

Toyota Claims Formula Drift Manufacturer Title, Three Race Victories

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NASCAR

Camry driver Denny Hamlin had the top-finishing Toyota entry in Monster Energy NASCAR Cup Series action at Alabama's Talladega Superspeedway on Sunday with a sixth-place result, while rookie Gray Gaulding finished a career-best ninth.

With his finish, Hamlin ranks fifth in the Playoff standings, while Camry driver Martin Truex Jr. continues to lead the field in points. Camry title contenders Kyle Busch and Matt Kenseth rank ninth and 10th, respectively, in the standings with one race remaining before the championship field is cut to eight drivers.

Parker Kligerman can put in work in the TV booth and behind the wheel of a Toyota Tundra and showed the latter on Saturday when he won at Talladega. The part-time driver and NBC Sports analyst/pit reporter led three laps in the event, including the final lap to the checkered flag.

"It was just crazy and every move worked," Kligerman said. "Sometimes they click and those last 10 laps, whether I went high and I separated from the pack or I tried to get the bump and the run, every move just

worked. Sometimes they go your way and that was awesome.”

Kligerman’s triumph was his second-career Truck Series win in a Tundra.

All three Tundra drivers competing in the Playoffs – Christopher Bell (second-place finish), Matt Crafton (ninth) and Ben Rhodes (23rd) – advanced to the next round of the title hunt. Bell and Rhodes advanced automatically with race wins during the first round of the Playoffs.

In the NASCAR K&N Pro Series West, Toyota teammates Todd Gilliland and Chris Eggleston finished second and third at California’s All American Speedway on Saturday night.

Gilliland leads Eggleston by 11 points in the standings with one race left in 2017. The 17-year-old driver finished second in the final NASCAR K&N Pro Series East standings and Toyota claimed the championship in the east with driver Harrison Burton.

The Cup and XFINITY Series will compete this weekend at Kansas Speedway on Saturday and Sunday, Oct. 21-22.

Formula Drift

Toyota won its fourth-consecutive Formula Drift manufacturer championship with three of its drivers advancing into the top-16 overall in the season-finale at California’s Irwindale Speedway on Saturday night.

Toyota captured the title with a 2017 performance that featured two wins and four podium finishes over the eight-race season, with both victories coming at the hands of Fredric Aasbø, who finished fifth at Irwindale.

“We helped clinch the car manufacturer championship with the other Toyota vehicles out here and all in all that makes for a fantastic season,” Aasbø, the 2015 Formula D champion and the series’ all-time wins leader, said. “We wouldn’t be here without the support from Toyota and I’ve been with the Toyota brand for 10 years now – effectively throughout my entire drifting career – and the support we get from Toyota is unparalleled and it’s 100 percent critical to what we do on the track.”

Piloting the Toyota Corolla iM for 2017, the ‘Norwegian Hammer’ claimed victories in Orlando and Montreal to lead Toyota to the manufacturer title. Aasbø finished second in the driver standings to champion James Deane.

The Formula D finale also marked the series’ final race at Irwindale, known as ‘The House of Drift’ due to its connection and history with the sport, before the track closes this winter.

NHRA

Toyota’s Shawn Langdon lost to Brittany Force by just one-thousandth of a second in the Top Fuel final to lead Toyota in NHRA Mello Yello Drag Racing Series action at Texas Motorplex outside Dallas on Sunday.

In the final, Langdon had the advantage at the light, but was narrowly edged at the finish line, despite running a 3.693-second pass.

With just two races remaining in the Countdown to the Championship playoffs, Doug Kalitta is third in the Top Fuel point standings, one spot ahead of Antron Brown.

In Funny Car, Alexis DeJoria has the top Toyota and advanced to the second round.

The series next competes in the NHRA Toyota Nationals at The Strip at Las Vegas Motor Speedway from Thursday to Sunday, Oct. 26 to -29.

POWRi

Toyota drivers swept the POWRi Lucas Oil National Midget League double-header at Illinois' Jacksonville Speedway in Illinois on Friday and Saturday.

Spencer Bayston stretched his national midget car win streak to five-consecutive victories on Friday night as he led wire-to-wire, but his Keith Kunz Motorsport teammate Tanner Thorson ended the streak with a victory on Saturday as the two Toyota-powered cars led all 60 laps on the weekend.