



Associated Press

HOMESTEAD, Fla. — Matt Crafton waited a week to start his championship party.

It ended up being a subdued celebration.

Crafton won the NASCAR Truck Series title even before the green flag dropped Friday night at Homestead-Miami Speedway but lost the owners' championship to Kyle Busch on a tie-breaker.

"It's kind of aggravating because we wanted the owners' championship as well but it happens," Crafton said.

With a nearly insurmountable 46-point lead over Ty Dillon, all Crafton needed to do was start the 200-mile finale to secure his first series championship in 13 seasons.

So when his engine fired and he took the track, it became official.

All that was left was the owner's title, which Crafton badly wanted to secure for longtime boss Duke Thorson. But Crafton was involved in a late wreck, damaging the front end of his No. 88 Toyota and forcing the team to sweat out the final few laps.

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In the end, Busch won the race — his fifth of the season while driving a partial schedule — and the owner's championship. The Sprint Cup regular's No. 51 car won the tie-breaker because it had more wins than Crafton this season.

"It means a lot," Busch said. "Man, this is so much fun to come out and race, for one, to win races, two, and to contend for owner's championships. It's big for us. ... I can't say enough about this team."

Ryan Blaney finished second, followed by Jeb Burton, Brendan Gaughan and Ron Hornaday Jr.

Crafton crossed the finish line 21st, one spot short of a clean sweep.

It was his lowest finish of the year.

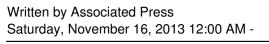
Nonetheless, the 37-year-old Crafton become the first driver in the series' 19 years to complete every lap in a season.

Crafton essentially wrapped up the championship last week at Phoenix. He ended up 40 points ahead of second-place Dillon. James Buescher was third, followed by Johnny Sauter and Jeb Burton.

The only real shake-up came in the owners' points.

It also was the only downer in an otherwise solid season for Crafton, who extended his record for the most consecutive starts in the Truck Series to 316.

The title was the first for ThorSport Racing, which is based in Sandusky, Ohio.



"This has been such a blessing," Crafton added. "You don't have to be in North Carolina to do this. We've built this thing as a group. Each and every year we've gotten it better and better. Everyone who works there, I can't thank them enough."

Crafton had just one victory this season — he won at Kansas in April — but had a remarkable 19 top-10 finishes in 22 starts.

He was rewarded with a contract extension with ThorSport Racing on Thursday, ensuing he will be drive a 10th season for Thorson.

He spent the early part of Friday's race near the front of the field. But he found himself 17th on the first of three green-white-checkered restarts. Back in the pack, he got caught up in a multi-truck wreck.

Joey Coulter turned into Crafton shortly after the restart, setting off a melee Brennan Newberry shot across the track twice, hitting an inside wall and then the outside wall. Crafton's truck had significant front-end damage.

Another restart ended with another wreck, setting the stage for one final shot.

It wasn't incident free but officials let the drivers race to the finish.

No one could catch Busch.

He has 21 victories this season in NASCAR's three national series, also winning four times in Cup and 12 in Nationwide. Overall, he has 126 victories — 28 in Cup, a record 63 in Nationwide and 35 in Truck.

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