

Martin Truex Jr. gets breakthrough short-track win at Richmond

RICHMOND, Va. — Saturday night's victory in the Toyota Owners 400 at Richmond Raceway was a first for Martin Truex Jr.—and more of the same for Joe Gibbs Racing.

Truex won his first Monster Energy NASCAR Cup Series race on a short track in his 81st try and in the process picked up his first victory with Joe Gibbs Racing since moving from now-defunct Furniture Row Racing between seasons.

At the same time, Truex gave JGR its third straight victory in NASCAR's top series and sixth in nine races this season. Joey Logano finished .178 seconds behind the race winner, as Gibbs and Team Penske maintained their stranglehold on the premier division. Penske drivers Logano and Brad Keselowski triumphed in the three races JGR hasn't won.

"It means a lot to break through, especially here at Richmond," said Truex, who won for the first time this season and the 20th time in his career. "I've always really enjoyed this track. I've always loved coming here. The short track win—everybody kept asking me when it was going to happen.

"I was struggling the last 40 laps. I had no front tire and got real tight that last run. I just had to hold them off. Thanks to the pit crew—they had a great night. I'm just really happy to get our first win with Gibbs. First short-track win is pretty awesome, too.

"Tonight, we didn't have the best car, but we've lost here with the best car a bunch of times. We just fought and battled. Being out front was just the key."

Logano got past third-place finisher Clint Bowyer in the closing laps and got a strong run off Turn 2 on the final circuit, but Logano couldn't find a way around Truex through the last two corners. To his credit, the reigning series champion kept it clean, opting not to move Truex as he had done on the final lap in last year's Playoff race at Martinsville.

"I figured something out there toward the end with about 10 laps to go to make up some speed," Logano said. "I got a decent run off of (Turn) 2 the last lap... I thought I could maybe get to the outside and then roll momentum—I don't know.

"I couldn't roll the bottom and get enough drive off of (Turn) 4 either way. My only move was to go up. I slid up and I got tight and couldn't turn underneath him. Fun race, but, gosh, two weeks in a row I felt like we had a car that could win the race, and we haven't won.

"That's a little frustrating, but when you're frustrated with second, that's a good sign about where your team's at."

Two seconds behind Truex with 40 laps



Monster Energy NASCAR Cup Series drivers give fans a four-wide salute before the start of the Monster Energy NASCAR Cup Series Toyota Owners 400 (Photo Credit: Matt Sullivan/Getty Images)

left, Bowyer quickly closed the deficit and made a move to the inside of Truex's No. 19 Toyota with 17 laps to go, but Truex protected the outside and kept enough momentum to keep Bowyer behind him.

With fewer than 10 laps left, Bowyer brushed the wall and surrendered the second position when Logano got to his outside off Turn 4.

"It's frustrating," said Bowyer, who scored his fourth straight top-10 result. You get out there, and I ran him (Truex) down. I was faster on a long run than him, but by the time you get to him, your stuff is pretty wore out. And with this aero package, you are so aero dependent behind those cars that you get terrible tight.

"When I got behind him, I knew that wasn't the place to be, so I changed that. I lost. It sucks. Then the 22 (Logano) got to my outside. I knew better than to let him out there, but I felt like when I was running high that I was probably losing ground to him. In hopes of still trying to win the race, I needed to stay on the bottom and hope that he slipped up in traffic or something. Next thing you know I lost my nose down there, and the 22 got to the outside."

Pole winner Kevin Harvick ran fourth, followed by Denny Hamlin and Austin Dillon. Brad Keselowski, Kyle Busch, Ryan Newman and Paul Menard completed the top 10. Busch posted his ninth straight top 10 to start the season.

Busch led 101 laps—second only to Truex's 186—but a speeding penalty under

caution on Lap 131 after Kyle Larson's hard crash into the Turn 1 wall knocked Busch back to 26th, and he was unable to work his way back to the front.

Monster Energy NASCAR Cup Series Race - 65th Annual Toyota Owners 400 Richmond Raceway, Richmond, Virginia Saturday, April 13, 2019

Top Ten

1. (5) Martin Truex Jr, Toyota, 400.
2. (3) Joey Logano, Ford, 400.
3. (14) Clint Bowyer, Ford, 400.
4. (1) Kevin Harvick, Ford, 400.
5. (30) Denny Hamlin, Toyota, 400.
6. (6) Austin Dillon, Chevrolet, 400.
7. (8) Brad Keselowski, Ford, 400.
8. (4) Kyle Busch, Toyota, 400.
9. (24) Ryan Newman, Ford, 400.
10. (9) Paul Menard, Ford, 400.



Martin Truex Jr, driver of the #19 Auto Owners Insurance Toyota, celebrates in Victory Lane. (Photo Credit: Matt Sullivan/Getty Images)