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Suárez Brings it Home 21st at Phoenix

CommScope Toyota Camry Driver Avoids Trouble in Incident-Filled Race

Date: March 8, 2020
Event: FanShield 500k
Series: NASCAR Cup Series
Location: Phoenix Raceway (1.022-mile oval)
Format: 312 laps, broken into three stages (75 laps/115 laps/122 laps)
Start/Finish: 31st / 21st (Running, completed 316 of 316 laps)
Point Standing: 31st with 32 points, 132 out of first

Note: Race extended four laps past its scheduled 312-lap distance due to a green-white-checkered finish.

Race Winner: Joey Logano of Team Penske (Ford)

Stage 1 Winner: Kevin Harvick of Stewart-Haas Racing (Ford)

Stage 2 Winner: Brad Keselowski of Team Penske (Ford)

Stage 1 Recap (Laps 1-75):

- Daniel Suárez started 31st, finished 28th.
- Suárez held position until falling a lap down by the first caution period of the race on lap 58.
- He reported the CommScope Toyota was tight on both entry and exit of the turns, but the team elected to keep him out during the caution in order to take the wave-around back onto the lead lap.
- When the race went back to green on lap 63, with Suárez restarting in 30th, the caution immediately came out due to a multicar collision ahead of him. He avoided the calamity and stayed on track during that second caution.
- Suárez restarted in 28th with four laps to go in the segment and finished in that position. He pitted during the stage break for four tires, pressure adjustments to both left-side tires and a wedge adjustment.

Stage 2 Recap (Laps 76-190):

- Started 28th, finished 28th.
- Suárez held his relative position until the caution flag appeared on lap 130. He pitted from 22nd on lap 133 for tires, fuel and more pressure adjustments to help his handling through corner center and exit. Suárez restarted 28th when the race went back to green on lap 136.
- Two laps from the scheduled stage break, the caution flag flew once again with Suárez still in the 28th position to end the stage. He pitted for four tires, fuel and a track-bar adjustment.

Final Stage Recap (Laps 191-316):

- Started 27th, finished 21st.
- Suárez started the stage as the second driver one lap down, then got by J.J. Yeley on lap 208 to take over 26th place and the Lucky Dog position.
- The caution flag flew five laps later, enabling Suárez to get back onto the lead lap via the free pass. He pitted for tires and fuel and adjustments to free up the rear end of the car. He restarted 26th and on the lead lap when the race went back to green on lap 221.
- Suárez was up to 24th place when the next caution flag flew on lap 252. He was called into the pits for tires, fuel and more air-pressure and track-bar adjustments and restarted 22nd on lap 257.
- Another caution flag appeared on lap 264 and Suárez stayed on track while most of the leaders pitted, sliding all the way up to eighth for the lap-271 restart.
- Cars with fresher tires prevailed over the initial laps of the latest run, and Suárez slid back to 25th when the caution flag flew on lap 277. He pitted during this caution for fresh tires, fuel and some tape added to the radiator grille. He restarted 22nd.
- Suárez was up to 18th when the next caution flag flew on lap 283, and the team once again elected to keep him on track, along with most of the rest of the field. He restarted 18th on lap 288.
- Once again, the caution flag flew, this time on lap 303 with Suárez in 23rd. He pitted for his last set of fresh tires during that sequence and restarted 23rd on lap 308, but the caution flag flew before the field could complete a lap.
- Suárez stayed on track and restarted 20th for the restart in overtime on lap 314. He dropped one position coming to the checkered flag.

Daniel Suárez, driver of the No. 96 CommScope Toyota Camry for Gaunt Brothers Racing:

“The result looked really good, on paper. We just need to keep working to get more speed. The balance of the car wasn’t even close to what we wanted, so we have a lot of work to do. It was a crazy race, but that’s short-track racing. We did the best with what we had. We just need to keep working and find some more speed.”

Race Notes:

- Joey Logano won the FanShield 500k to score his 25th career NASCAR Cup Series victory, his second of the season and his second at Phoenix. His margin of victory over second-place Kevin Harvick was .276 of a second.
- There were 12 caution periods for a total of 73 laps.
- Twenty-seven of the 38 drivers in the FanShield 500k finished on the lead lap.
- Harvick takes over as the championship leader after Phoenix with a one-point advantage over second-place Logano.

Next Up:

The next event for Suárez and Gaunt Brothers Racing is the Folds of Honor 500 on Sunday, March 15, at Atlanta Motor Speedway. The race starts at 2 p.m. EDT with live coverage provided by FOX and SiriusXM NASCAR Radio.

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