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SRT Motorsports - Sprint Cup Race Recap - Daytona

KESELOWSKI EARNS HARD-FOUGHT 8TH-PLACE FINISH AT DAYTONA

July 7, 2012, Daytona Beach, Fla. -

DAYTONA BEACH, Fla., (Saturday, July 7, 2012) – Brad Keselowski fought-off a pit road accident, recovered from a spin and avoided several multi-car wrecks to finish eighth in the Coke Zero 400 at Daytona International Speedway.

Restrictor-plate racing at superspeedways is always a dance with anticipated danger. It's never "if" but "when" the big wreck will happen. Saturday night was no different. A couple of six-car mishaps served as a primer for a 14-car wreck in the tri-oval on Lap 153 and a 15-car donnybrook as the field raced to the checkered flag in the 160-lap event. Of the 43 starters, 33 cars were involved in the four mishaps, several in more than one.

"Incredible," said Keselowski after unbuckling from the No. 2 Dodge. "Sometimes you come to these places and you have no luck and sometimes you come to these places and have luck and don't run good. We just haven't had a race here where we've run good and had luck. We're proud to bring this Miller Lite Dodge home to an eight-place finish. It was crazy."

After qualifying his Miller Lite Dodge ninth, Keselowski patiently ran on the lead lap as the first 81 laps of the 160-lap event ran caution-free. Once past halfway, the racing intensified.

While pitting with the leaders under the race's first caution on Lap 82, Ryan Newman slid into Keselowski's Dodge while it was in the pit stall. It started when Jeff Gordon pinched down on Newman as they were exiting pit road, forcing the No. 39 car into Kasey Kahne. That sent Newman sliding into Keselowski's pit area and into the Blue Deuce. The impact damaged the rear of the racecar and severely changed the aerodynamic characteristics and handling.

"That was the first time I've ever wrecked standing still," Keselowski added. "That's going to happen some times. We got through it. It was just one of those strange nights where you're sitting behind the wheel and you can't believe some of the things that are happening around you. I'm proud of my guys."

Keselowski benefitted from a second caution flag only four laps later. That gave crew chief Paul Wolfe and the No. 2 crew the opportunity to make much-needed repairs and adjustments. They were successful as Keselowski was able to remain on the lead lap and race his way back inside the top 10 by Lap 124.

"It was a long, tough night," said Wolfe. "We had trouble there early with the contact in the pits but continued to fight back. We had to cut the quarter-panel off because it was flapping. That made the car really hard to drive. Brad hung in there and drove his butt off."

Keselowski was 12th in the running order on Lap 145 when he spun all by himself coming off of Turn 2. The incident forced the Penske Racing driver to pit road for four Goodyear tires. The spin was a blessing as four laps later, the first of two major multi-car wrecks allowed Keselowski to gain 20 positions on the leaders and restart 10th on the grid.

And he would kiss Lady Luck one more time on the race to the checkers. Restarting 10th with two laps to go, the No. 2 Dodge was hugged to the bottom of the race track coming out of Turn 4 when the race's sixth and final caution appeared as the race leaders tangled. Keselowski picked his way through the smoke and debris to finish eighth. The finish moved him up to ninth in the season standings, just 13 points out of sixth.

Tony Stewart claimed the race win, his third of the season to join Keselowski as the only three-time winners in Sprint

Cup competition.

Sam Hornish Jr. was a late replacement for A.J. Allmendinger in the No. 22 Shell/Pennzoil Dodge. Relegated to the 43rd starting position for a driver change, Hornish used the early laps to settle into the No. 22 Dodge. A veteran of six Sprint Cup races at Daytona, it was clear that Hornish was comfortable and fast from the drop of the green flag.

Hornish brought out the race's first caution on Lap 81 when the No. 22 Shell/Pennzoil Dodge blew a rear tire and contacted the wall on the backstretch. Significant damage to the right-rear forced Hornish down pit road multiple times under green, costing him 10 laps to the leaders. He was credited a 33rd-place finish in the final rundown.

"The first 15 laps or so I just rode around trying to get comfortable in the car," Hornish said. "The car felt great and had a lot of speed in it. The Shell/Pennzoil Dodge was really good and I felt good in it. We cut down a tire and it came apart and tore the car all up. I'm disappointed for the guys. We just needed to stay up there and you never know what can happen at these plate races."

Allmendinger Temporarily Suspended from NASCAR Competition

Prior to the start of Saturday's Coke Zero 400 at Daytona International Speedway, NASCAR announced that Penske Racing driver A.J. Allmendinger has been temporarily suspended from NASCAR competition.

Steve O'Donnell, NASCAR senior vice president for racing operations, announced that the driver of the No. 22 Shell/Pennzoil Dodge Charger "has been temporarily suspended from NASCAR competition based upon notification of a positive 'A' test NASCAR received from the medical review officer," citing rulebook clauses pertaining to the NASCAR substance abuse policy. Allmendinger has the opportunity to request within the next 72 hours that his "B" sample be tested.

The "A" and "B" samples refer to what NASCAR calls a "split sample." That is, the specimen is split into separate containers for separate testing. The "temporary" in the NASCAR announcement of the suspension refers to the driver's option of having the "B" sample tested.

Penske Racing issued the following statement:

"NASCAR notified Penske Racing this afternoon that AJ Allmendinger was administered a drug test earlier this week, and those results tested positive. NASCAR has a strict drug testing program that Penske Racing fully supports. Penske Racing will work with NASCAR through this process and its next steps. Sam Hornish Jr., will drive the No. 22 car in tonight's Coke Zero 400."

Race Results

NASCAR Sprint Cup Series

Coke Zero 400

Daytona International Speedway

1. Tony Stewart
2. Jeff Burton
3. Matt Kenseth
4. Joey Logano
5. Ryan Newman
6. Carl Edwards
7. Kasey Kahne
8. BRAD KESELOWSKI
9. Michael Waltrip
10. Bobby Labonte
33. SAM HORNISH JR.

NASCAR Sprint Cup Series

Point Standings

(After 18 of 36 events)

1. Matt Kenseth 676

2. Dale Earnhardt Jr. -25
3. Greg Biffle -44
4. Jimmie Johnson -58
5. Tony Stewart -84
6. Kevin Harvick -90
7. Denny Hamlin -92
8. Martin Truex Jr. -92
9. BRAD KESELOWSKI -103
10. Clint Bowyer -104
23. A.J. ALLMENDINGER -276

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