

Johnson Wins, Increases Point Lead



Jimmie Johnson

By Gerald Hodges
THE RACING REPORTER

AVONDALE, Ariz. - Jimmie Johnson won Sunday's Checker O'Reilly Auto Parts 500 at Phoenix Int'l Raceway, and is now 141 points ahead of second-place driver Carl Edwards. If Johnson finishes 36th or better in next Sunday's final race at Homestead, Fla., he will capture his third consecutive Sprint Cup championship.

Johnson dominated the race as he led 216 of the 312 laps.

"Oh man, you never know how this sport is going to turn out," said Johnson. "You never count anyone out. We worked hard on this thing last night, and today we had an awesome car."

"It's emotional, whether you have a big points lead or not. This is what my whole life's for. We love to win."

Kurt Busch finished second. He was able to run with Johnson, but could not complete a pass on Johnson during the final green, white, checkered finish.

"We had plenty of opportunities to go for Jimmie," said Busch. "But we just weren't that good."

Jamie McMurray finished third.

"We were very fast on the start," said McMurray. "I got back in traffic and I never thought I'd get out. We got a little tight as the race went on and it wouldn't turn."

Edwards was never able to contend with Johnson for the win as he has in the past, and had to settle for fourth.

"We had a great run, but Jimmie is just doing a great job," said Edwards. "The thing we've got to do is keep our heads up and go to Homestead. It's still possible, but not probable, but we're still going to go there and give it 100 percent."

Jeff Gordon lost an engine with 42 laps to go and finished 41st.

"We've had a lot of things happen and now we add this to the mix," he said. "We've got one more shot at a win this season."

Top-10 Checker O'Reilly Auto Parts 500 finishers: 1. Jimmie Johnson, 2. Kurt Busch, 3. Jamie McMurray, 4. Carl Edwards, 5. Denny Hamlin, 6. Dale Earnhardt Jr., 7. Kevin Harvick, 8. Kyle Busch, 9. Jeff Burton, 10. David Ragan

Top-12 Chase contenders with one to go: Johnson-6561, 2. Edwards-6420, 3. Biffle-6358, 4. Burton-6292, 5. Harvick-6233, 6. Bowyer-6226, 7. J. Gordon-6151, 8. Kenseth-6091, 9. Hamlin-6090, 10. Earnhardt-6087, 11. Kyle Busch-6080, 12. Stewart-6059

Top-10 Nationwide Series leaders with one to go: 1. Bowyer-4977, 2. Edwards-4921, 3. Keselowski-4624, 4. Ragan-4431, 5. Bliss-4397, 6. Kyle Busch-4281, 7. Reutimann-4264, 8. M. Wallace-4019, 9. Leffler-3926, 10. Ambrose-3921

Top-10 Craftsman Truck Series leaders with one to go: 1. Benson-3574, 2. Hornaday-3571, 3. Bodine-3431, 4. Darnell-3282, 5. Skinner-3278, 6. Crafton-3275, 7. Crawford-3251, 8. Setzer-3042, 9. Sprague-3022, 10. Cook-2934

NASCAR is still sound

NASCAR is on solid ground. They will weather this economic downturn.

Any problems in NASCAR racing right now, and in the foreseeable future, won't affect the sanctioning body, but individual race teams are cutting back, as money slows.

Last week, The Associated Press reported that Chip Gannasi Racing and Dale Earnhardt Inc. were meeting to discuss a merger. Hardly big news these days, because it seems like all teams are attempting to shore up their financial position.

Sponsorship is a key factor. That's why the teams are talking merger. Should the Ganassi-DEI merger come to pass in the form of a four-car team, there are just two full-time sponsors in the mix: Bass Pro Shops on Martin Truex Jr.'s No. 1 car and Target Stores on the No. 41 that Reed Sorenson will step out of at season's end. Ganassi has a half-season schedule set with Wrigley's for Juan Montoya and the No. 42, while DEI is seeking a backer for Aric Almirola's No. 8.

John Story is the vice president for motorsports at Dale Earnhardt Inc., and the man charged with finding primary car sponsors for next season.

"No question, there are some deals out there to be made. But they're not necessarily the kind of deals that Sprint Cup teams, which can spend upwards of \$20 million to fund a competitive car, are accustomed to finding," Story said.

"The economy is definitely taking its toll. As late as a month ago, I really wasn't concerned. Call me naïve, I don't know. A month ago, I thought, it's going to be OK. The market fell another 690 points last week when it was supposed to be up. The investment community is scared, the banking industry is struggling for sure, the automobile industry is off. The economy, to say it's weak is an understatement. There are still some sponsorship deals out there for 2009. We've spoken to a lot of them. But I am a little bit nervous about the garage, about the sport and the industry, because of the economy, for sure."

