

Hamlin Clutch in Phoenix Victory, Secures Manufacturer's Title for Toyota

November 11, 2019

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PLANO, Texas (November 11, 2019) – Denny Hamlin scored a clutch victory at ISM Raceway in Arizona to clinch a spot to run for the championship in Homestead. With the win, Hamlin also secured the Monster Energy NASCAR Cup Series Manufacturer's Championship for Toyota for the third time in the last four seasons.

NASCAR

Denny Hamlin scored his sixth win of the season – and first at ISM Raceway since 2012 – in dominant fashion. After winning the first stage, Hamlin retook the top spot during a long green flag stretch to start the final stage. Hamlin would extend his advantage to over 10 seconds, and made it through a round of green flag pit stops unscathed. However, a caution bunched up the field with less than 10 laps to go. Hamlin made a two-tire stop, and came off pit road still in the lead. He survived the final restart and claimed victory.

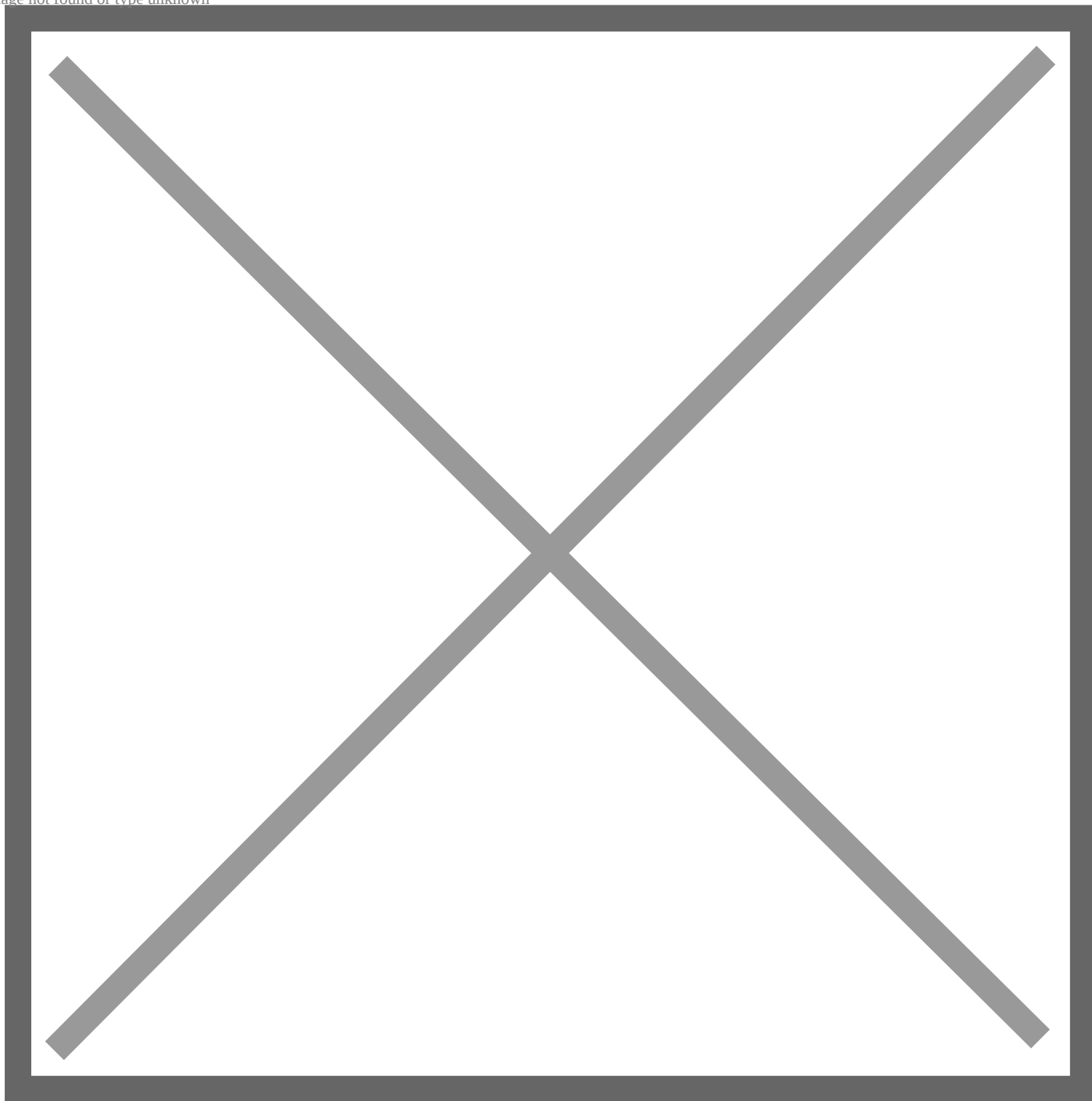
“The caution was the most nervous moment,” said Hamlin. “I was counting down. I have a clock inside the car and I was looking at the clock and thinking, 20 more minutes of laps, 10 more minutes of laps, five more minutes of laps. I knew it was inevitable. I’ve been through so much at this race track. Obviously in 2010 and the downfall of our championship run there to get it all back 10 years later, this is special to me.”

