

LA PREMIÈRE VICTOIRE FOR GUILLAUME HESNAULT IN KANSAS 150



The Vertex Stock Car Cup's second season kicked off on the challenging 1.5 miles Kansas Speedway oval. Success on a track renowned for tyre management and clever pit strategy requires more than just a fast race car. The race lived up to all the expectations and at the end of the 105 laps completed, No. 68 Guillaume Hesnault took the chequered flag by just seven-hundredths of a second from No.9 Alex Sedgwick.

After a short break from season one, 21 drivers lined up to contest the first round of season two of the Vertex Stock Car Cup. Current Vertex Stock Car Cup Champion Connor Mills returned to defend his championship but with a new team: Revolution Satellite Racing. Three new drivers also joined the championship, No. 3 Jamie Jakins, No. 13 Tom Seldon and No. 92 Shaun Stacey. The rest of the field was made up of regular championship drivers.

The normal two-lap qualifying set the grid for the race and it was Alex Sedgwick who secured pole position with Aaron Smith and Connor Mills making up the top three

positions. Last season's championship runner up Bryan Crauwels made up the second row of the grid, setting the fourth-fastest time

As the field lined up behind the iRacing Ford Mustang pace car, all eyes were on Sedgwick and Smith to see who would get the break from the start. Sedgwick took first blood and got the lead at the start from Smith, but it did not last as newcomer Jamie Jakins hit the wall after being tagged by another car, bringing out the first caution.

At the restart, Sedgwick again got the jump over Smith and a battle which would rage for a further seventy laps commenced. Behind the leaders, a number of midfield battles also developed as the drivers clocked up the laps. With an expected maximum tyre window of 30 laps, tyre management and pit strategy were going to also have to be mastered by the drivers.

With a half-second lead over Smith, Sedgwick was controlling the race when the second caution came out on lap 25 as Jakins hit the wall again.

With the pit lane open, all the front running cars hit pit lane for tyres and fuel and it was Sedgwick who won the race off pit lane holding his lead ahead of Smith. Jeff Hooper was the biggest mover so far in the race making up eight places.

The restart on lap 27, saw Sedgwick opt for the top line and Smith take the low line. Sedgwick again got the jump over Smith and the two started to pull a small gap over third-placed Guillaume Hesnault.

Hesnault then found himself in his own battle with Ben Creanor, a battle which would be as intense as the leaders and would see the pair swap places several times.

On lap 43, Hesnault got out of shape and, behind him, Creanor hit Billy Fletcher and then hit the wall bringing out the second caution. With a long green-flag run, the leaders hit the pits again for fuel, tyres and adjustments. Sedgwick again won the race off pit lane with Smith, Hesnault, Freientsehner and Birks making up the top five. Hooper continued his move up the field with nine places now gained with the race just under halfway.

Meanwhile, Creanor dropped down to 17th after pitting for repairs and had just one aim now to move back up to the front as quickly as he could.

At the restart, it was only the front two cars who still maintained their starting positions. Smith had clearly been watching Sedgwick and this time was not left behind as the cars accelerated away from the restart zone. Sedgwick had to fight to hold the lead but did, only for a caution to be thrown nearly straight away as Crauwels was tagged and spun after being hit by Shaun Stacey.

Mills immediately headed for the pits to serve a stop & go penalty for speeding in the pit lane dropping him down to 18th place.

With a number of faster drivers and, Mills, Crauwels and Creanor now at the foot of the field, the race was going to get spiced up at the restart.

The two leaders again fought over the lead from the single-file restart. Smith again had to settle for second place but working together the pair quickly pulled a second lead over third-placed, Jase Glen.

On lap 57, Smith went purple in the first section and started to pressurise Sedgwick into a mistake. As the green flag laps clocked down, the tyres started to drop off for all the drivers.

Further down the field Creanor again made contact with the wall losing him a number of places. With 30 laps to go and with a 20 lap green flag run, Crauwels had moved up to 12th with Mills up to 9th. At the front, Sedgwick led by just over three-quarters of a second, then another caution came out due to a failure on Shaun Stacey's car.

The leaders immediately pitted for what should have been the final pit stop. All eyes were on the two lead cars and Sedgwick hit his pit box perfectly but Smith overshot his pit box. Sedgwick again won the race off pit lane but now there was a new second-placed car Marcel Freienhener, with Hesnault in third, Smith dropped down to sixth.

Sedgwick lined up for the restart as the only car still in its original starting position but now had two new drivers to battle at the start. Maintaining his flawless starts, again

he held the lead with Freiversehner now in second initially but then passed by Birks who became the new chaser after Sedgwick.

With 20 laps to go, the two Luxsim esports teammates Creanor and Billy Fletcher came together to bring out another caution and resulting in Creanor heading to the pits with a lot of damage. Sedgwick led the pack away again from the restart, but now with Birks chasing him down in second.

Birks' hold of second was quickly taken away as the fast-charging Hesnault passed him and become the new challenger for Sedgwick's lead. Smith, meanwhile, had been making steady progress and was up to sixth. Further down the field, a great battle was developing between the third, fourth, fifth-placed drivers and the hard-charging Smith in sixth place.

Sedgwick built up a lead of half a second over second-placed Hesnault when, on lap 93, the caution came out again as George Tolsma spun after being involved in a multi-car incident with Jack Mace and Justin Naaijer.

With just 7 laps to go, Sedgwick had led all 93 laps so far. With the caution out, Sedgwick decided to stay out as did Hesnault, but both Mills and Smith pitted for new tyres and rejoined in 16th and 11th place.

As the pace car brought the field to the restart, the leaders, still on old tyres, had a new challenge from the first car on new tyres starting in 12th place.

With 3 laps to go, the restart could make or break the race and Sedgwick again brought the field up to the restart zone. However, this time the usual strong start disappeared as he dropped to second place behind new race leader, Hesnault.

With a new leader, the caution came out again as Alastair Topley hit the wall. It would now be Hesnault who would lead the field away for the green-white-checkered finish.

Sedgwick, now in second due to a poor previous restart, later to be found to have been caused by the loss of third gear, now had to hope his gearbox would hold up for the final dash to the line.

Hesnault got a good restart and immediately blocked Sedgwick as he tried to pass on the low line, and then drove a perfect final 2 laps to take his first well-deserved win. Sedgwick took second with the final podium place going to Birks, his highest placed finish to date. Freinsehner, Smith and Crauwels made up the top six. The final top ten places were taken by Jase Glen, Fletcher, Justin Bailey and Jaz Harvey.

The Vertex Stock Car Cup now moves to the first doubleheader round which will be contested on the Indianapolis Motor Speedway Oval and Charlotte Motor Speedway on the 3rd June...