

USA INTERNATIONAL SPEEDWAY

"Home Track of the HOOTERS ProCup Series"
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Monday, September 13, 2004

ROGERS DOMINATES IN DEBUT

Lakeland, FL (3-1-2004) - Clay Rogers sure knows how to make an entrance. In his debut race for East Coast Motorsports, Rogers, driving the No. 44 TOFF Bed-Liners Ford Taurus, dominated the Lucas Oil 250 presented by Hooters Air on Saturday night at USA Intl Speedway in Lakeland, Fla., leading a race-high 237 laps en route to his fourth career win and an \$11,000 payday. "I've always wanted to win this race", Rogers said in victory lane. "Seems like we've been so close, but something has always happened. Little things have kept us out of victory lane here, but I think this is one of the most important races to win, especially with a new team, new sponsors and new owners." And Rogers made them all proud on Saturday.

The Mooresville, N.C., driver picked \$1,000 for winning the Advance Auto Parts Pole Award with his track-record lap of 124.281 mph in qualifying, breaking the previous record of 124.184 mph held by Shane Huffman. Rogers speed carried over into the race as he quickly distanced himself from the field in the first 10 laps. With Rogers clearly being the class of the field at the start, the battle for second showcased the best racing early in the event.

Bobby Gill, who qualified second, dropped to the end of the field for working on his car after qualifying, allowing David Pletcher to start alongside Rogers at the drop of the green. Pletcher didn't stay there long, however.

Danny O'Quinn Jr. charged from his sixth starting spot into second on lap 11. Brad Rogers, who started fifth, and Shane Huffman, who started seventh, followed O'Quinn Jr. to the front, moving into third and fourth, respectively. Brad Rogers, younger brother of Clay Rogers, made his way into second a few laps later and began to chase down his brother, who had built a two-second lead.

"When I looked up in the mirror and saw Brad take over second, it felt good", said Clay Rogers. "The crew called over the radio and said that Brad was good. I said, Tell me how good he is, because he might outrun me!"

Brad was good, but not as good as Clay on Saturday night. After a pair of cautions bunched the field, Clay began to pull away from his younger sibling, building a one-second lead by lap 75. Brad, however, soon had company for the runner-up spot as Gill joined the fray.

The 3-time Hooters ProCup champion made an incredible run from the back of the pack in the first 100 laps. By lap 11, Gill picked up 12 spots from his 34th-place starting position. Passing in cars where he caught them, Gill made his way into the top 10 by lap 39. On lap 83, Gill made it back to where he qualified when slipped underneath Brad Rogers to take over second. Gill was still 2.4 second behind Clay Rogers, but a caution for debris on lap 93 erased Rogers lead.

Joe Gaita was the only car in the top 10 to make a pit stop during the caution. The majority of the top 10 waited to make their stops under caution on lap 119. Mike Laughlin Jr., who was running fifth, elected to stay on the track during the caution and inherited the lead, while Gaita cycled into second after making an earlier stop. Clay Rogers, Gill and Huffman rounded out the top five for the restart, but Brad Rogers had trouble on his stop and lost 10 positions, restarting in 13th.

Laughlin Jr. picked up a \$1,000 for the Lucas Oil Products Halfway Leader award and led until lap 128 when Gaita took over the top spot. Gaita led for three circuits before tangling with Clay Rogers in Turn 2. The contact sent Gaita spinning and Rogers back to the point. Huffman moved around Gill to take over second in the second half of the event, but he had nothing for Rogers. Gill made his way back around Huffman shortly before the defending Hooters ProCup Champion lost an engine on lap 204. Huffman finished 24th.

Five cautions periods gave Gill ample opportunity to race Rogers for the win in the last 100 laps.



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The last caution waved at lap 234, setting up a 10-lap dash to the checkered, but Rogers never stumbled and beat Gill to the checkered by 2.529 seconds.

"We had some bad luck the last couple of days here", said Gill. "But well take second and go on to New Smyrna."

Brad Rogers rebounded from the poor pit stop and nearly clipped Gill for second at the finish, but the rookie had to settle for third in his ProCup debut. "We ran great", said Brad, who picked up an extra \$1,000 for being the Miller Lite Rookie of the Race. "If we hadn't of had to come from the back, we may have been able to get Bobby [Gill]. I really wanted to have a Rogers 1-2 finish there, but I'm happy".

Mike Laughlin Jr. finished fourth, while Jay Fogleman rounded out the top five.

The race was slowed 13 times for 70 laps of caution.

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