

= 2012 Gatorade Duels =

The 2012 Gatorade Duels were a pair of stock car races held on February 23 , 2012 at Daytona International Speedway in Daytona Beach , Florida . The 60 @-@ lap races , held before a crowd of 80 @, @ 000 , were the qualifying races for the 2012 Daytona 500 , the premier event of the 2012 NASCAR Sprint Cup Series . The first race was won by Tony Stewart for the Stewart @-@ Haas Racing team . Dale Earnhardt Jr. finished second and Marcos Ambrose came in third . The second race was won by Matt Kenseth driving for the Roush Fenway Racing team ; their first win in the history of the Gatorade Duels . Regan Smith followed in the second position and Jimmie Johnson was third .

Carl Edwards led the first race from the start . One lap later , he was overtaken by Stewart . Afterward , Earnhardt moved into the first position , holding it until a caution period on lap nine . Denny Hamlin assumed the lead at the lap 14 and maintained the position until his pit stop 30 laps later . Stewart reclaimed the lead and held it throughout the remaining 16 laps and two further caution periods to win the first Gatorade Duel . There were three cautions and eight lead changes among five different drivers during the course of the first race .

During the second race , Greg Biffle was the leader at the start . On the fourth lap , Kenseth passed Biffle to take over the lead . He lost the position when Joey Logano and Kyle Busch moved into the top two places . Biffle passed Kyle Busch by the 29th lap and held it during his pit stop 14 laps later . With three laps remaining in the race , Kenseth attempted a race @-@ winning slingshot and passed Biffle when the final lap started and held it to win the second Gatorade Duel . There were five lead changes among five different drivers and no cautions were shown during the course of the second race .

= = Report = =

= = = Background = = =

Daytona International Speedway is one of six superspeedways to hold NASCAR races ; the others are Michigan International Speedway , Auto Club Speedway , Indianapolis Motor Speedway , Pocono Raceway and Talladega Superspeedway . Its standard track is a four @-@ turn , 2 @. @ 5 @-@ mile (4 @. @ 0 km) superspeedway . Daytona 's turns are banked at 31 degrees and the front stretch (the location of the finish line) is banked at 18 degrees . The defending winners of the races were Kurt Busch and Jeff Burton .

In early years , qualifying had varying formats : from one timed lap , to the average of two laps , to the better of two laps . The idea of having two individual races to establish the starting lineup of the Daytona 500 dates back to the first race in 1959 . The first of the 100 @-@ mile (160 km) qualifying races consisted of Convertible division cars and the second of Grand National cars . Between 1960 and 1967 , the races were 100 miles (160 km) and were increased to 125 miles (201 km) in 1969 . Prior to 1971 , the races yielded points to the Drivers ' Championship . Large well @-@ established teams approach the races as practice sessions for the Daytona 500 while a successful qualification into the Daytona 500 for smaller less @-@ established teams would allow them to enter future NASCAR events during the season . An unsuccessful qualification meant the team would risk closing down until sponsorship was found . Corporate sponsors purchased naming rights to qualifying races ; between 1981 and 1984 , Uno cards was the title sponsor for the " Uno Twin 125 ? s " qualifying events . In 1985 they became known as " 7 @-@ Eleven Twin 125 's " ; no sponsors funded the 1988 , 1989 and 1990 qualifying events and the races were called " Daytona Twin Qualifiers " . Gatorade became the sponsor of the dual qualifying events in 1991 and the races were increased to 150 miles (240 km) as it became known as the " Gatorade Duels " in 2005 . The races were rebranded as the " Budweiser Duels " in 2013 and became known as the " Can @-@ Am Duels " in 2016 .

The top 35 drivers were assigned to Gatorade Duel races based upon their qualifying positions in

the Daytona 500 . Drivers who qualified in odd @-@ number positions competed in the first Duel along with the winner of the 2012 Daytona 500 pole . Competitors who qualified in even @-@ numbered places took part in the second Duel . The drivers ' finishing positions in both Duels determined their starting positions in the Daytona 500 . Positions 40 to 42 were filled with the quickest drivers who did not qualify in the top 35 , apart from 43rd which was occupied by an eligible past champion . In the event a past champion was not available , the 43rd position would be filled by the next @-@ fastest driver . Two drivers outside the top 35 were eligible for two transfer spots in each Duel .

