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## ProCup - Brad Rogers Wins Naturally Fresh 250

Written by: Paul Warner

**Kenly, N.C. – 7/26/2004** For the fourth time of 2004, a Rogers stood in victory lane at the end of a Hooters ProCup Series race. But for the first time, it was Brad Rogers.

Brad Rogers led the final 23 laps of the Naturally Fresh 250 presented by Tucson at Southern National Speedway on Saturday night, picking up his first career ProCup win in just his 10th start.

"It kind of feels like winning the lottery," said Rogers, driver of the No. 29 KellyCo Heavy Hauling Ford. "I probably didn't have the best car tonight, but a win is a win."

For most of the night, the win appeared to be up for grabs.

Shane Huffman, driver of the No. 84 John Morrell Dinner Bell Ford, swept around pole sitter Clay Rogers, who won \$1,000 for being the Advance Auto Parts Pole Award winner, and led the first 112 laps of the race.

Huffman was able to dictate the pace and keep Rogers at bay, building leads of two seconds on several occasions. However, Huffman was joined in the lead battle at Lap 105 by Danny O'Quinn Jr. O'Quinn, who started ninth in the 31-car field, tracked down Huffman and took over the point on Lap 113.

While many of the lead-lap cars elected to pit on lap 115, O'Quinn Jr., driver of the No. 02 Homesteader Trailers Chevy, elected to stay on the track. O'Quinn Jr. finally pitted under caution on Lap 127, but he would restart in 16th position.

Joe Gaita, who was also pitting off-sequence with the leaders, inherited the lead after O'Quinn pitted, but Gaita would lead just 11 laps before Huffman tracked him down. Huffman caught Gaita on Lap 138 and made his way around on Lap 139. With O'Quinn mired in heavy traffic, Huffman appeared to be en route to his second win of 2004. That all changed on Lap 179.

Coming to a restart, Huffman and Bobby Gill, driver of the No. 5 Ford, made contact. Huffman lost traction under the flag stand, leaving Gill a narrow hole to slip to the outside of Huffman. However, that hole closed as Huffman regained control.

Gill made contact with Huffman and the frontstretch wall, but it was Huffman who suffered the most damage. The contact sent the 2003 Hooters ProCup Series champion to pit road with a flat right-rear tire.

"When we took off, we might have had a little trash on my tires, and I got a little sideways," said Huffman, who led a race-high 153 laps. "Bobby [Gill] was looking for a hole because he knew that he was beat, and he cut my tire down. That's just the way our week has been. Nothing has gone right all week."

Gill took his turn out front as Huffman pitted, but O'Quinn had made his way back to third and reeling in Rogers and Gill by Lap 205. After bypassing Brad Rogers for second, O'Quinn went for the lead on Lap 225. Heading into the Turn 1, O'Quinn and Gill made contact. The bump sent Gill spinning and O'Quinn to tail end of the lead lap for rough driving.

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"I felt like I had a nose under [Gill] and he came down on me," said O'Quinn. "[USAR officials] gave me the black flag, and there was nothing I could do about it. That's just the way it goes."

With O'Quinn and Gill at the back of the field for the restart on Lap 232, the race came down to a shootout between Rogers, Michael Ritch, driver of the No. 28 Jackaroo Pontiac, and Jody Lavender.

Ritch and Rogers were able to pull away from Lavender, but a late-race caution set up a green-white-checkered finish, allowing the veteran one last shot at the rookie.

Rogers never faltered and beat Ritch to the checkered flag by .516 sec to take the first win of his ProCup career.

"I was just trying not to spin the tires, but I think I spun them all the way into [Turn 1]," said Rogers, who also picked up \$1,000 for being the Miller Lite Rookie of the Race. "We hit our marks perfect on the last few laps. It feels incredible to get a win."

While Rogers picked up his first win, Ritch was looking for his first win since 1999.

"I couldn't do anything with [Brad Rogers]," said Ritch. "We had some heavy hitters fall out of contention tonight. We weren't a second-place car, but we were a solid top-six car. We just got to get a little bit better."

Jody Lavender, driver of the No. 99 H&R Block Ford, picked up his best finish of the season by coming home in third.

"Our team has really made a major turn," said Lavender, whose previous best finish was ninth in the season opener. "We really busted our butts at the shop all week. We were late getting here because we worked so late. Billy Hess helped us out by moving some stuff around in the car, and it handled so much better tonight."

Billy Bigley Jr finished fourth and David Pletcher rounded out the top five

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