

EMOTIONAL WIN FOR DYSON IN DRENCHED LIME ROCK PARK TRANS AM RACE

BY HV NEWS STAFF

Winning at his home track was twice as sweet for Chris Dyson in Saturday's Trans Am Memorial Day Classic at Lime Rock Park. The resident of nearby Poughkeepsie, New York, led every lap for his second Trans Am Series presented by Pirelli victory of the season, while pole sitter Ernie Francis Jr., his closest rival for the championship, failed to finish after a mechanical issue.

Dyson led every lap at Lime Rock for the second-consecutive race (he won in 2019), scoring his eighth career victory in the No. 20 ATWELL CBD Ford Mustang in a race that began in the rain and ended on a drying track.

"This means the world to me," Dyson said. "The conditions were challenging, but Lime Rock always puts an extra spring in my step, and it's an unbelievable feat to drive around this place in these Trans Am cars at these speeds and in these conditions, against the calibre of drivers in this field. I've been coming here since I was a kid, it's always been special to be part of this tradition. What a day for the team – what a points day too! I think we're just hitting our stride."



Chris Dyson. File photo.

Francis Jr. entered the race with a slim lead in the standings in the No. 98 Future Star Racing Ford

Mustang, and won the Motul Pole Award in Friday's rainy qualifier race.

The race began with rain pouring down the front straight. Using a move that he learned from legendary Dyson Racing driver Butch Leitzinger, Dyson went

to the outside in Turn 1 on the opening lap to take the lead. Francis did a 360-spin on the wet track and continued, although in eighth place.

"I've had that move in my pocket," said Dyson. "I watched Butch Leitzinger use that move so many times here, and I've been waiting years to use it."

Francis recovered quickly and worked his way up to third, setting his sights on Dyson's teammate, second-place Andy Lally in the No. 21 Amamos LaVida Tequilla Mustang. Francis finally got by Lally entering No-Name Straight on Lap 28. Lally dove to the inside to regain the position entering the final turn, with Francis coming to a rapid stop shortly thereafter before pulling off in Turn 1.

"It's been a very unlucky weekend for us, we've been kind of struggling all season, we are trying to shake it off and get back on track," said Francis Jr. "I had a spin at the start, I pinched it down a bit



Dyson's race car. Photo by David Livshin IMAGES

tight, and spun off Chris' (Dyson) car. I got back going and was moving through the field pretty quick. I thought we had a car to fight for the win if we had a caution. I came down the hill and lost oil pressure, and had to pull it off to save the motor. It's really disappointing we couldn't get the finish we wanted for our sponsors, but we will come back next time and do better."

With Francis gone, Dyson's biggest threat was the weather as the rain let off and the track began to dry over the final 25 laps. Ken Thwait's hit the tire barrier at the end of the front straight on Lap 50 in the No. 50 Franklin Road Apparel Camaro to bring out the first caution. Thwait's was able to continue after being extricated.

Racing resumed on Lap 55 with less than eight minutes remaining on the drying but slippery circuit. Tomy Drissi passed Lally for second with seven laps remaining, and took second in the No. 8 Lucas Oil Chevrolet Camaro. Drissi fended off Lally down to the stripe, only 0.315-seconds separated the pair

at the checkered. Drissi's clean defense earned him the ChillOut Moment of the Race.

"I learned a lot today over the last few laps," said Drissi. "My tires came in right away (after the restart) and I got by Lally and I was catching Dyson. I'm feeling really good, but all of a sudden I see Dyson pick it up and Lally's right behind me. I learned a lot. Lally was very nice to me,"

Lally was a late replacement for Humaid Masood in the No. 21 Mustang, with the sports car veteran winning his lone prior Trans Am start at Watkins Glen in 2017.

"It was fun," Lally said. "With a drying track like that in these cars sliding around, to do battle with guys like Chris and Tomy was pretty crazy. We had a couple runs, but Tomy was smart with his lines on that last lap. We were side-by-side in West Bend, and we picked up a lapped guy. Tomy used him as a pick, and that was that. Trans Am's a fun group, especially with this horsepower in mixed conditions like today."