After some of the cars ' engines overheated while driving in packs during the 2012 Budweiser Shootout , NASCAR increased the engines ' pressure release values from 25 psi (1 @. @ 7 bar) to 28 psi (1 @. @ 9 bar) to help reduce overheating and alleviate the effects of driving at high temperatures .

= = = Practice and qualification = = =

Two 90 @-@ minute practice sessions were held on February 22 . Matt Kenseth was quickest in the first practice session , with a time of 44 @. @ 809 seconds . Trevor Bayne was second @-@ quickest with a lap @-@ time 0 @. @ 009 seconds slower . Ricky Stenhouse Jr , with a time of 44 @. @ 849 seconds , was third @-@ fastest , ahead of Marcos Ambrose and Mark Martin . Clint Bowyer , Michael McDowell and Kevin Harvick . Paul Menard and Kasey Kahne completed the top ten . During the session , Brad Keselowski slowed to avoid Ryan Newman , causing Clint Bowyer to turn into Keselowski , whose car went spinning into the grass on the backstretch . Keselowski 's car sustained minor damage ; his team could repair it , meaning he was not required to use a back @-@ up car . Aric Almirola led the second practice , in which 25 drivers competed , with a lap of 45 @. @ 065 seconds ? nearly one @-@ tenth of a second faster than David Stremme . David Ragan was third , ahead of Robert Richardson , Jr. and Greg Biffle . Bobby Labonte , Joe Nemechek , Bill Elliott , Michael Waltrip and Kahne completed the top ten ahead of the races .

During the session , in where drivers ran in packs and drafted off each other , Juan Pablo Montoya made contact with Kahne and sent his car spinning into the grass on the frontstretch , tearing off some of its nose . Kahne was required to use a back @-@ up car for the rest of Speedweeks . Because the qualifying grids were chosen by the order in which drivers qualified in Daytona 500 pole position qualifying , the pole was given to Carl Edwards in the first race and to Biffle in the second . Edwards was joined on the front row of the grid by Dale Earnhardt , Jr . , with Ambrose in third . Stenhouse and Bayne started in fourth and fifth positions respectively . Biffle was joined by Mears on the front row for the second race , with Jeff Gordon in third . Martin Truex , Jr. started fourth , and was followed by Martin in fifth .

= = = Races = = =

The qualifying races for the 2012 Daytona 500 began at 2 : 00 p.m. EST and was televised live in the United States by Speed . The conditions on the grid before the race were dry , the air temperature was 82 ° F (28 ° C) and a ten percent chance of rain was forecast . Dr. L. Ronald Durham of Greater Friendship Missionary Baptist Church in Daytona Beach , Florida began the pre @-@ race ceremonies with an invocation . Vocalist Catrina Mack from Orlando , Florida performed the national anthem .

= = = Race 1 = = =

Following the invocation and the performance of the National Anthem , three @-@ time Olympic gold medalist swimmer Ryan Lochte gave the command for the drivers to start their engines . Edwards maintained his pole position lead going into the first corner with Earnhardt , Jr. in second . On lap two , Tony Stewart passed Edwards around the outside to take the lead . Edwards , with assistance from Bayne , moved in front of Stewart going into turn three to reclaim the first position

two laps later . On the fifth lap , Earnhardt moved into the lead and Ambrose moved into second place . Edwards temporarily moved back into first before Earnhardt reclaimed the position . Bayne , who also battled for the lead , had moved down the field by lap seven . On lap nine , Michael McDowell made contact with David Gilliland 's left @-@ rear quarter panel between turns one and two ; Gilliland went up the track towards the outside wall , and collected Menard and Montoya , triggering the first caution of the race and the appearance of the pace car . Keselowski was also caught up in the wreckage and his car sustained minor damage . Most of the drivers , including Earnhardt , made pit stops for fuel . Earnhardt was required to make an additional pit stop after one of his pit crew went over the wall too soon , dropping him down the field .

