



Wild Tangles & Wide Open Racing for Crafton in Charlotte

*Former Charlotte Winner & Driver of No. 88 Menards/Great Lakes Flooring Chevy
Caught Up in Unavoidable Contact; Team Rallies to Rebuild & Return Truck p26*

CHARLOTTE RACE RECAP - NC Education Lottery 200

Charlotte, NC - May 22, 2011 - Matt Crafton, driver of the No. 88 Menards/Great Lakes Flooring by Mullican Chevrolet Silverado, entered Charlotte Motor Speedway on Thursday with a spring in his step. The 2008 Charlotte race winner was first in points and had finished every lap of every Charlotte race he'd ever entered – in the top 10 or better in all of his eight starts. After a high number of cautions, wide open racing and an unavoidable tangle on track, however, his night ended with a 26th place finish.

After two strong practice sessions on the one day show, Crafton qualified fourteenth on the grid Friday afternoon. "Bud and I weren't worried at all," he said. "I told the guys earlier in practice that we didn't need to over adjust – Charlotte's a full day, and the track conditions are so drastically different even from qualifying to race time. Grip's always an issue, and track position counts in the last 50 laps. So we had a good truck going into the race."

He quickly made headway through the field early on in the race, gaining ground to as high as fifth position after expertly wheeling through some near-misses in early cautions. The driver fought loose left rear grip throughout the night and chose to pit early for an advantage on tires and fuel – putting him back on the grid in 10th position. Crafton was left with nowhere to go, however, after the midpoint of the race when a competitor pushed into the wall within inches of his truck and made contact – causing excessive damage to the front end of the No. 88 Menards Chevy. The No. 88 team charged to rebuild the truck in the garage in record time, putting him back out on track in the 28th position with 30 to go; he would later finish 26th.

"We got caught in a bad spot, and I had nowhere to go – I was just in the wrong place at the wrong time and it was a bad deal that happens a lot at Charlotte. Look at all those cautions overall. Totally wide open racing all day with 36 trucks, really, but we had a good truck to do this. I'm really proud of my guys though, because this truck was really in pieces, and they rallied fast to get me back out on the track so we could salvage a finish. It's not what we wanted here, but we're looking towards a championship. It's a big goal. We'll take the energy to Kansas and focus on really preparing the intermediate trucks for that track as well as Texas – two places I like going." Crafton is now fourth in overall driver points in the NCWTS and has finished in the top 10 in five of seven races this season.

NEXT RACE:

O'Reilly Auto Parts 200

Kansas Speedway

June 4th, 2011

2:00pmET (167 laps, 250.5 miles)

(IMAGE BELOW – CHARLOTTE RACE)



Photo Credit: Ronda A. Greer Photography

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