

RACING THIS WEEK

XFINITY RECAP

• Friday's WAWA 250, Daytona



WINNER: CONNOR ZILISCH (FINISHED BY PARKER KLIGERMAN)

The record book will list Connor Zilisch as the winner of the Wawa 250 Presented by Coca-Cola at Daytona International Speedway.

But it was part-timer Parker Kligerman (pictured) who did the heavy lifting in Friday's race, driving the No. 88 JR Motorsports Chevrolet to victory in relief of the 19-year-old prodigy.

With Zilisch determined to protect the collarbone he broke in a fall in Victory Lane at Watkins Glen, Kligerman got behind the wheel in a driver switch under caution on Lap 13.

From that point through an overtime that took the race to Lap 104, Kligerman drove a masterful race. His victory was welcome consolation for a heart-wrenching loss at Daytona in February, when Kligerman was first to the finish line in a Truck Series event but suffered a disqualification for a ride-height infraction.

Racing-reference.info, the statistics bible of motor racing, will credit Zilisch with his seventh win of the season, tying Christopher Bell for most by a Sunoco rookie in series history, but it was Kligerman who performed the celebratory burnout on the frontstretch at the World Center of Racing.

"It's different in every way, because I didn't expect to get a call from (team owner) Dale (Earnhardt) Jr. on the day I was leaving for vacation, saying 'Hey, man, would you come drive this thing?'"

"I hate the circumstances for Connor. He's an amazing generational talent. I feel honored to have gotten the call to grace the seat that he's been in, that Kyle Larson's been in... For me, it's such a neat thing that this will not be on Racing Reference at all."

After the OT restart on Lap 103, Zilisch got a push from teammate and eventual third-place finisher Justin Allgaier. He controlled the final two circuits until a 13-car wreck in Turn 4 ended the race under caution.

With Sammy Smith running second, JR Motorsports enjoyed a 1-2-3 finish.

It was the second time this season Zilisch has watched his car win a race. After a hard crash at Talladega in April, Zilisch sat out the subsequent race at Texas Motor Speedway, with Larson winning in the No. 88.

But on this Friday night, Zilisch ran from the pit box to the frontstretch to congratulate Kligerman. The drivers shared a delicate hug, with Kligerman mindful of Zilisch's surgically repaired collarbone, which is still on the mend.

With a fifth-place finish in Stage 1 and a win in Stage 2, Allgaier regained the series lead from Zilisch and takes a four-point advantage to the Aug.30 event at Portland International.

The fortunes of cousins Harrison Burton and Jeb Burton—both fighting for the final spot in the Xfinity Playoffs—changed radically during the race. On Lap 10, Harrison Burton's No. 25 Ford spun after contact from Matt DiBenedetto's Chevrolet.

Harrison finished 16th to Jeb's 20th, giving Harrison a 36-point lead for the final Playoff spot with two races left in the regular season.

Jesse Love finished fourth, followed by Sam Mayer, Brandon Jones, Dean Thompson, Garrett Smithley, Brennan Poole and Carson Kvapil.

COKE ZERO SUGAR 400

Ryan Blaney's second win of the season, his second at Daytona and 15th of his career vaulted the driver of the No. 12 Team Penske Ford into second place in the regular-season standings, earning him a bonus of 10 Playoff points.



Ryan Blaney, driver of the #12 Advance Auto Parts Ford, crosses the finish line to win the Cup Series Coke Zero Sugar 400 at Daytona International Speedway on Saturday. (Chris Graythen/Getty Images)

Coke Zero Sugar 3-wide finish goes Blaney's way

DAYTONA BEACH, Fla. — Not that a rescue mission was top of mind for Ryan Blaney, but his dramatic victory in Saturday night's Coke Zero Sugar 400 at Daytona International Speedway saved Alex Bowman from Playoff oblivion.

Blaney rocketed forward from 12th in the running order with three laps left in the final Cup Series regular-season race and crossed the finish line 0.031 seconds ahead of runner-up Daniel Suarez.

Justin Haley was 0.036 seconds behind Blaney in a three-wide photo finish for second place, with Cole Custer, who led the next-to-last lap, 0.049 seconds back in fourth.

A victory by Suarez, Haley or Custer would have eliminated Bowman from the Playoffs. Instead, the driver of the No.48 Hendrick Motorsports Chevrolet earned the 16th and final postseason berth on points.

Blaney's second win of the season, his second at Daytona and 15th of his career vaulted the driver of the No. 12 Team Penske Ford into second place in the regular-season standings, earning him a bonus of 10 Playoff points.

