



Homestead-Miami Speedway Recap – Ford 200

Handling Results In Dreary Finish for Crafton in Rainy Season Finale

HOMESTEAD, Fla. (November 19, 2011) – Matt Crafton fought handling and the elements in the season finale at Homestead-Miami Speedway. The No. 88 Menards/Tarkett machine was extremely loose for the majority of the Ford 200, and although the team fought hard to improve the truck, there was not enough time before the race was shortened for rain, resulting in a 19th-place finish.

Hoping to end the season on a high note, Crafton took the green flag from the 11th position after rain canceled qualifying. He fought his way through the pack into the top five by the time the competition yellow waved on lap 20. Relaying to crew chief Bud Haeefele that the No. 88 was bouncing off the splitter, he brought his truck down pit road for four tires, fuel and an air-pressure adjustment.

Crafton took the green flag from the eighth spot after a quick stop, and muscled back into the top five once more. However, the Menards/Tarkett Silverado was now snapping loose center off, causing him to lose track position. A caution on lap 31 gave Crafton the opportunity to bring his truck down pit road, and the team adjusted the front springs and topped the No. 88 off with fuel. Making a second stop under yellow to further top-off on fuel in the event of a long green-flag run, Crafton returned to the track 27th for the restart.

As expected, a long green-flag run followed, but the adjustments to the truck only hurt its handling. Crafton said that his truck was “wrecking loose,” claiming it was a 15 out of 10 loose. With enough fuel to run a little longer than his competitors, Crafton led two laps as green-flag pit stops cycled through before bringing his truck down pit road for four tires, fuel, a wedge adjustment and an air-pressure adjustment on lap 76.

Crafton was 14th when the next yellow flag waved on lap 98, and the driver was baffled by how incredibly loose his truck was. The team took one final swing at the truck under caution, providing Crafton with four tires, fuel and another wedge adjustment. Unfortunately, another truck bumped Crafton while exiting the pits, so Crafton made a second stop to pull out the left-rear fender to ensure it wouldn't cause a tire rub. When the field went green on lap 101, Crafton restarted in 21st. Although Crafton's laps were now as fast as the leaders, he was only able to improve to 19th before rain began to fall, bringing out the yellow flag, followed by the red flag. With no end to the rain in sight, the race was called, ultimately scoring Crafton in 19th.

“This definitely wasn't the way we wanted to end this race or this season,” said Crafton. “We had a good truck in practice and at the beginning of the race, but the handling just completely went away. We kept swinging at it, but it was just too loose. We've had some high points, but this season has had a lot of struggles, so I'm definitely glad we can close the book on 2011 and look ahead to 2012. I've got to thank my sponsors for a season of support and my guys for all the hard work they've done, and I hope that we can be lifting that championship trophy at the end of next year.”

Crafton finishes the season eighth in the NASCAR Camping World Truck Series point standings after leading the championship standings for three weeks (after races two, three and six). Crafton ultimately scored one win (Iowa Speedway), two pole awards (Michigan International Speedway and Martinsville Speedway II), five top-five and 13 top-10 finishes. He led 90 laps, had an average start of 9.8 and an average finish of 13.0.

Race Recap:

Date: November 18, 2011

Track: Homestead-Miami Speedway

Race: 25 of 25

Started: 11th

Finished: 19th

Driver's Point Standings: 8th

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