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GAUNT BROTHERS RACING



Disappointing 34th at Talladega for Suárez

Team USA Toyota Runs as High as Second Before 13-Car Accident Ends Day

Date: Oct. 4, 2020
Event: YellaWood 500 (Round 31 of 36)
Series: NASCAR Cup Series
Location: Talladega (Ala.) Superspeedway (2.66-mile oval)
Format: 188 laps, broken into three stages (60 laps/60 laps/68 laps)
Start/Finish: 31st / 34th (Accident, completed 108 of 200 laps)
Point Standing: 31st with 317 points
Note: Race extended 12 laps past its scheduled 188-lap distance due to a green-white-checked finish.
Race Winner: Denny Hamlin of Joe Gibbs Racing (Toyota)
Stage 1 Winner: Chris Buescher of Roush Fenway Racing (Ford)
Stage 2 Winner: Martin Truex Jr., of Joe Gibbs Racing (Toyota)

Stage 1 Recap (Laps 1-60):

- Started 31st, finished 12th.
- Suárez and his Team USA Toyota survived three, early incident-related cautions, moving up to as high as ninth before sitting 17th when the competition caution flag flew on lap 25. He pitted for fuel only during the competition caution, having taken a fresh set of tires during the first caution of the day on lap one as a precaution after locking up his brakes slightly to avoid the initial incident ahead of him. He resumed 23rd when the race went back to green on lap 30.
- The run to the end of the stage was a competitive one with Suárez moving up to as high as second. He was 12th when the caution flag flew on lap 58, two laps before the scheduled end of the stage, for a multicar accident at the front of the pack. Suárez got through this one cleanly, as well. He pitted for tires, fuel, tape on the grille and rear air pressure and track bar adjustments to lower the Team USA Toyota Camry in an effort to match up bumpers better with cars trying to push him.

Stage 2 Recap (Laps 61-108):

- Started 13th, finished 34th.
- A single-car incident brought out the caution flag three laps after the stage's start on lap 65 with Suárez running 14th. He pitted twice during what turned out to be an extended caution period to top off his fuel tank and resumed 22nd when the race went back to green on lap 73.
- The Team USA Toyota team called Suárez to pit lane on lap 86 for a scheduled green-flag stop coordinated with the other Toyota teams, but the caution flag appeared for a multicar incident just as Suárez was approaching the entrance to pit road. He was able to abort his pit entry, allowing him to stay on track and make his stop for fuel, tires and a track bar adjustment under caution, instead. He resumed in 11th when the race went back to green on lap 92.
- The race remained green until 12 laps before the scheduled conclusion of the stage with Suárez running 13th when the largest, multicar accident to that point occurred on lap 108. It involved 13 cars, including Suárez's Team USA Toyota, as he could not steer his way through the melee without heavy damage, and he was unable to continue. He was scored 34th in the final running order.

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

“That was definitely not the way we were hoping to end our day. You never know what’s going to happen at Talladega and Daytona because so much is out of your control, but we had another good Team USA Toyota today, like we did at Daytona. We just needed to get to the end of the race so we could fight for a good finish and we got caught up in something. It is what it is. Now we go to the road course at Charlotte and we’ll hope to make the most of our day there next week.”

Race Notes:

- The DNF (did not finish) was just the second in 30 races this season for Suárez and the No. 96 Team USA Toyota Camry.
- Denny Hamlin won the YellaWood 500 to score his 44th career NASCAR Cup Series victory, his seventh of the season and his second at Talladega. His margin of victory over second-place Erik Jones was .086 of a second.
- There were 13 caution periods for a total of 54 laps.
- Twenty-two of the 39 drivers in the race finished on the lead lap.
- Hamlin leaves Talladega as the championship leader with a 20-point advantage over second-place Kevin Harvick.

Next Up:

The next event on the NASCAR Cup Series schedule for Suárez and Gaunt Brothers Racing is the Bank of America Roval 400 on Sunday, Oct. 11 on the Charlotte (N.C.) Motor Speedway road course. It starts at 2:30 p.m. EDT with live coverage provided by NBC and SiriusXM NASCAR Radio.

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