The victory was the first for a Ford driver since Blaney triumphed at Nashville Superspeedway on June 1.

"What a wild last couple laps, honestly," Blaney said. "I was with Cole, I kind of asked him on the restart, if you go to the top I'm going with you. We kind of just waited and waited and then the opportunity came, and he made a good move to get to the top, and we were able to really get good shoves."

"A couple good guys behind us, and then it kind of cleared the way for us when the 7 (Haley) and 41 (Custer) got racing, and I was able to clear on the top and just barely hold out for the win."

In fact, Blaney got the opportunity he needed when Custer moved off the top lane to block Haley's strong run. At that point, Blaney had enough momentum to carry him to the finish line with roughly a half-car-length to spare.

In a race that featured 44 lead changes among 19 drivers, Blaney and teammate Joey Logano each led 27 laps. Logano spent much of the final stage out front before spinning in front of Erik Jones with 11 laps left.

Jones finished fifth, followed by Stage

1 winner Kyle Larson, Chris Buescher, Ty Gibbs, Josh Berry and Chase Elliott. Ross Chastain won the second stage before finishing 15th.

For Bowman, a window of opportunity in the early going opened and shut in short order. On Lap 18, Todd Gilliland lost control from the middle lane and took the Toyota of Tyler Reddick with him.

Reddick nosed into the inside wall but and able to continue after repairs, but the accident gave Bowman hope of overcoming his 29-point deficit to the 23XI driver and locking into the Playoffs.

That hope was short-lived. On Lap 27, Bowman was collected in a 12-car pileup on the frontstretch triggered by chain reaction contact between Kyle Larson, Bubba Wallace, Joey Logano and Kyle Busch.

"Everything was happening pretty quick there," Wallace said. "The hit from the 5 (Larson) shoved me down there, and it was like I got shoved up by the 22 (Logano) and the 12 (Blaney) moved up. He was trying to just move up and take the lane. But, oh well. I hate it. 20th or 22nd to the lead in a short amount of time..."

"All in all, we're locked in (the Playoffs), and we'll get focused for Darlington."

The wreck knocked Bowman out of the race and out of contention for a Playoff berth on points, as Reddick clinched with Bowman's exit. Busch's last hope for the postseason also ended in the garage, as did that of formidable superspeedway racer Ricky Stenhouse Jr.

"It was all very out of our control," said Bowman, who had to watch the rest of race from the sidelines and hope no new winner would oust him from the Playoffs. "I hate that we tanked so bad the first run."

"The bottom lane just fell apart behind us. We had to overcome that, but we had gotten back to the back side of the top 10. Unfortunately, it just didn't work out."

What did work out was Blaney's victory, which kept Bowman's championship aspirations alive. He joins Hendrick teammates William Byron (the Regular Season Champion), Kyle Larson and Chase Elliott in the Playoffs.

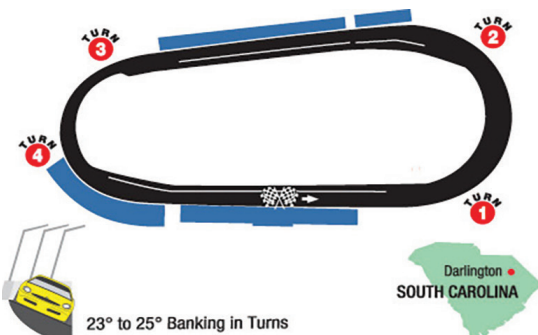
With the field of 16 drivers set, the 10-race Playoffs will begin Sunday at Darlington Raceway in the Cook Out Southern 500 (6 p.m. ET on USA, MRN and SiriusXM NASCAR Radio).

XFINITY BUMPER TO BUMPER!

Parker Kligerman and Austin Hill lead the packed field on a restart in Friday's Wawa 250 at Daytona. C. Graythen/Getty



NEXT: SOUTHERN 500



Darlington Raceway

6 p.m. ET Sunday, USA

- Location: 1301 Harry Byrd Hwy., Darlington, SC
- Nicknamed "The Lady in Black" and "The Track Too Tough to Tame." These two titles provide some indication of the respect and awe NASCAR drivers and fans have for Darlington, the oldest superspeedway hosting Cup events.
- Length: 1.366 mi (2.198 km)
- Capacity: 47,000
- Surface: Asphalt
- Track type: Oval
- Banking: 23-25 degrees on turns
- Caution speed: 45 mph
- Opened: 1950. Darlington contractor Harold Brasington attended the Indianapolis 500 in 1933 and dreamed of building a similar track.
- Closest finish: The second closest finish in NASCAR history happened at Darlington in 2003; Ricky Craven beat Kurt Busch by 0.002 seconds.
- Most wins: David Pearson, 10

75TH ANNIVERSARY: For 75 thrilling years, Darlington Raceway has been home to legendary moments and daring drivers testing the limits of skill and speed in its unforgiving turns.



