

Toyotas Open Strong at Daytona

February 19, 2018

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MENCS

Camry driver Hamlin continued his restrictor plate success over the weekend as he earned his third top-four

finish in the Daytona 500 in his last four starts in the race. He led 22 laps (of 207) in the 500-mile Monster Energy NASCAR Cup Series (MENCs) race after his Camry started on the front row for The Great American race. Hamlin has not finished outside the top 25 at the superspeedway since 2013.

“Definitely disappointed after leading on the last restart, but it’s just a 50-50 shot,” said Hamlin, following the race. “It’s about what line can stay organized and work the best. I had the 37 (Chris Buescher) committed to my rear bumper which was great, but we couldn’t get the 21 (Paul Menard) to buy in. We just didn’t have the line to win. I’m proud of our whole FedEx Camry team for giving me a car that we were able to battle back and lead a lap there and give ourselves a chance.”

Defending MENCs champion Martin Truex Jr. found speed in his Camry mid-race in the Daytona 500 – leading four laps. He would ultimately finish 18th after battling the last few laps to stay with the pack upfront.

“It was our day for a while and then it wasn’t,” stated the defending champion. “It’s just the way it goes. Superspeedway racing – a lot of it is out of your control. That last caution in hindsight, we probably should have gotten tires. Tried to come up from the back because we were sitting ducks upfront. We didn’t have enough speed to keep up with some of those guys up front. I’d get back there but didn’t have the speed to get by them. It was just one of those deals where we needed it to stay green to be in a good spot. It just didn’t work out in the end.”

In only his second-career Daytona 500 start, Camry driver Erik Jones was out to a hot start. The 21-year-old led 11 laps early before getting caught up in a multi-car incident on Lap 61 that also collected fellow Toyota driver Daniel Suárez, who was running in the top five at the time.

“It looked like the 17 (Ricky Stenhouse Jr.) just got freed up there by the 12 (Ryan Blaney), unfortunately,” said Jones. “We tried to check up and everybody got stacked up, and caused a big wreck. It’s unfortunate because the DEWALT Camry was definitely fast – we just didn’t get to the end to see what we could really do. We were in position I thought to have a good race. We were staying upfront and out of trouble, it just didn’t work out.”

NXS

In Saturday’s NASCAR Xfinity Series (NXS) race at Daytona, Suárez was the highest finishing Camry driver in eighth.

In his debut with Toyota and Joe Gibbs Racing, Brandon Jones scored a top-10 finish after early damage to his No. 19 Camry put him towards the back of the field. The 10th-place finish was the 18th top 10 of his career in the NXS and first with Toyota and JGR.

Jones was jubilant after his first race with Toyota.

“I’ve never had a race like this before at Daytona – this was a pretty crazy race,” said the driver of the No. 19 Camry. “Heck of a race with our guys for the first time. I thought we were going to end up in the back there and not have a great day, but we ended up with a top-10 and that says a lot about this organization and a lot about what Toyota does for us. It was pretty incredible to pull off a top-10 off after looking at this car here today.”

NCWTS

In his NASCAR Camping World Truck Series (NCWTS) debut with Toyota and Kyle Busch Motorsports, Spencer Davis wheeled his Tundra to a seventh-place result at Daytona Friday night.

Davis was not only proud of where he and the No. 51 Tundra team finished, but felt accomplishment for showing patience in his first NASCAR national series race.

“The big word coming into this weekend was patience and it showed,” said Davis. “We rode around on the bottom and stayed out of trouble – stayed out of the big ones and just tried to make it to the end.”

NCWTS pole sitter David Gilliland received contact to his Tundra late in the race and ultimately finished 21st, while Noah Gragson and Brett Moffitt finished 23rd and 26th, respectively.

What’s Next:

The Monster Energy NASCAR Cup Series is back in action Sunday, Feb. 25 at Atlanta Motor Speedway at 2 p.m. ET on FOX.

On Saturday, Feb. 24, the NASCAR Xfinity Series and NASCAR Camping World Truck Series will race a doubleheader Atlanta Motor Speedway with the NXS race at 2 p.m. ET and the NCWTS event at 4:30 p.m. ET – both on FS1.

NHRA hits the drag strip for the NHRA Arizona Nationals Sunday, Feb. 24 at 6:30 p.m. ET on FS1.

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