

Brett Butler Scores “Rookie of the Race” at Daytona debut in NextEra Energy Resources 250

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Brett Butler looked over the starting grid of the NextEra Energy Resources 250 and knew that it would take patience and hard work to finish strong among the field of champions like Kyle Busch, Johnny Benson, Ron Hornaday Jr., Mike Skinner and Ted Musgrave.

Butler, piloting the #47 Fuel Doctor Chevy, made his fifth start in the NASCAR Camping World Truck Series from the 29th position, and the youngster from Snellville, Georgia carried a grin the entire time he was strapping in his seat.

“I am so excited to get this thing started,” stated Butler. “The guys have worked hard all winter and now it’s time to show that it will pay off!”

Brett climbed his way early in the event towards the front and by lap 15, he moved his Fuel Doctor Chevy into the 14th position. After a shuffle in pit strategy, Butler found himself in the lead, gaining valuable championship bonus points and marking the first time he has led a race in his NASCAR career.

Dodging several near crashes from his competitors, Butler was not only gaining valuable seat time but also confidence.

“The truck is good enough to get back to the lead, but I don’t think they are done crashing yet,” he chuckled with just 30 laps remaining.

Butler was correct. After an incident happened behind him, only fourteen trucks were on the lead lap with just fifteen laps to go.

The restart with just twelve laps to go was Butler's opportunity at the leaders, and he quickly moved into the sixth position in the draft, following teammate Donnie Neuenberger. The Rick Ware Racing duo shuffled among the leaders for nearly five laps, and Brett crossed the line in 11th place, his career high in NASCAR.

Not only did Brett Butler grab his career high finish, but he also took the lead in the NASCAR Rookie of the Year points, setting the bar for fellow competitors Austin Dillon and Justin Lofton.

In the press room, the smile that Brett started the day with was still positioned firmly on his face.

BUTLER: YOU FLIRTED WITH A TOP-10 IN THE CLOSING LAPS OF THE RACE. "With our Fuel Doctor Go Green Machine, we were pretty good all night. We kind of just stayed in the back. We were one of the smart ones avoiding all the wrecks. Man, I can't thank these guys enough. With 12 laps to go we decided to get with the pack. I think we were in 10th or so and we went three wide, got a little loose, just barely saved it, caught back up to the field and just ran out of time."

WAS THE STRATEGY TO RIDE ALONG AND PUSH MORE IN THE DRAFT THAN YOU PULLED? "It depends who you are. You can ask some of these other guys qualifying up front and their race trucks are destroyed. I qualified 29th and finished 11th so I'd say it's a pretty good game plan [smiles]."

HOW IMPORTANT IS THIS FOR YOU TO FINISH WELL IN THE FIRST RACE OF THE YEAR? "Oh man I've ran four truck races and this is my best finish. The Rick Ware Racing guys, I can't thank them enough, Fuel Doctor too."

HOW MANY CLOSE CALLS DID YOU HAVE TONIGHT? "Right there at the end with 12 to go, I mean, it was getting a little hairy between everybody but the closest call was when a guy was wanting to go three-wide with me. The truck didn't like that, got a little sideways, we saved it and brought 'er home 11th."

HOW MUCH MOMENTUM DOES THIS RUN GIVE YOU AND THE TEAM? "It's awesome. I just hate it for Chrissy [Wallace] and the other cars [in the Nationwide race] but for us coming so close to a top-10, we'll take it and build on this momentum and hopefully do the same in Atlanta."

IF YOU REWIND THE LAST FEW LAPS, WHAT WOULD YOU DO DIFFERENTLY? "No, I mean I had a great spotter. He told us to lay back, and with twelve to go Matt Crafton was back there with us. He said that with 12 to go we were going to move. I wouldn't handle anything different. I can't thank these guys enough. It's been a great night."

HOW MUCH FUN DID YOU HAVE? "It was great. It was a blast man. Just riding back, that's fun, but getting in that main draft was important. We're very excited."