The race was restarted on lap 14 , with Ambrose leading Denny Hamlin (both of whom opted not to pit) Almirola , Stewart and Jamie McMurray . Hamlin passed Ambrose to take the lead one lap later . Stewart , with aid from Burton , took over the lead from Hamlin one lap later . Hamlin reclaimed the lead on lap 17 and McDowell moved into second place . Hamlin continued to maintain his lead over the next four laps while McMurray battled with Stewart for second . McDowell had fallen to eighth by lap 21 , while Stewart continued in second by lap 25 . On the 28th lap , McMurray tried an overtake around the outside of Hamlin for the lead at turn three but could not complete the manoeuvre , causing him to drop to eighth two laps later . On lap 32 , the top five were Hamlin , Stewart , Harvick , Stenhouse and Ambrose . As the cars ran in single file , Edwards had dropped to 15th place one lap later . McDowell was told by his team to save fuel on lap 43 . Green flag pit stops began on lap 44 when Hamlin and Ambrose stopped for tyres and fuel , allowing Stewart to assume the lead with Kevin Harvick in second and Stenhouse in third . Eight laps later , after making a pit stop , Michael Waltrip lost control of his car on the backstraightaway after driving from the side of the track onto the race track , and crashed into the backstretch wall . The incident caused the second caution to be shown as every driver except Stewart , Harvick and Edwards stopped for fuel .

Stewart , Harvick and Edwards led at the lap 57 restart . Two laps later , Earnhardt and Edwards temporarily moved to the front of the field but Stewart retook the lead on the same lap . On the final lap , McMurray drove down from the top lane after exiting turn two , and went into Almirola in the middle lane , causing Almirola to make contact with Danica Patrick on the backstraightaway , sending her car spinning 180 degrees , and straight into the inside wall which she hit with her right @-@ hand side , sustaining heavy damage to her car . The crash caused the third and final caution of the race to be shown . Patrick was unhurt ; she was able to walk to an ambulance that took her to the in @-@ field medical center . The field was frozen in place , with the order of finish determined by where the drivers were when the caution began . This gave Stewart the victory ; Earnhardt finished second , and Ambrose finished third . Burton and Edwards completed the top five finishers . McDowell and Robby Gordon earned transfers to qualify for the Daytona 500 . The first race had a total of three cautions and eight lead changes among five different drivers .

= = = = Race 2 = = = =

Following the first Gatorade Duel , the Lead Category Manager at Harris Teeter , Steve Kravitz , gave the command for the drivers to start their engines . The weather conditions were similar to those encountered during the first Duel , albeit with a higher air temperature of 84 ° F (29 ° C) . During the pace laps , Kahne had to move to the rear of the field because he had switched to his backup car . He was joined by Clint Bowyer ? whose qualifying time was disallowed because his car twice failed the post @-@ race inspection for height sticks , and Bill Elliott ? who had switched his car 's engine . Biffle maintained his pole position advantage heading into the first turn , followed by Casey Mears . On lap three , Kenseth moved into the outside line to prepare for a race @-@ lead overtake and was helped by Johnson . Kenseth took over the lead on the following lap with Johnson in second ; Biffle was pushed down to third . By the twelfth lap , the top ten drivers were separated by one second as Joey Logano and Kyle Busch moved to the front two positions by lap 14 . Elliott Sadler nearly lost control of his car between the first and second turns on lap 16 but was able to continue . Kenseth tried to pass Kyle Busch on the outside of turn four on lap 17 , but Busch closed the door on Kenseth .

Kyle Busch moved into the lead on the 18th lap , while Logano moved down the field . After starting from 14th , Dave Blaney had moved up nine positions to fifth by lap 21 ; Logano had moved into third by the same lap . Biffle moved into the lead on lap 23 . Kenseth , who was drafting off teammate Biffle , encountered overheating problems and fell to ninth position . Biffle and Kyle Busch started to contest the lead through the fourth turn on lap 26 , and the pair traded the position over the following two laps . Biffle gained the lead position on the 29th lap . By lap 33 , Regan Smith and Sadler had moved into third and fourth positions respectively . Biffle had reported debris in turn two but officials could not locate it . Green flag pit stops began on lap 40 ; Kenseth , Logano and Kyle Busch made their pit stops on lap 42 while Biffle , Smith and Jimmie Johnson made pit stops on the following lap . After the pit stops had been completed , Biffle reclaimed the first position , while Smith moved into second and Johnson was in third . The top three drivers were followed by Sadler and Kenseth . Kyle Busch was drafting off Logano throughout lap 46 but suffered with engine problems , allowing Logano to pull away . By the 50th lap , the top five were Biffle , Smith , Johnson , Sadler and Kenseth .

