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Busch Wins Budweiser Duel at Daytona

M&M'S Driver Will Start Fourth in 55th Daytona 500

Date: Feb. 21, 2013
Event: Race No. 2 of the Budweiser Duel at Daytona (non-point qualifying races for the 55th Daytona 500)
Series: NASCAR Sprint Cup Series
Location: Daytona (Fla.) International Speedway (2.5-mile oval)
Start/Finish: 4th/1st (**Running, completed 60 of 60 laps**)
Winners: **Budweiser Duel No. 1** – Kevin Harvick of Richard Childress Racing (Chevrolet)
Budweiser Duel No. 2 – **Kyle Busch of Joe Gibbs Racing (Toyota)**

Kyle Busch flexed some muscle Thursday at Daytona (Fla.) International Speedway, winning his Budweiser Duel qualifying race by .093 of a second over Kasey Kahne.

The Budweiser Duel consists of twin qualifying races that set the 43-car field for the season-opening Daytona 500, and Busch's victory in the second Duel race slots him and his No. 18 M&M's Toyota Camry fourth for the 55th Daytona 500 on Sunday.

"This is awesome to be able to put the M&M'S Camry in victory lane," said Busch, who led twice for 19 laps in the non-points race. "Coming to pit road is what won us the race – being able to beat the other guys, out-braking them getting into the pits and not sliding any tires. Dave Rogers (crew chief) made a great call of no tires and to get fuel only to get us out front. I had a great teammate behind me in Matt Kenseth pushing me there at the end. This is always a fun race and it gives us a great starting spot for Sunday."

Busch took the lead with less than eight laps remaining around the 2.5-mile superspeedway and held off a last-lap charge by Kahne. It was Busch's sixth overall victory at Daytona, which includes the 2009 Budweiser Duel.

Forty-five drivers were split among the two Duels, putting 23 drivers in the first 150-mile race and 22 drivers in the second 150-mile race.

"Even though it was only half the field, I think the biggest thing you saw in both races is that it's hard to pass the leader," Busch said. "You want to stay out front when you can get up there and just try to hold everyone off behind you."

Kenseth, Busch's Joe Gibbs Racing (JGR) teammate and driver of the No. 20 Toyota, finished fifth in the second Budweiser Duel race. He will start 12th in the Daytona 500.

Denny Hamlin, driver of the No. 11 Toyota for JGR, finished 20th in the first Budweiser Duel after being caught up in a lap-54 accident. Hamlin's team quickly began repairing his No. 11 machine, and he will start 35th in the Daytona 500.

Kevin Harvick won the first Budweiser Duel by .165 of a second over Greg Biffle. Juan Pablo Montoya, Jimmie Johnson and Kurt Busch took spots three through five. The rest of the top-10 consisted of Tony Stewart, Brad Keselowski, Casey Mears, Dale Earnhardt Jr. and Joey Logano.

Finishing behind Kyle Busch and Kahne in the second Budweiser Duel were Austin Dillon, Clint Bowyer and Kenseth, who took spots three through five. The rest of the top-10 consisted of Mark Martin, Paul Menard, Jeff Burton, Jamie McMurray and David Ragan.

With the Budweiser Duel now complete, the field for the Daytona 500 is set. On the pole is Danica Patrick, and alongside her is Jeff Gordon. By notching the two quickest times during last Sunday's time trials, both drivers were able to lock themselves into the front row for the Daytona 500.

Failing to qualify today for the Daytona 500 were Brian Keselowski and Mike Bliss.

The Daytona 500 gets underway at 1 p.m. EST Sunday, Feb. 24 with live coverage provided by FOX beginning with its pre-race show at noon.

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