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M&M's Team Vaults Busch to Atlanta Win

M&M's Driver Claims Fourth Victory of Season, Clinches Spot in 2013 Chase

Date: Sept. 1, 2013
Event: AdvoCare 500 (Round 25 of 36)
Series: NASCAR Sprint Cup Series
Location: Atlanta Motor Speedway (2.54-mile oval)
Start/Finish: 9th/1st (Running, completed 325 of 325 laps)
Point Standing: 5th (786 points, 51 out of first, 73 ahead of 11th)
Winner: Kyle Busch of Joe Gibbs Racing (Toyota)

Kyle Busch and his M&M's team didn't start the AdvoCare 500 on Sunday night at Atlanta Motor Speedway looking like race winners. But they finished that way.

Busch, driver of the No. 18 M&M's Toyota Camry for Joe Gibbs Racing (JGR), overcame early-race handling issues and used a clutch final pit stop by the M&M's over-the-wall team to lead the final 36 laps to score his fourth win of the season. The win also clinched Busch a spot in the 2013 Chase for the NASCAR Sprint Cup.

"I can't say enough about this team and their work tonight," said Busch, who also earned his 100th overall NASCAR win (Sprint Cup, Nationwide, and Camping World Truck) driving a Toyota vehicle. "Their work tonight definitely helped me out a lot. I wasn't happy with the racecar at all in the beginning of the race, but Dave (Rogers, crew chief) and the guy made some really good calls and got us some great adjustments there tonight to get us back up.

"This M&M's Camry wasn't good to start, but it was good at the end, and it was good to get up front. Track position -- my boys, my boys on pit road. What can I say? They're just -- that's the same group since 2008. They're amazing. I love those guys. I would do anything for them, and this M&M's Camry was awesome today."

After starting ninth, Busch fought various handling issues at the start of the 500-mile race. Crew chief Dave Rogers worked throughout the first half of the race to fix a very tight-handling condition. Still, Busch sat anywhere from eighth through 12th during the first 250 laps. But after a pit stop just past 250, Busch's M&M's Toyota came to life, as he worked his way up to as high as third when the caution waved on lap 285.

Busch brought his M&M's Camry in for the final time two laps later on lap 287. The No. 18 team did not disappoint, performing a flawless stop that helped Busch leave pit road with the lead.

Despite a few more restarts and the hard-charging efforts of Martin Truex Jr. and Joey Logano, Busch held on to the lead for the rest of the race to bring home his second Sprint Cup victory at Atlanta. Busch's other Atlanta win, in 2008, was the first Sprint Cup win for Mars Chocolate North America and Toyota. The win Sunday was Busch's 28th career victory and his 24th since joining JGR in 2008.

"We certainly had a lot to do and a lot to overcome, and I think that Dave and these guys stuck with me," said Busch, who scored his 100th overall win in a Toyota and also brought home Toyota's 250th overall win in NASCAR. "They kept going to work and trying to figure things out for me and make my life a little easier behind the wheel, although Atlanta is always never easy. I just appreciate them digging in, and for as far back as we fell and for as tight as it was and then as loose as it was and then just trying to make our way back up through the field, and the green flag runs that we got, they're always my best friend.

"Obviously, that stop there at the end getting us out with the lead was huge. We were able to restart on the bottom, which was a huge advantage, and I'm thankful we were able to bring home a win for M&M's and all of their associates worldwide."

Busch's JGR teammates -- Matt Kenseth in the No. 20 Toyota and Denny Hamlin in the No. 11 Toyota -- finished 12th and 38th, respectively.

Logano finished .740 of a second behind Busch in the runner-up spot, while Truex, Kurt Busch and Ryan Newman rounded out the top-five. Jeff Gordon, Juan Pablo Montoya, Dale Earnhardt Jr., Kevin Harvick and Brian Vickers comprised the remainder of the top-10.

There were nine caution periods for 47 laps, with eight drivers failing to finish the 325-lap race.

With round 25 of 36 complete, Busch leads the JGR trio in the championship point standings. He maintained fifth in the standings with 786 points, 51 behind series leader Johnson and 73 ahead of 11th-place Gordon. Kenseth kept sixth position with 768 points, 69 out of first and 55 ahead of Gordon. Hamlin dropped one spot to 26th-place with 462 points, 375 out of first and 257 behind 10th-place Kurt Busch.

The next event on the Sprint Cup schedule is the Federated Auto Parts 400 on Saturday, Sept. 7 at Richmond (Va.) International Raceway. The race starts at 7:30 p.m. EDT, with live coverage provided by ABC beginning with its pre-race show at 7 p.m.

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