

Hailie Deegan Makes History With K&N Pro Series West Win at Meridian

*First Female To Earn Victory
In Series' 64 Years*

MERIDIAN, Idaho. — Hailie Deegan's first season in the NASCAR K&N Pro Series has been full of historic achievements.

She topped them all Saturday night.

The 17-year-old from Temecula, California, led one lap in the NAPA Auto Parts/Idaho 208 at Meridian Speedway. But it was the most important of them all. Deegan used a pass on the white-flag lap to claim the victory and become the first female driver to win in the history of the NASCAR K&N Pro Series.

Twice before Deegan had finished second in a NASCAR K&N Pro Series West race, most recently at The Dirt Track at Las Vegas Motor Speedway two weeks ago. That tied the series' record for highest finish by a woman in either the K&N Pro Series East or West.

That Saturday night, she did one better.

"Oh my god," Deegan said in Victory Lane. "This has to be the best day of my life right here. It doesn't get any better than this. People don't understand how many days, how many hours I've put into this. How much work I've done to get to this moment. It's just amazing ... this is the happiest day of my life. We did it. WOOHOO!"

Racing-Reference: Hailie Deegan's 2018 K&N Pro Series West Statistics

The East lineage dates to the formation of the old Busch North in 1987, while the West records go back to the Pacific Coast Late Model Series' first season in 1954.

At Vegas, Deegan became the first female to win the pole in a NASCAR K&N Pro Series race. The NASCAR Next driver has five top fives and 10 top 10s in 12 starts, and took over the lead in the Sunoco Rookie of the Year standings.

The winning move was on her Bill McAnally Racing teammate Cole Rouse entering Turn 1, a maneuver that Deegan



said she thought about before performing it.

"I was in bed last night thinking, 'If it comes down, last lap, I'm in second, I'm a car length off of him, what am I going to do?'" Deegan said. "And I found that Turn 1 spot. I knew what exactly I had to do there. I was doing it to some other people just getting right under them to get them a little light to get them, not wrecking loose, nothing crazy, but enough to just get a little under them and make the pass happen. We did that. I knew exactly what I had to do the last lap. I did it, we executed, and we made it happen."

But one driver's triumph is another driver's disappointment, as Rouse came home in second place, marking the third time in the last four races he's been the runner-up.

"We were going into Turn 1 ... and she doesn't lift and drives into me, gets me completely sideways," Rouse said, looking at his beaten and battered left rear quarter panel of his No. 99 NAPA Filters Toyota. "We were going to win that race if it was run clean, but unfortunately it wasn't. I'm just going to go into the next two races, not give her any slack and we're going to win both of those. It was a good night, but I don't really care about second, honestly."

Pole sitter Derek Kraus brought his No. 16 NAPA Auto Parts Toyota home in third, completing a podium sweep for Bill McAnally's stable out of Roseville, California. But after leading over 190 laps without relinquishing the top spot, third was a huge letdown and another in the string of bad luck for the Stratford, Wisconsin native.

"We led 190+ laps, then a lapped car spun again," Kraus said. "I was predicting he was going to roll down because he didn't have his brakes on yet. But he stayed there, and I was already committed (to the top) ... and I guess NASCAR ruled me third. I don't know, I guess we'll go onto Roseville and Kern and win them two."

K&N Pro Series West championship points leader Derek Thorn maintained his lead thanks to a fourth-place finish, as Sunrise Ford teammate and challenger for the title Ryan Partridge rounded out the top five. Thorn leads Partridge and Rouse by 32 apiece.

Trevor Huddleston, Matt Levin, Jeff Jefferson, Kody Vanderwal and Stingray Robb completed the top 10 at Meridian.

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