6 with television coverage on FS1 and FS2.

The POWRi National Midget League races twice in Missouri this weekend with contests at Valley Speedway on Friday, May 4 and Lucas Oil Speedway on Saturday, May 5.