

Toyota NASCAR, POWri Victories and Championship Highlight Weekend

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NASCAR

Kyle Busch won Sunday's Monster Energy NASCAR Cup Series Playoff event at Dover International Speedway when he made a late-race pass by Chase Elliott to earn his second consecutive win in as many races.

"It's no doubt the moment that you live for," Busch said of his late-race pass for victory. "It's the moment that all these guys live for and what we do with this M&M's Caramel team and this Toyota Camry was not the best there early on, but we made a lot of gains on it and got it where it was really good there at the end."

Busch started second in the Joe Gibbs Racing No. 18 Camry and led four times for 30 laps (of 400) in the final Round 1 event of the Playoffs en route to his fourth win of the season and 38th victory behind the wheel of a Camry in Cup Series action.

In addition to Busch's win, Martin Truex Jr. finished fourth for Toyota. Truex started Sunday's race from the pole position and led the field three times for 51 laps.

“It seemed like on the short run we weren’t quite good enough and then on the long run we still weren’t quite good enough. We were just off a little bit all day,” Truex added. “Fired off the start of the race there and it took off really good and I thought well we might be in for a great day. And then once we got back after that caution caught us back in sixth or so, we could just never get back there. Thought maybe we should have been second or third, but that last run just really went away on us.”

Toyota won all three Playoff races in Round 1 with Truex’s win at Chicagoland to begin the Playoffs and Busch’s two most recent wins. Busch and Truex automatically advanced to the Round of 12 with their respective victories and fellow Camry playoff competitors Denny Hamlin and Matt Kenseth also advanced to the second round with their point’s positions.

In Saturday afternoon’s NASCAR XFINITY Series (NXS) race at Dover, Camry drivers Matt Tifft (sixth) and Daniel Suárez (seventh) recorded top-10 finishes.

Tifft now sits seventh in the XFINITY Series Playoff standings, and is currently inside the eight-driver cutoff which will take place following this Saturday’s race at Charlotte Motor Speedway.

“We kind of knew today that we were going to have an uphill battle starting from the back, but then right off the bat we got smacked in the back,” Tifft explained. “I was hoping the damage wasn’t going to be too severe and it wasn’t – it didn’t affect us at all. It was a great day for our team. We just need to keep that consistency rolling through next week in Charlotte.”

Tundra driver Ben Rhodes waited until the 2017 NASCAR Camping World Truck Series (NCWTS) Playoffs to claim his first-career victory and did so by holding off his fellow title contender and Toyota teammate Christopher Bell at Las Vegas Motor Speedway on Saturday night.

Rhodes led the field for 20 laps (of 146) – including the final seven to the checkered flag – and won Stage 2 of the race en route to his first-career NASCAR national series triumph.

“This was uncontrollable screaming on the radio,” Rhodes said of his immediate reaction to the win. “This is the biggest high of my life. This is crazy. I just never thought it would come after so many things went wrong and now it did and we’re here.”

With his win, Rhodes joins Bell in earning an automatic berth into the next, three-race round of the Truck Series Playoffs and now sits second in the point standings – trailing just Bell, who finished the race second.

The MENCS and NXS next race at Charlotte on Saturday and Sunday, October 7-8, while the NCWTS has an off week and will return to action in the series’ elimination race at Talladega Superspeedway on Saturday, October 14.

Toyota driver Harrison Burton captured the NASCAR K&N Pro Series East (NKNPSE) championship with a victory in the season-finale at Dover International Speedway on Friday, marking his first career NASCAR title and the fifth East Series championship for Toyota.

“It was a hard battle and I’m kind of speechless,” Burton said. “I remember being at the banquet last year after a pretty bad season and saying, ‘I want to win this championship,’ and that’s why I made the decision to come back and run again was for this moment right here. It’s totally worth it – I can tell you that much.”

The 16-year-old, Huntersville, North Carolina-native captured the title following a close, season-long battle with fellow Toyota driver Todd Gilliland. Burton claimed the championship on the strength of five wins and top-10 finishes in all 14 series starts this season.

The son of former Monster Energy NASCAR Cup Series driver Jeff Burton, Harrison won the title in his second full-time NKNPSE season, while also competing part-time for Kyle Busch Motorsports in the NCWTS.

NHRA

Doug Kalitta advanced to the final round in Top Fuel competition before falling to Steve Torrence by a scant .008 seconds on Sunday to lead Toyota at the AAA Insurance NHRA Midwest Nationals at Gateway Motorsports Park in suburban St. Louis.

Kalitta defeated Scott Palmer, Brittany Force and Dom Lagana to set up his final round match-up with Torrence. Kalitta had a .006 advantage at the light and went on to run a 3.698, only to fall just shy of Torrence's 3.684.

“Tough way to end a great race weekend for this Mac Tools Toyota team,” Kalitta said. “We had a great hot rod and just came up a little short there in the final. We still have a shot at this title and I have the best group behind me. We will put these Mac Tools to work and go some more rounds in Dallas.”

Defending world champion Antron Brown advanced to the semi-finals Sunday before being eliminated by Torrence in a close match-up.

In Funny Car, Alexis DeJoria drove her Camry to the fourth spot in qualifying and then defeated fellow Toyota driver Cruz Pedregon in the first round before losing to Jonnie Lindberg in the second round.

NHRA next competes at Texas Motorplex in Ennis, Texas, October 13-15.

POWRi

Spencer Bayston held off fellow Toyota driver Tucker Klaasmeyer to capture a POWRi win on Saturday night and sweep the weekend double-header at Illinois' Belle-Clair Speedway.

Bayston also won Friday night's feature at the track and now has seven national midget feature wins this season. Saturday's victory marked the 32nd triumph for a Toyota-powered driver in 2017.

“It was a little bit ugly, but it was a win,” Bayston said who has won his last four national midget feature events. “I can't thank everyone at Keith Kunz Motorsports, TRD (Toyota Racing Development), Toyota Racing and all of the fans that came out enough.”

After a mid-race restart, Toyota's Logan Seavey started to pull away, while Bayston had moved up through the field into the second spot with Klaasmeyer running fourth. As the laps began to wind down, it appeared that Seavey was on the way to a dominating victory, only to see it slip away after he spun and then rolled coming out of turn four on lap 26.

The race restarted with five laps remaining and Bayston in the lead, while Klaasmeyer had moved up to third.

On lap 28, Klaasmeyer would pass for second behind Bayston, but he was unable to catch the eventual winner.

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