Kyle Busch finished second and secured the only spot on points in the Championship 4. With Truex and Hamlin's wins, Joe Gibbs Racing (JGR) and Toyota have three of the four drivers in the Championship 4. It is the first time in NASCAR history that one team and manufacturer have three of the final four drivers running for the championship.

Hamlin's win was the 18th of the season for both JGR and Toyota, which reestablished season-best efforts. With the win, Toyota officially clinched its third manufacturer's title. Toyota's previous two titles came in 2016 and 2017.

Christopher Bell dominated the early parts of the NASCAR Xfinity Series event – winning the pole and the first two stages of the event – but after a pit road speeding penalty and flat tire which led to a spin, Bell was forced to settle for 16th. Bell's JGR teammate, Kansas winner Brandon Jones, led Toyota with an 11th-place finish. However, Bell is ready for his chance at his first Xfinity Series title in Homestead.

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“I’m just really excited to go to Homestead with a chance to win a championship,” said Bell. “I’m really proud of these guys. They gave me a really fast race car. I wasn’t really sure what happened with the speeding penalty. I was matching my lights, just like I did all day long and all day yesterday. We’ll have to look into that and see why it was so much closer to speeding today than it was yesterday in practice. Really happy for all my guys to be able to compete for a championship. Just have to go home, use the Xfinity internet service to study up and hopefully be as prepared as we can for Homestead.”

In the NASCAR Gander Outdoors Truck Series event on Friday evening, both Toyota Playoff contenders – Austin Hill and Tyler Ankrum – were eliminated from championship contention. Hill started strong by winning his third career pole but suffered tight conditions through the last stage which made him unable to make up the positions he needed to earn a Championship 4 spot.

