

FORT WAYNE, Ind. – There was a profound sense of déjà vu inside the Allen County War Memorial Coliseum during Saturday night's finale to the 22nd annual Rumble in Fort Wayne presented by Jason Dietsch Trailer Sales. Exactly like he did one night earlier, Tony Stewart set fast time in qualifying, had to transfer into the field from a B-main and then romped forward from ninth to win the 50-lap national midget headliner. This time, Stewart had to contend with a pair of young guns in Kyle Hamilton and Justin Peck, but neither were strong enough to be able to stop the three-time NASCAR Cup Series champion in the end. Stewart methodically worked his way up to third before 20 laps were on the board, then laid in wait while Hamilton and Peck went at it for the race lead out front before making his move late. The Columbus, Ind., native pounced following a lap-33 red flag for building ventilation, taking a car that he'd called "not as good as we need it to be" right before the restart and slipping past Peck into second. Once in the runner-up position with 12 to go, Stewart got the help of a timely caution flag for a spinning Cap Henry to close on the back bumper of Hamilton's Mel Kenyon-prepared No. 16, setting up the winning pass. Stewart finally got inside Hamilton in turn three with six laps left, finding front grip he hadn't had all race long and surging ahead to take a lead he wouldn't relinquish. It was Stewart's record-extending 11th career Rumble in Fort Wayne victory, far and away the most of all drivers, as well as the first time a driver has swept both nights of the event since 2011. In victory lane, an animated Stewart noted that he drove his No. 2 Our Gang Poker Munchkin "with no power steering for 50 laps" as he discussed the night and what many considered a surprising victory. "This is indoor racing. Anyone that came to watch a parade came to the wrong place," Stewart said. "We get rough and rowdy in this building, and all night it was like that. Everybody keeps asking why I come to this deal, and it's because of the fans and the fact that they want to see a show. They don't want to see us just sit there and ride around and follow each other for 50 laps. That's the nature of the beast. "We saw it all night. I don't know why when I do it (make contact while making a pass), it's not acceptable, but I think everyone came to see a show and if they didn't get a show out of that, I don't know what else to do, man," Stewart continued. "I sat there and ran 50 laps and I only leaned on guys a couple of times when I needed to. I never spun anybody out in the two days that I was here. "All in all, I don't think I did too badly. After last year, it's pretty sweet to be back here winning again." Hamilton won the dash to earn the pole for the main and jumped out to the early lead, with only one caution slowing the early pace after Scott Hampton found the wall off the exit of the second corner. Following that restart on lap 16 is when Stewart made his move into the top three, but at that point, all eyes were on Hamilton and Peck as they diced it up for the race lead out in front. Hamilton held serve through the halfway point of the race, but on the 29th lap, Peck was tired of sitting back in second and made his bid for the race lead. The three-time Rumble winner got inside of Hamilton going into turn one and came out ahead, looking like a driver who might win his fourth Rumble main. But Peck's downfall was short-run speed, and a segmented end to the race spelled his doom. The race's lone red flag with 17 to go, plus a caution one lap after the restart, ultimately ruined his chances. Peck spun the tires on a lap-35 restart and gave up command to Hamilton, who then appeared to be in the driver's seat until spins by Henry – and then Austin Nemire with nine to go – gave Stewart a fighting chance. After the last restart, Stewart dug down deep and finally got to Hamilton's bumper, turning the tables coming to five to go and forcing Hamilton to settle for second at the checkered flag. Hamilton was matter-of-fact after the race and said he "couldn't be too disappointed" at the final outcome. "I was pretty happy to get back around Peck, but I knew that was just a battle. The war was still going to be to try and beat Tony, and he just had too much there at the end," Hamilton said. "Our car was good, but it was second best. We can't hang our heads on it though. To come in here and have a car that could run that close to Tony within six laps, you really can't be all that disappointed." Peck crossed the line third, followed by Derek Bischak and Travis Welpott. Matt Westfall, Billy Wease, Nick Hamilton, Scott Hampton and Troy DeCaire were the balance of the top 10.

