

Denny Hamlin Captures Toyota's First Daytona 500 Victory

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DAYTONA BEACH, Fla. (Feb. 22, 2016) – Camry driver Denny Hamlin won NASCAR’s biggest race – the Daytona 500 – when he finished first in Sunday’s 2016 NASCAR Sprint Cup Series (NSCS) season-opener at Daytona International Speedway. Hamlin earned his first-career Daytona 500 victory and the first for Toyota in the prestigious event which is second to only the series championship, which Camry driver Kyle Busch won in 2015.

Hamlin crossed the finish-line in his Joe Gibbs Racing No. 11 FedEx Camry by 0.010-seconds ahead of fellow Camry driver and second-place finisher Martin Truex Jr., marking the closest finish in the 58-year history of the Daytona 500. With the victory, Hamlin is also locked into this year’s Chase championship playoff.

“This is the best,” said Hamlin after the race. “It’s the biggest race of my life. The Daytona 500 is – as a kid what you – this is the pinnacle of our sport and I’m just proud to be here.”

Camry drivers also claimed four of the top-five finishing positions with Busch (third) and Carl Edwards (fifth) also finishing behind Hamlin and Truex. In addition, Toyota drivers combined to lead 158 laps (of 200) to kick off the 2016 season.

“This is a team victory,” continued Hamlin. “My teammates did an amazing job all day working together – all the Toyotas. This is a proud moment for everyone at Toyota. This wouldn’t be possible if this wasn’t Toyotas sticking together all race long. We were able to get up, capture our track position. This is amazing for Toyota.”

Since becoming a Toyota driver in 2008, Hamlin has won 24 of his 27 career NSCS victories. He won a Daytona Duel qualifying race in 2008, a non-points event, which is the Camry’s first ever victory of any kind in NSCS competition.

“Winning the Daytona 500 is a tremendous accomplishment by Denny Hamlin and Joe Gibbs Racing,” said Ed Laukes, vice president of marketing, performance and guest experience for Toyota Motor Sales (TMS), U.S.A. “We are incredibly honored to win NASCAR’s biggest race and to not only win, but to see how strong our Toyota drivers ran all race – especially in the closing laps where it almost came down to any one of five of our guys could have won. That speaks volumes.

“Winning last year’s championship and now the Daytona 500 has been a huge aspiration for Toyota since joining NASCAR in 2004. We are honored to compete and win races and championships at the Sprint Cup Series level,” continued Laukes. “The consistency and hard work by our team partners and TRD team members has enabled Toyota to enjoy successes across multiple racing platforms and we are dedicated through unwavering support of all NASCAR series.”

The 2016 season marks Toyota’s 10th season competing in the Sprint Cup Series, NASCAR’s top level, where Camry drivers have won 80 events since joining the series in 2007. Last year, Busch won the first NSCS championship for the manufacturer and Toyota drivers won 14 races, tying the most by Camry racers in a single-season.

“This is the greatest race in America,” said David Wilson, president and general manager of TRD, U.S.A. (Toyota Racing Development). “For our company to have won it makes it that special. The reason we came into the sport was to connect with the American fans, to talk about how we build every Camry in America. I still remember what resonated my first time at Daytona, this moniker – ‘The Great American Race’ – as we were looking at why we should come into NASCAR. That was a big part of it – to have a shot at winning ‘The Great American Race,’ to be able to talk to the incredible, powerful fan base that NASCAR has. How do you quantify the value? It’s truly stunning and special.”

The NASCAR season continues with racing at Atlanta Motor Speedway on Feb., 28, 2016, where Toyota won its first NSCS victory with Busch in 2008. For more information about the Toyota Racing program visit www.ToyotaRacing.com.