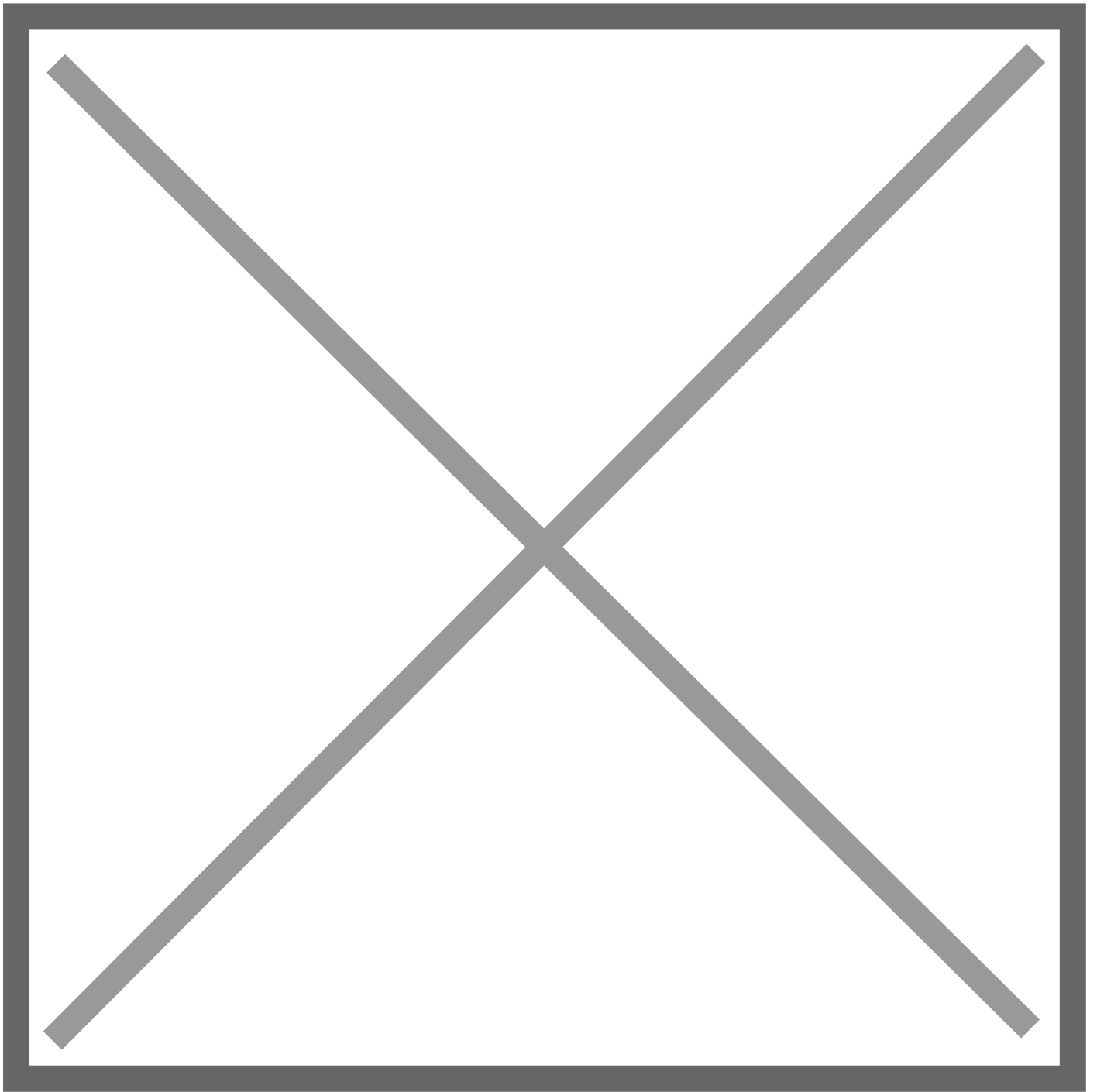
“I don’t know if the track went through a change or what on the last run, but we were the tightest we had been all night,” said Hill after the race. “Just couldn’t ever pass. I was faster than the three or four guys that were in front of me. Every time I got close to them, I would get tighter. Just a bummer.”

18-year-old Ankrum, who has already clinched the series’ rookie of the year honors, suffered damage early in the race and finished 26th. Jones, who was running both the Xfinity and Truck Series races for the fifth time this season, scored his fifth career runner-up result to lead Toyota. 16-year-old Chandler Smith finished third – his third top-five finish in four career Truck Series starts.

Completing the weekend for Toyota at ISM Raceway in Phoenix was Saturday evening’s NASCAR K&N Pro Series West finale. Derek Kraus only had to start the race to complete a dream season as he earned the championship. Kraus would finish the year in style as he crossed the line in third – his 11th top-five finish in 14 starts this season.

“I’ve had great opportunities like coming to Bill McAnally Racing,” said Kraus. “They tested me when I was 15 years old, took a chance on me and here we are the third year and got the championship. I just can’t thank every single one of these guys that work on this race car. They worked their tails off on this thing.”

Fellow Toyota driver Ty Gibbs won in his NASCAR K&N West Series debut leading the final 38 (of 108) laps. The 16-year-old Gibbs scored wins in both the K&N Pro Series and ARCA Menards Series this season.



What's Next

The NASCAR season closes at Homestead-Miami Speedway. The Truck Series starts the weekend on Friday, November 15. Coverage begins at 8 p.m. ET on FS1. On Saturday, November 16, the Xfinity Series runs at 3:30 p.m. on NBCSN, while the Cup Series closes the weekend with its finale on Sunday, November 17 at 3 p.m. on NBC.

The NHRA also ends their season in Pomona, California at Auto Club Raceway. Television coverage of the Finals is on Sunday, November 17 at 4 p.m. on FS1.