Johnson went up the track on lap 52 , but regained control of his car . Six laps later , after the leaders ran single file , Kenseth received help from Johnson while running on the outside line to prepare for a race winning slingshot . Kenseth slid underneath teammate Biffle as they started the final lap , as Biffle attempted to block Kenseth . Kenseth maintained the lead and crossed the finish line on lap 60 to win the race , with Smith in second and Johnson third . Sadler and Biffle rounded out the top five finishers . Blaney and Nemechek earned the second pair of transfer spots to qualify for the Daytona 500 . Bayne , Tony Raines and David Stremme secured qualification for the Daytona 500 based on their lap times in the qualifier , with Terry Labonte using a champion 's provisional to qualify . The following six drivers failed to qualify for the Daytona 500 because they did not finish high enough in their respective Duels or turn a fast @-@ enough qualifying lap : Waltrip , Richardson , Bill Elliott , Mike Wallace , Kenny Wallace and J.J. Yeley . The second race had a total of five lead changes among four different drivers and no cautions were shown .

= = = Post @-@ race comments = = =

After the first race , Stewart drove to the victory lane ; the win earned him \$ 55 @, @ 725 . He said , " The fact that we 've won 17 times here and not won on the right day is proof it 's good momentum , but it 's no guarantee obviously . It 's nice to come here , especially for Steve and I , being our first race together , to be able to come out and have two really good strong and solid races back @-@ to @-@ back is an awesome start for us . " Earnhardt felt that the race was " pretty good " and praised Stewart for his victory . He also said that he aimed to start the Daytona 500 without using a back @-@ up car . Ambrose was happy with his third @-@ place finish , " We learned a lot for Sunday , we got a good result . We are smiling right now but it was very close to being the other way around . " He also said he was hoping to carry on his good form into the Daytona 500 .

Waltrip , who failed to qualify for the Daytona 500 after crashing on lap 52 , said he felt he had let everyone down but was thankful his team and his sponsor Aaron 's had given him an opportunity to race in the Duels . Patrick , who was hit by Almirola on the final lap and crashed heavily into the wall , said , " It sucks [to hit the wall like that] . You just have to brace yourself . I guess in these situations , I just have to be glad that I 'm a small driver and that I 've got room . Kinda hug it in and let it rip . " She also said the crash was " a blessing in a big disguise " . Patrick , along with Gilliland , Montoya and Menard , were required to drive their backup cars for the Daytona 500 . After the wreck on lap nine , Gilliland cut his thumb on his helmet ; the thumb required one stitch but he was confident about driving his backup car . According to Menard , who was involved in the lap nine wreck , " Somebody turned (David) Gilliland ; I saw him get sideways underneath me . I was three lanes up and I tried to clear him and didn 't quite make it . ? It took 56 minutes and 34 seconds to complete the first race ; because it ended under caution , no margin of victory was recorded .

After winning the second race , Kenseth drove to the victory lane ; earning \$ 56 @, @ 726 for the victory . Kenseth 's victory gave his team Roush Fenway Racing its first win in the Gatorade Duels . Kenseth said , " Jimmie Johnson gave me a huge push there and really worked nice for me the

whole race . Without that push it never would 've got there . Greg lost his drafting partner . We were able to separate him and the # 78 [Regan Smith] and we had such a big run that Greg was kind of a sitting duck . " Smith , who finished second , stated , " It would have been nice to put the Furniture Row / CSX Play it Safe Chevrolet in Victory Lane , but no complaints . " , and , " It ? s good to know that we have a car capable of running up front . " Johnson , who finished third , said , " It was an awesome race . We really had a shot to win that one . It was unfortunate there at the end that there were some lapped cars that were kind of mixed in with the leaders . It would have been nice if they would have let us race there ; at least from the white flag on . " It took 46 minutes and 23 seconds to complete the second race , and the margin of victory was 0 @. @ 209 seconds .

After the races , there was continued discussion about overheating engines in high temperatures . Harvick said the temperatures of around 80 ° F (27 ° C) had affected the racing , the grills were " too tight " and competitors chose to remain in a single @-@ file formation because of overheating . Smith said he believed there was no efficient method of tackling the problem . McMurray advocated the widening of the grille , saying , " it was a little hard to race because you got too hot " . One day after the second race , NASCAR announced that no further changes would be made .

= = Results = =

= = = Qualifying 1 and 2 = = =

= = = Race results 1 and 2 = = =