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## **SRT Motorsports - Weekend Recap - June 24**

- Allmendinger Ninth, Keselowski 12th on Road Course at Sonoma
- Hornish Fifth, Villeneuve Sixth in Nationwide Race at Road America

June 24, 2012, Auburn Hills, Mich. - **NASCAR SPRINT CUP SERIES (NSCS)**

There was plenty of strategy on the table when the green flag launched the 43-car field for Sunday's scheduled 110-lap race on the 1.99-mile road course at Sonoma. The top priority for everyone was keeping the racecar on the asphalt. Some teams were looking to cover the distance with only two pit stops. Others opted for three with an early stop for fuel to make sure they made it to the finish.

Teams were forced to adapt as the race unfolded. The event set a record for fewest cautions – two. However, the final yellow extended the race beyond the scheduled distance by two laps and a green-white-checkered finish. That bunched up the 35 cars still on the track for a double-file restart. For those final two laps, it was vintage road course racing – fender rubbing, bumper banging and no shortage of aggressive driving.

A.J. Allmendinger led the three Dodge drivers in the race with a ninth-place finish, his second top 10 of the season. "It was a pretty good day for the Shell/Pennzoil Dodge team," he said. "I was happy with the way I drove. I didn't make a lot of mistakes and cost us anything. The car was really amazing in some spots and then there were spots where it just didn't react."

Teammate Brad Keselowski finished 12th and Robby Gordon, making only his third start of the season, finished 39th.

Allmendinger started 17th in the No. 22 Shell/Pennzoil Dodge Charger. He had worked his way into the top 10 by lap 48. When the No. 29 appeared to run out of fuel on the track, crew chief Todd Gordon called his driver to pit road for service, anticipating a caution. The yellow never came. As a result, the No. 22 fell back to 26th in the field.

By the time the first caution appeared on lap 83, Allmendinger had worked his way back inside the top-15. He was running 10th when the second yellow appeared on lap 106, extending the race beyond the scheduled distance by two laps and a green-white-checkered finish. "We weren't a race-winning car today," he said. "We had a solid weekend. We knew what our weaknesses were coming into the weekend and it showed on race day. We got everything out of the car that we could."

Keselowski rebounded from an early pit road miscue to finish 12th and remain 10th in the Sprint Cup season standings. During a routine pit stop on Lap 30, Keselowski stalled the engine and had to be pushed by the crew to restart the Blue Deuce. "I stalled the car coming out of the pits," he said. "That's my fault. I just stalled the car. The car didn't take off really well out of the box and I just couldn't keep it revved up enough to get going. It cost us a lot of spots. Add the long green flag run and you just had to be patient and wait of the second round of pit stops to start. We fought back hard with the Miller Lite Dodge. We probably had a top-10 car if not for the mistake.

Robby Gordon started 34th in the No. 7 MAPELI Dodge Charger and was playing the strategy game until a vibration forced him out of the race on lap 73. "Our car was fast all day," said Gordon. "We played the pit strategy game knowing that it was going to be a three-stop race. It would have worked because we had enough speed in the car to run with the leaders."

Clint Bowyer led 71 laps en route to his first victory of the season. There were eight lead changes among five drivers. The two cautions were a record for fewest ever for a Sprint Cup race at the road course.

## **NASCAR NATIONWIDE SERIES (NNS)**

The key for success in road course racing is keeping the racecar on the asphalt. Sam Hornish Jr. did just that Saturday at Road America. The result – a fifth-place finish at the 4.048-mile, 14-turn track in the No. 12 Alliance Truck Parts Dodge Charger.

Teammate Jacques Villeneuve wasn't as fortunate. He found the grass a couple of times during the 50-lap event at the Wisconsin track, but showed the road-racing talent that carried him to a Formula One championship as he rebounded from both to finish sixth in the No. 22 Discount Tire Dodge Charger.

As a bonus, Hornish gained 11 points on series point leader Elliott Sadler. He now trails Sadler by 34 points with 19 races left on the 2012 calendar.

Hornish led once in the race, but the five cautions during the afternoon didn't compliment the race strategy of crew chief Chad Walter and the Penske Racing team. Unlike the previous year when there were three attempts at a green-white-checked finish which required seven extra laps (28.336 miles), this edition ended as scheduled. Hornish's No. 12 had enough fuel to cover that extra distance if necessary, something many of the leaders could not.

"We had a pretty good day all-in-all," he said. "We were forced into a strategy where we wanted to make sure that we had enough fuel to cover green-white-checkerds so we stayed out a little longer (before making the final pit stop). We were able to lead a couple laps because of it, then we pitted. I think we came out 18th with 13 or so to go, maybe a little bit more than that, and we were able to work our way up to fifth."

Hornish led once for three laps and kept the No. 12 clean throughout the race. "We were just trying to play it smart all day long, keep the car on the racetrack. That was my goal for the weekend – just make sure that we weren't sitting in any sand traps. So, I'm really happy about that and to be able to pass some really good road racers there towards the end. We've got to run for points, so to be able to have the kind of day that we did I'm super-happy about it. I'm looking forward to the next road course because I had such a great day today."

Hornish did get a little aggressive on the final lap, passing his teammate for fifth. "Jacques is a hell of a driver, so anytime I can pass him on the last lap when he's still on the track, that's good," he said with a wide smile.

Villeneuve started fourth and took the lead on lap 21. He held the top spot for 10 laps, second only to the 19 by race winner Nelson Piquet Jr. Villeneuve's first off-course adventure came on lap 33. A nudge from behind sent the No. 22 for a spin in Turn 5. Villeneuve kept his car out of the gravel trap and off the wall, but the incident dropped him to 22nd in the running order.

"I got pushed around halfway through the race and the steering was bent," he said. "After that, the car was just lacking a little bit to race the guys in front."

For some drivers, that would be a major setback. For Villeneuve, it was a challenge. He battled his way back into the top 10 and looked to make it a top five on the final lap. Racing hard in a pack, contact with Max Papis pushed the No. 22 into the grass just as Villeneuve was braking for the turn. In front of him was Danica Patrick who had an issue (wheel hop) braking for the corner. Contact sent Patrick's No. 7 into a spin.

"We were racing hard but I wasn't fighting with Danica," Villeneuve said. "I was fighting with Papis and just before the braking for the turn, I guess he wanted to cross over and go to the inside of Danica. He probably didn't know I was there, so it pushed me in the grass. You don't slow down that much in the grass, so by that time I was back on the racetrack again, I was going a little bit faster than Danica."

The win makes Piquet the first Brazilian to win a race in NASCAR's national touring series. There were nine lead changes among eight drivers. Five cautions slowed the race for eight laps.

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