

Atlanta Motor Speedway NASCAR Folds of Honor QuikTrip 500 plus XFINITY Series & Camping World Truck Series

Story: Phillip Prichard, MSA/Photos: MSA Staff

It appeared that Kevin Harvick was a sure bet to go to victory lane, leading 292 of 325 laps in the Folds of Honor QuikTrip 500 the Monster Energy NASCAR Cup Series at Atlanta Motor Speedway. Harvick won Segements 1 and 2, dominating the whole race. A speeding penalty on pit road with 14 laps to go put him at the back of the field and took him out of contention for the win.

This was the first Atlanta race since NASCAR added more timing lines to measure pit road speed, the sanctioning body handed out 13 speeding infractions with Harvick getting the final speeding infraction of the race.

This set up a restart with Kyle Larson and Matt Kenseth on the front row, with an 11-lap dash deciding the winner on Atlanta's weathered track surface. Larson got the jump off the green flag, but couldn't keep his car on the bottom in turns one and two. Ultimately, when he went high with seven laps to go, Keselowski got a run on the backstretch enough to clear the No. 42 and never looked back. Keselowski took the checkered flag with a .564 second lead of Larson.

This was Keselowski's first Atlanta Motor Speedway win. Keselowski rebounded from an earlier trip to pit road for a loose wheel to grab the win in the season's second race. It was his 22nd series win.

Kenseth finished third ahead of Kasey Kahne and hometown favorite Chase Elliott, who rallied from a speeding penalty on lap 211 to round out the top five after challenging for the win in the final 50 laps.

Joey Logano, Daytona 500 champion Kurt Busch and Martin Truex Jr. finished sixth through eighth, while Harvick came back to finish ninth in the end ahead of Jamie McMurray.

In a race that ran clean with the first 210 laps ran uninterrupted, only the two stage



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breaks slowed the pace for the first 239 circuits on Sunday.

However, four cautions slowed the pace over the final 86 laps before Keselowski ended the day in victory lane.

Harvick leads the list in what was the most disappointing turn of events in race. He looked untouchable all afternoon but his speeding penalty erased all of his earlier effort and he was forced to settle for ninth place. Harvick has led the most laps in the last four Atlanta races but failed to win any of them. On the positive side, Harvick who captured the pole, leaves Atlanta with two additional playoff points for winning the first two stages of the race. He also holds the series lead by four points over Stewart-Haas Racing teammate and Daytona winner Kurt Busch.

Denny Hamlin burned a hub and the miserable start to his season continued with a 38th-place finish. Dale Earnhardt Jr. made several trips to pit road including one for damage when a tire went down and he ended up 30th. Ryan Newman started from the outside of the front row and was near the front of the field late but a battery issue

took him out of the race. It was the same problem his RCR teammate Austin Dillon suffered.

Kyle Busch was the pole winner at Atlanta for the sixth time in the NASCAR XFINITY Series. Busch powered away on the Lap 148 restart of 163 lap and beat Brad Keselowski to the finish line by .605 seconds to score his second straight victory at the 1.54-mile track in Saturday's Rinnai



POLE WINNER: HAPPY HARVICK

250. The victory was Busch's 87th in 329 starts, extending his own series record.

Kyle Larson, Kevin Harvick, Elliott Sadler, Darrell Wallace Jr., William Byron, Austin Dillon, Daniel Hemric and Cole Custer completed the top 10.

The race was contested in three stages, the first two of 40 laps each before an 83-lap final stage. Keselowski, a Monster Energy NASCAR Cup Series regular, won the first stage, earning a playoff point for the No. 22 Team Penske Ford.

Harvick won Stage 2 convincingly, but his car tightened up in the final third of the race.

Christopher Bell held off Matt Crafton on a restart with two laps to go and completely dominated the NASCAR Camping World Truck Series race at Atlanta Motor Speedway.

Driving for Kyle Busch Motorsports, Bell started from the pole, took the first two 40-lap stages and passed Crafton for the lead with 16 laps remaining.

The other top ten finishers were: Johnny Sauter, Ben Rhodes, Chase Elliott, Alex Bowman, Austin Dillon, Grant Enfinger, Timothy Peters, and Ross Chastain.

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