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Busch, Interstate Batteries Team Up for Texas Victory

Dallas-Based Interstate Batteries Scores First Win at 'Home' Track

Date: April 13, 2013
Event: NRA 500 (Round 7 of 36)
Series: NASCAR Sprint Cup Series
Location: Texas Motor Speedway in Fort Worth (1.5-mile oval)
Start/Finish: 1st/1st (**Running, completed 334 of 334 laps**)
Point Standing: 3rd (251 points, 18 out of first)
Winner: **Kyle Busch of Joe Gibbs Racing (Toyota)**

After waiting more than 20 years, Norm Miller and Interstate Batteries finally went to victory lane in a NASCAR Sprint Cup Series race at Texas Motor Speedway in Fort Worth.

Miller, chairman of Dallas-based Interstate Batteries, got there thanks to the superb drive put in by Kyle Busch and an equally impressive late-race pit stop performed by the Interstate Batteries team.

Busch, driver of the No. 18 Interstate Batteries Toyota Camry for Joe Gibbs Racing (JGR), led eight times for a race-high 171 laps Saturday night to score his second win of the season and first at Texas in the NRA 500. It was also the first win for Interstate Batteries at its hometown track. Interstate had finished third five times, three times with former JGR driver Bobby Labonte (April 1997, March 1999 and April 2000) and twice with Busch (April 2008 and April 2010).

“This feels good,” said Busch, who earned his 26th career victory in his 300th Sprint Cup start. “For Interstate Batteries and Norm Miller to be in victory lane in Texas – there’s nothing better than putting him right here. We had a great racecar. Dave Rogers (crew chief) and these guys gave me a great piece today. We ran up front all day long. If it wasn’t for my pit crew, who is the most awesome crew ever, I don’t know if we would be here. We’ve been together since 2008 and haven’t had any changeover. Those guys were awesome tonight. They pulled out one heck of a stop right there at the end to put us up front and give us that lead, and to be able to bring it home is awesome. I thank M&M’s and Toyota, of course, Monster Energy, Sprint – without Sprint this wouldn’t be a sport, so we appreciate them. Of course, the fans, we have to have them, also.”

Busch started from the pole position and had a dominant racecar for much of the race. His green-and-black machine was a fixture out front for the first half of the race, leading 149 of the first 200 laps. But as night fell, the handling of Busch’s No. 18 Interstate Batteries Toyota began to change. He started to struggle with a tight-handling condition and even brushed the wall. Despite the tight racecar, Busch never fell out of the top three all night.

As the laps wound down, Busch was in second place and steadily chasing down leader Martin Truex Jr. when the caution flag waved at lap 315. With just 19 laps remaining, all the leaders decided to bring their cars down pit road. A lightning-quick, four-tire pit stop by his Interstate Batteries pit crew put Busch back in the top spot for the final restart of the night, and he never looked back, taking the checkered flag.

“We had a great racecar, and we worked really hard all weekend long on this car, but without that pit crew – they’re the best in the business,” Busch said. “They know when it’s crunch time. I was watching my mirror seeing if those guys were coming behind me. It felt good; it felt like it was going to be a good stop. They dropped the jack on the left side, and I was like, ‘Go, go,’ and I pulled out. I was like: ‘Oh, this is too sweet, man. You give me the lead with just 20-something laps to go, and it feels really good.’”

The win ties Busch, 27, for 23rd on the all-time Sprint Cup win list with 1965 Daytona 500 winner Fred Lorenzen. Busch has won at 17 of the 23 tracks at which the Sprint Cup Series competes. The only six tracks Busch has failed to reach victory lane at are: Martinsville (Va.) Speedway, Charlotte (N.C.) Motor Speedway, Pocono (Pa.) Raceway, Indianapolis Motor Speedway, Homestead-Miami Speedway and Kansas Speedway in Kansas City, Kan. – site of next week’s STP 400.

“It’s good, really good,” said Busch, who also won the NASCAR Nationwide Series race Friday night at Texas. “We’ve had a good start to the season. It feels amazing to keep this roll going. It’s so much fun to race with this group. We had a talk over the winter, Dave (Rogers, crew chief) and I had a talk a few weeks ago, and things have kind of jelled – we’ve been doing really, really good. I’m proud of this bunch and couldn’t say enough about Joe Gibbs Racing. Everybody back at the shop – all the guys and gals – these cars are amazing to drive, they’re fast, they’re fun.”

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Busch has 111 victories across NASCAR's top three divisions (Sprint Cup – 26, Nationwide – 55, Camping World Truck – 30).

Busch's JGR teammates – Brian Vickers, interim driver of the No. 11 Toyota Camry as he subs for the injured Denny Hamlin, and Matt Kenseth, driver of the No. 20 Toyota Camry – finished eighth and 12th, respectively.

Truex finished .508 of a second behind Busch in the runner-up spot, while Carl Edwards, Greg Biffle and Joey Logano rounded out the top-five. Jimmie Johnson, Aric Almirola, Vickers, Brad Keselowski and Ryan Newman comprised the remainder of the top-10.

There were seven caution periods for 36 laps, with five drivers failing to finish the 334-lap race.

With round seven of 36 complete, Busch leads the JGR trio in the championship standings. He gained one spot and sits third with 251 points, 18 behind series leader Johnson. Kenseth fell one spot to 11th, 65 points out of first. Hamlin, who was forced to sit out for a second consecutive race due to injury, dropped seven spots to 25th, 124 points behind Johnson.

The next event on the Sprint Cup schedule is the STP 400 Sunday, April 21 at Kansas Speedway. The race starts at 1 p.m. EDT, with live coverage provided by FOX beginning with its pre-race show at 12:30 p.m.

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