## RESULTS: 22nd annual Rumble in Fort Wayne Finale Night; Dec. 28, 2019

**National Midget Qualifying (best of two laps):** 1. Tony Stewart, 2, Stewart-7.606; 2. Nick Hamilton, 6, Kenyon-7.652; 3. Derek Bischak, 31, Bischak-7.656; 4. Kyle Hamilton, 16, Kenyon-7.692; 5. Joe Liguori, 8up, Williams-7.757; 6. Cap Henry, 44, Williams-7.760; 7. Matt Westfall, 9, Ryder-7.794; 8. Bryan Nuckles, 59, Nuckles-7.835; 9. Trey Osborne, 61, Kenyon-7.853; 10. Justin Peck, 5x, Clay-7.866; 11. Troy DeCaire, 67, Williams-7.911; 12. Scott Hampton, 5, D. Dietsch-7.919; 13. Travis Welpott, 18, Gorman-7.931; 14. Mario Clouser, 99, Guess-7.950; 15. Austin Nemire, 19, O'Connell-8.000; 16. Billy Wease, 99, Burrow-8.053; 17. Junior Gould, 65, Gould-8.057; 18. Sean Murphy, 4b, Murphy-8.057; 19. Rich Corson, 15, Corson-8.134; 20. Jordan Caskey, 33, Caskey-8.149; 21. Jim Anderson, 36, Anderson-8.151; 22. Cory Setser, 24s, Setser-8.173; 23. Aaron Pierce, 98, Pierce-8.220; 24. Mike Fedorcak, 97, Stewart-8.252; 25. Justin Harper, 53, Harper-8.393; 26. Brian Vaughn, 49v, TnT-8.510; 27. Billy Lewis, 49, Burrow-8.686; 28. Chris Malaterre, 6m, Malaterre-8.992; 29. Jared Rouch, 88, Jagger-9.004; 30. Tim Buckwalter, 8, J. Dietsch-11.015; 31. Rico Abreu, 2.5, Stewart-NT.

**National Midget Heat #1 (10 laps, top two transfer):** 1. Joe Liguori, 2. Travis Welpott / 3. Tony Stewart, 4. Trey Osborne, 5. Jim Anderson, 6. Junior Gould, 7. Justin Harper, 8. Jared Rouch.

**National Midget Heat #2 (10 laps, top two transfer):** 1. Justin Peck, 2. Nick Hamilton / 3. Mario Clouser, 4. Cap Henry, 5. Sean Murphy, 6. Brian Vaughn, 7. Tim Buckwalter, 8. Cory Setser.

**National Midget Heat #3 (10 laps, top two transfer):** 1. Troy DeCaire, 2. Derek Bischak / 3. Matt Westfall, 4. Austin Nemire, 5. Aaron Pierce, 6. Rich Corson, 7. Billy Lewis, 8. Rico Abreu (DNS).

**National Midget Heat #4 (10 laps, top two transfer):** 1. Kyle Hamilton, 2. Scott Hampton / 3. Bryan Nuckles, 4. Mike Fedorcak, 5. Billy Wease, 6. Jordan Caskey, 7. Chris Malaterre.

**National Midget B-Main #1 (10 laps, top two transfer):** 1. Tony Stewart, 2. Austin Nemire / 3. Jim Anderson, 4. Tim Buckwalter, 5. Sean Murphy, 6. Mike Fedorcak, 7. Billy Lewis, 8. Bryan Nuckles.

**National Midget B-Main #2 (10 laps, top two transfer):** 1. Cap Henry, 2. Billy Wease / 3. Trey Osborne, 4. Rich Corson, Justin Harper, Chris Malaterre, 7. Cory Setser, 8. Rico Abreu (DNS).

**National Midget B-Main #3 (10 laps, top two transfer):** 1. Matt Westfall, 2. Mario Clouser / 3. Aaron Pierce, 4. Junior Gould, 5. Brian Vaughn, 6. Jordan Caskey, 7. Jared Rouch.

**National Midget Dash (4 laps, sets first two rows):** 1. Kyle Hamilton, 2. Justin Peck, 3. Troy DeCaire, 4. Joe Liguori.

**National Midget A-Feature (50 laps):** 1. Tony Stewart [9], 2. Kyle Hamilton [1], 3. Justin Peck [2], 4. Derek Bischak [7], 5. Travis Welpott [5], 6. Matt Westfall [11], 7. Billy Wease [13], 8. Nick Hamilton [6], 9. Scott Hampton [8], 10. Troy DeCaire [3], 11. Cap Henry [10], 12. Mario Clouser [14], 13. Austin Nemire [12], 14. Joe Liguori [4].

*Lap Leader(s):* Kyle Hamilton 1-28, Justin Peck 29-34, Kyle Hamilton 35-44, Tony Stewart 45-50.

*Hard Charger: #2 – Tony Stewart (+8)*