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Kyle Busch, No. 18 Interstate Batteries Toyota Camry Race Recap for Auto Club 400

Date: March 1, 2020
Event: Auto Club 400 (Round 3 of 36)
Series: NASCAR Cup Series
Location: Auto Club Speedway in Fontana, California (2-mile oval)
Format: 200 laps, broken into three stages (60 laps/60 laps/80 laps)
Start/Finish: 17th/2nd (Running, completed 200 of 200 laps)
Point Standing: 19th (65 points, 57 out of first)

Race Winner: Alex Bowman of Hendrick Motorsports (Chevrolet)
Stage 1 Winner: Alex Bowman of Hendrick Motorsports (Chevrolet)
Stage 2 Winner: Ryan Blaney of Team Penske (Ford)

Stage 1 Recap (Laps 1-60):

- Kyle Busch started 17th and finished 10th.
- The Interstate Batteries driver spent the opening laps in the midst of a hard battle to crack the top-10. He finally assumed 10th place on lap 10.
- On lap 14 Busch made his first report, noting the car was handling on the loose side all around the track and especially in turn two.
- Green-flag pit stops started on lap 27 with Busch making his own trip to pit road on lap 28. The Interstate Batteries team made a wedge adjustment, changed four tires and added fuel. Busch was in 16th place once all teams had completed their respective stops.
- Busch was in 10th place on lap 38 when he reported that he needed more grip, particularly through the first and second turns.
- Stage 1 concluded with Busch in 10th place. During the break the team made wholesale changes to the No. 18 Interstate Batteries Camry by pulling packer, adding wedge, changing four tires and adding fuel. Once work was complete, Busch returned to the track in 16th place for the start of Stage 2.

Stage 2 Recap (Laps 61-120):

- Started 16th and finished seventh.
- The reigning NASCAR Cup Series champion picked up four positions on the first lap of Stage 2 to climb to 12th place. He was in 10th place on lap 71 when he reported that the changes had done very little to improve the grip issue.
- The team was one of the first to make a trip to pit road for the next round of green-flag stops on lap 89. The crew added more tape to the nose of the car, changed four tires and added fuel.
- Caution came out three laps later. The No. 18 Interstate Batteries team elected to come to pit road for fresh tires. A number of cars stayed out, which resulted in Busch lining up 16th for the restart on lap 95.
- Busch was back in the top-10 by lap 99 and up to seventh place by lap 104. He maintained seventh through to the conclusion of Stage 2.
- At the end of the stage, Busch reported that while the car handled well enough when he was running laps by himself, it lacked the grip he needed to be aggressive when in traffic.

Stage 3 Recap (Laps 121-200):

- Started sixth and finished second.
- It was four tires and fuel for the No. 18 team during the break, and quick work placed Busch in sixth place for the restart. Busch was up to fourth within the first two laps before settling in to the fifth position for the next several laps around the 2-mile oval.
- The Las Vegas native took over the fourth position on lap 157 and reported that the balance on the car was “ok.”
- Green-flag pit stops started taking place a few laps later. The Interstate Batteries racecar took its trip down pit road on lap 160 for four tires and fuel.
- As the car’s handling started to balance, Busch was able to pick up more positions and was in third place by lap 167. He logged laps in the third spot until the second-place car of Ryan Blaney had to pit for an issue, handing the runner-up spot to Busch with just three laps to go.
- Busch maintained second place to the checkered flag.

Kyle Busch, driver of the No. 18 Interstate Batteries Toyota Camry for Joe Gibbs Racing:

“We have a lot of work to do. The guys did a great job here though just trying to work on it and trying to make everything we could out of it all day long, all weekend long. Interstate Batteries Camry wasn’t a second place car, but thankfully we got a good finish out of here and try to get some points. Guys are doing all they can, I know along with everybody at TRD (Toyota Racing Development). I appreciate all the hard work. We just have to get a little bit better. We finished the end of last year so strong.

I don't know what we're missing here. Obviously, it's a little bit of something here and maybe a little bit of something in a few different areas, but overall good car today. Thank M&M's, Snickers, Skittles, Rowdy Energy and go on to next week."

Team Interstate Results:

- Kyle Busch (Finished 2nd / Running, completed 200 of 200 laps)
- Denny Hamlin (Finished 6th / Running, completed 200 of 200 laps)
- Erik Jones (Finished 10th / Running, completed 200 of 200 laps)
- Martin Truex Jr. (Finished 14th / Running, completed 200 of 200 laps)

Next Up:

The next event on the Monster Energy NASCAR Cup Series schedule is the FanShield 500k on Sunday, March 8, at Phoenix Raceway. The race starts at 3:30 p.m. EDT with live coverage provided by FOX.

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