

# TALLADEGA 2022

Story: Nancy Elles, Photos: MSA Staff

Another beautiful weekend at Talladega Super Speedway. A 2 ½ mile track. Let's start with the Saturday's Xfinity race. The Ag-Pro 300. 113 laps.

Notable for this race is the sight of the Richard Childress Black Number 3 car driven by Jeffrey Earnhardt with Larry McReynolds as his crew chief on the pit box. McReynolds has not acted as a crew chief in nearly 22 years after last racing with Mike Skinner. Earnhardt ends up getting the pole award. A good sign.

On to some highlights. Starts as seven cars start at rear for unapproved adjustments. By lap 11 the #44 (Tommy Joe Martins) is slow in 2 and loses LR tire. Brings out caution. Restart on lap 15, Earnhardt still in the lead. Stage 1 over at lap 25, Noah Gragson wins in the number 8.

In lap 48 Mason Massey in the #91 loses tire and makes hard contact with wall. Massey, a Douglas County, Ga native is out of race.

Stage 2 ends at lap 50 with # 7, AJ Allmendinger winning. Going into pit the # 19, Brandon Jones penalized for not entering in a single file.

Lap 68, caution for debris. Rear bumper panel falls off. Lap 97, the RF fender of #5, (Matt Mills) shreds.

Lap 103, Big Wreck involves 6 cars. The 31 of Myatt Snider gets the rear bumper of the 48 on nose of car.

Lap 110, Another wreck. The #1 Sam Mayer and Austin Hill's #21 hit inside wall. This puts Hill, also a native Douglas County, Ga. resident out of race.

Lap 114, The 45 of Cesar Bacarella and # 2 Sheldon Reed make hard contact with turn 2 wall.

Lap 119, the # 51 of Jeremy Clements stalls in turn 1 bringing out caution.

Race ends on lap 124, due to 3 overtimes, with Noah Gragson in the # 9 hold-

ing off Earnhardt for second. Earnhardt had made a push from 5th but came up just a little bit short. I believe we will be seeing more of him. In Noah's words "it came down to fuel strategy."

Sunday's race. The GEICO 500 188 laps. Before the race started, Clint Bowyer drove Davey Allison's Black Number 28 for ceremonial lap. Afterwards he was seen running to the Fox booth for broadcasting. Talladega is a big place. They couldn't get him a ride?

Christopher Bell won the pole in the #20. The #62 with Noah Gragson to the rear for adjustments, The # 77 of Landon Cassill did not qualify and will do a pass through after green flag. He will be a lap down by the 9th lap.

Lap 33 the number 8, Tyler Reddick pits under green and the hood goes up. Lap 34 the Ford's pit. #51 of Cody Ware spins into pit. Lap 35, Toyotas pit. Denny Hamlin's # 11 slides through and has to back up. Lap 36 Chevy's pit and Ross Chastain's #1 is penalized for speeding on pit road.

After all stops, Kyle Larson takes the lead in the number 5. Lap 46 the #6 of Brad Keselowski goes 1 lap down after losing the draft due to penalty.

Lap 57 The Daniel Hemrick in the #16 spins down the track after contact with the 3 and collects #14 (Chase Briscoe) and #17 (Chris Buescher) as collateral damage.

Lap 60 end of stage 1. #23 of Bubba Wallace takes the win.

Stage 2 begins with Ricky Stenhouse Jr.'s # 47 crew cuts out fins on hood to lower temperature which was getting high. #18 Kyle Busch takes gas can along with him and receives penalty.

In lap 82 the #44 with Greg Biffle (Hi Biff) loses power in turn 4.

Lap 82 B J McLeod spins in the #78 turn 2 and loses RR wheel.

Lap 90 another restart with #24 (William Byron) in lead. Number 23 (Bubba) spins



**REALLY TIGHT RACIN  
PHOTO: GREG McWILLIAMS**

and takes 9 others with him. Logano is out and this is his first DNF. Damaged cars all pit multiple times. Restart does not come until lap 98. The # 41 of Cole Custer is very slow on the back stretch. He was damaged on last caution.

Only to make it to lap 107 before another caution. Nine cars pit. The #12 of Ryan Blaney working on nose of car, and # 20 (Bell) speeding while entering. Number 23 (Bubba) goes out but returns with a loose tire. Takes 4 replacements.

Lap 120 end of stage 2. Number 24, William Byron wins.

More pits under green and lots of maneuvering but no major wrecks.

Lap 186 finds the #11, Denny Hamlin out of fuel.

Coming to the finish on lap 188 #43 of Erik Jones and # 5 of Kyle Larson battle it out for finish.

Larson tried to pull out but was blocked

by Jones. The # 1 of Ross Chastain, with a push from #3 is able to pass and wins the race on the last lap. The only lap he led. This is second win of the season. He also won the COTA race with this same car.

Chastain credits his decision to stay along the bottom of the track for the last eight laps. Let the watermelon smashing commence.

Austin Dillion was 2nd and Kyle Busch 3rd.

A couple things about this race. Bubba Wallace was looking for his second win at this track. He won last year after rain shortened the race and was called.

If Erik Jones had won this would have been the first win for Richard Petty Racing since Aric Almirola won in 2014!

Chase Elliot has still not won a race but remains in the lead of 21 points in the standings leading into Dover.

**Continued on page 8**



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