Sept. 4, 1950, first Southern 500. There were 75 cars entered, with 25,000 fans on hand. Race was won by Californian Johnny Mantz, the slowest qualifier in the field. He blitzed the field by using a hard-compound truck tire while others kept blowing tires. (Getty)



Chase Briscoe grabbed a Playoff berth last year at Darlington. GETTY

2025 CUP SERIES STANDINGS

Playoff 16 + 14 as of August 23

Rank/Driver	Points	Rank/Driver	Points
1 Kyle Larson #5	2032	16 Alex Bowman #48	2002
2 William Byron #24	2032	17 Chris Buescher #17	655
3 Denny Hamlin #11	2029	18 Ryan Preece #60	620
4 Ryan Blaney #12	2026	19 Ty Gibbs #54	543
5 Christopher Bell #20	2023	20 Kyle Busch #8	541
6 S. v. Gisbergen #88	2022	21 AJ Allmendinger #16	516
7 Chase Elliott #9	2013	22 Brad Keselowski #6	515
8 Chase Briscoe #19	2010	23 Michael McDowell #71	510
9 Bubba Wallace #23	2008	24 Erik Jones #43	504
10 Austin Cindric #2	2008	25 Carson Hocevar #77	491
11 Ross Chastain #1	2007	26 J.H. Nemechek #42	486
12 Joey Logano #22	2007	27 Daniel Suárez #99	468
13 Josh Berry #21	2006	28 Zane Smith #38	447
14 Tyler Reddick #45	2006	29 Ricky Stenhouse Jr #47	436
15 Austin Dillon #3	2005	30 Justin Haley #7	429

2025 XFINITY SERIES STANDINGS

Top 20 as of August 22

Rank/Driver	Points	Rank/Driver	Points
1 Justin Allgaier #7	866	11 Harrison Burton #25	603
2 Connor Zilisch #88	863	12 Nicholas Sanchez #48	569
3 Sam Mayer #41	840	13 Jeb Burton #27	567
4 Jesse Love #2	773	14 Ryan Sieg #39	547
5 Austin Hill #21	716	15 Dean Thompson #26	531
6 Carson Kvapil #1	687	16 Christian Eckes #16	523
7 Brandon Jones #20	684	17 Brennan Poole #44	467
8 Sheldon Creed #00	651	18 Daniel Dye #10	467
9 Sammy Smith #8	648	19 William Sawalich #18	423
10 Taylor Gray #54	634	20 Jeremy Clements #51	407

NEXT RACE: PACIFIC OFFICE AUTOMATION 147, Portland International, 7:30 p.m. ET Saturday, CW

2025 TRUCK SERIES STANDINGS

Playoff 10 + 10 as of August 15

Rank/Driver	Points	Rank/Driver	Points
1 Corey Heim #11	2065	11 Ben Rhodes #99	491
2 Layne Riggs #34	2026	12 Gio Ruggiero #17	479
3 Chandler Smith #38	2019	13 Tanner Gray #15	423
4 Daniel Hemric #19	2011	14 Stewart Friesen #52	397
5 Tyler Ankrum #18	2010	15 Connor Mosack #81	385
6 Ty Majeski #98	2010	16 Matt Crafton #88	364
7 Grant Enfinger #9	2007	17 A. Perez De Lara #44	345
8 Rajah Caruth #71	2005	18 Matt Mills #42	337
9 K. Honeycutt #02	2003	19 Jack Wood #91	308
10 Jake Garcia #13	2003	20 Dawson Sutton #26	303

NEXT RACE: SOBER OR SLAMMER 200, Darlington Raceway, 12 p.m. ET Friday, FS1

COKE ZERO WINNER QUOTE

"What a wild last couple laps, honestly. I was with Cole, I kind of asked him on the restart, if you go to the top I'm going with you. We kind of just waited and waited and then the opportunity came, and he made a good move to get to the top, and we were able to really get good shoves."

— Ryan Blaney, who grabbed his second win of the season Saturday at Daytona



Ryan Blaney celebrates in Victory Lane after winning at Daytona Saturday.

JAMES GILBERT/GETTY IMAGES

ALL AMERICAN

SUB + MELT

Declare your freedom from hunger with ham, Smith's bologna, hard salami and cheese on a toasty pretzel bun or piled high on a Barnbuster sub.