

Office
DEPOT.14Mobil 1

Stewart Scores Fourth Coke Zero 400 Win at Daytona

Mobil 1/Office Depot Driver Rallies from 42nd To Take 18th Overall Win at Daytona

Date: July 7, 2012
Event: Coke Zero 400 (Round 18 of 36)
Series: NASCAR Sprint Cup Series
Location: Daytona (Fla.) International Speedway (2.5-mile oval)
Start/Finish: 42nd/1st (**Running, completed 160 of 160 laps**)
Point Standing: 5th (592 points, 84 out of first; 51 ahead of 11th)
Winner: **Tony Stewart of Stewart-Haas Racing (Chevrolet)**

Tony Stewart may not embrace restrictor-plate racing, where drivers have to rely on one another to push and pull themselves around the NASCAR Sprint Cup Series' two "plate" tracks – Daytona (Fla.) International Speedway and Talladega (Ala.) Superspeedway. But the driver of the No. 14 Mobil 1/Office Depot Chevrolet for Stewart-Haas Racing (SHR) certainly can embrace a trophy.

Such was the case Saturday night at Daytona when Stewart grabbed his fourth Coke Zero 400 victory with a stirring, last-lap pass that delivered his third win of 2012, tying three-time and reigning Sprint Cup champion Stewart with Brad Keselowski for the most victories this season.

"I wish I could explain it," said Stewart, who has five restrictor-plate victories in Sprint Cup, with four coming at Daytona. "The great thing about restrictor-plate racing is that 43 cars all have the same shot at winning the race, but that's also part of what makes it frustrating, too. It's just being at the right place at the right time, and when those last two big wrecks happened, we were in the right spot. We were ahead of them both times."

Stewart took the lead on lap 131 after a multi-car accident in turn four and led for 21 laps before relinquishing the spot to the duo of Matt Kenseth and Greg Biffle on lap 152. When another massive crash set up a two-lap dash to the finish, Stewart regained the lead on the final lap with an impressive drive around Biffle and Kenseth off turn two and down the backstretch.

"The biggest challenge was the '17' (Kenseth) and '16' (Biffle) cars, and when they hooked up, I don't think there was anybody that could beat them," Stewart said. "But we were able to stay in touch with them, and I got a great restart with Kasey Kahne helping me. I'm not sure how he got shuffled back there in (turns) one and two, but we just had to try to separate the '17' and '16' there. And once we got them pulled apart, I think Matt tried to reconnect with Greg, and we carried enough momentum to get back around in front of him and get down on that bottom line. I tried to back up to Matt to make sure they didn't get a huge run on us. They were coming on the outside in (turns) three and four and the last wreck happened, and we were just fortunate enough to be leading still."

With one last multi-car wreck coming on the final lap as the field raced toward the checkered flag, the yellow caution lights came on, securing Stewart's victory. The win was the 47th of Stewart's impressive Sprint Cup career. Even more impressive was that Stewart took the win after starting 42nd in the 43-car field.

Stewart qualified second, but his time was disallowed by NASCAR after his car failed post-qualifying inspection. The team had an open cooling hose in the cockpit, which is in violation of Rule 20A-2.1J in the NASCAR rulebook. The cap that went on the cooling hose fell off during the qualifying run. While there was no malicious intent by the team, NASCAR still had to assess the penalty, which sent Stewart to 42nd on the starting grid.

"Everybody at Stewart-Haas Racing did an awesome job this weekend," Stewart said. "I'm really proud of our organization. If it weren't for the cap blowing off of the duct there in qualifying, we would've been second and third in qualifying, and I'm really proud of that. I'm really proud of this Mobil 1/Office Depot team."

The victory moved Stewart into 14th on the all-time NASCAR Sprint Cup win list. He previously was tied with NASCAR Hall of Fame inductee Buck Baker. The win was Stewart's 18th all-time at Daytona, which includes non-points Sprint Cup events, NASCAR Nationwide Series events and IROC races. The victory places Stewart second on the track's all-time win list, 16 behind the legendary Dale Earnhardt (34). All four of Stewart's points-paying Sprint Cup wins have come in the Coke Zero 400 (2005, 2006, 2009 and 2012).

-more-

“I’ve got to thank Mobil 1,” Stewart said. “Their engine oil, chassis lubricants, gear oil – even their power steering fluid – helped put us in victory lane. It’s about reducing friction, heat and rolling resistance, and after looking up at the board and seeing us in first and Ryan Newman in fifth, I’d say their stuff did a pretty good job of that.”

This was the 17th point-paying Sprint Cup win for SHR since its inception in 2009 and its fourth this season. Stewart scored SHR’s first victory of 2012 on March 11 at Las Vegas Motor Speedway and its second victory March 25 at Auto Club Speedway in Fontana, Calif. Newman grabbed the organization’s third win April 1 at Martinsville (Va.) Speedway.

Newman, driver of the No. 39 Aspen Dental Chevrolet for SHR, finished fifth to score his third top-five of the season and his third top-five in 22 career Sprint Cup starts at Daytona. It was Newman’s best finish at the track since he won the 50th running of the Daytona 500 in February 2008.

This race also marked the second time this season SHR drivers Stewart and Newman have finished among the top-five. In the third race of the season at Las Vegas, Stewart won and Newman finished fourth.

Jeff Burton finished behind Stewart in the runner-up spot as the Coke Zero 400 ended under caution, while Kenseth, Joey Logano and Newman rounded out the top-five. Carl Edwards, Kasey Kahne, Keselowski, Michael Waltrip and Bobby Labonte comprised the remainder of the top-10.

There were six caution periods for a total of 23 laps, with 14 drivers failing to finish the 160-lap race.

With round 18 of 36 complete, Stewart continues to lead the SHR duo in the championship point standings. He improved four spots to fifth and has 592 points, 84 back of series leader Kenseth and six points ahead of sixth-place Kevin Harvick with a 51-point advantage over 11th-place Edwards. Newman remained 15th and has 502 points, 174 points behind Kenseth and 70 behind 10th-place Clint Bowyer.

The next event on the Sprint Cup schedule is the Lenox Industrial Tools 301 on Sunday, July 15 at New Hampshire Motor Speedway in Loudon. The race starts at 1 p.m. EDT, with live coverage provided by TNT beginning with its pre-race show at noon.

- TSC -

Contact Mike Arning with True Speed Communication
(704) 875-3388, ext. 802 or Mike.Arning@TrueSpeedCommunication.com
www.TrueSpeedCommunication.com • Online Media Kit Available at: www.TrueSpeedMedia.com