Whatever the future holds for this potential merger or the potential GM-Chrysler joining, the future of the NASCAR we know is going to change one way or another.

Ford has already cut its factory support for all non-Sprint Cup applications, and Chevrolet is looking at its outlay in that regard as well.

We already know there are too many seats at many tracks, because those tracks can't fill them all, despite still drawing big crowds.

And in recent years, TV ratings and attendance have declined in the latter portion of the season, when football, basketball and other sports begin to dominate the headlines and offer NASCAR stiff competition for the attention of fans.

While the sport's more successful teams are certainly feeling effects of the economy to a certain degree, they're far from the near-crisis mode that's been reached by lesser operations at the far end of the garage. A best-case scenario is that the current financial squeeze only widens the already-existent competitive gap between the sport's haves and have-nots. Worst case? That some operations don't survive.

"I think it's possible that the car counts will go down," said Mike Bartelli, the head marketing honcho at Petty Racing.

Waltrip's Ty Norris talked about fielding three cars for 2009 - one for Waltrip, another for David Reutimann, and a third in an alliance with JTG/Daugherty Racing and driver Marcos Ambrose. That plan omits the third solely-Waltrip car driven for most of this year by rookie Michael McDowell.

"We've seen these roller coasters before," he said. "We're not one to cry wolf and say it's never going to come back and we're never going to recover. We're going to recover. The economy is going to recover, the U.S. is going to recover. There are just so many unknowns right now."

Next week: Surprises and Disappointments

Weekend racing: The 2008 NASCAR season draws to a close this weekend at the 1.5-mile Homestead, Fla., track.

Friday, November 14, Craftsman Trucks Ford 200; starting time: 7:30 p.m. (EST) TV: Speed.

Saturday, November 15, Nationwide Series Ford 300, starting time: 4 p.m. (EST) TV: ESPN2.

Sunday, November 16, Cup Series Ford 400, starting time: 3 p.m. (EST); TV: ABC.

Racing trivia question: In 1950 Curtis Turner and a co-driver entered a 1950 Nash Ambassador in the Pan American Road Race. Who was Turner's driving partner?

Last week's question: What year did Rusty Wallace win his Cup championship? Answer: Wallace's only Cup championship came in 1989 when he edged Dale Earnhardt by 12 points.

You may contact the Racing Reporter at: hodge@earthlink.net.

Racing Roundup

By Brad Vores

Hagerstown Speedway officially wrapped up the 2008 racing season over the weekend with the 21st annual Octoberfest 350. The event was rescheduled from two weeks ago.

Fred Rahmer led all 50 laps to win the 410 Sprint portion of the event over Greg Hodnett, Don Kreitz Jr., Cody Darrah and Mark Smith. Stevie Smith, Wayne Johnson, Lucas Wolfe, Alan Cole and Ed Lynch Jr. were the top 10.

Tim McCreadie took top honors in the 100-lap Late Model main as Josh Richards came from the rear of the field to finish in the runner-up spot. Jason Covert, Rick Eckert, Alan Sagi, Gary Stuhler, Frankie Plessinger, Jim Yoder, Brian Ruhlman and Jeremy Miller were the top 10.

Brett Hearn won the Big Block Modified feature, while Rick Laubach took the small block modified win. All feature winners earned \$10,000.

Rahmer was honored as the 2008 Williams Grove Speedway 410 Sprint car champion Friday night at the track's banquet at the Radisson Penn Harris in Camp Hill.

Rahmer's title was worth \$15,000 for his eighth career Cindy Rowe Auto Glass title. He had five wins during the season and 20 top-five finishes. The title was the first for his car owners, Chad and Jenn Clemens.

Rahmer's former crew chief, Tim Elwell, was named Mechanic of the Year; Sportsmanship went to Alan Krimes; Cody Darrah won the Most Improved; and John Westbrook was the 410 Rookie of the Year. Westbrook accepted his award via telephone from his Magee Rehab Center in Philadelphia.

Pat Cannon, who will be the driver of the Jesse Keen-owned 410 Sprint car in 2009 was honored as the 358 Sprint car title at the Grove. It was his second straight title.

Frankie Herr (Sportsman), Gene Knaub (Limited Late Models), Doug Hoffman (Street Stocks) and Dave Leidy (4-cylinders) were also honored as 2008 track champions.

That will do it for the 2008 racing season as the countdown begins for the 2009 season-openers. Unfortunately, it was a miserable weekend for Penn State as they lost their bid for the BCS title game with a very disappointing loss to Iowa. So until next time, e-mail reaches me at Bvores@aol.com.

FR Youth Fair Well At State Finals Of Punt, Pass And Kick Competition



The Jaycees state finals of the punt, pass and kick competition were held November 9 at Holuba Hall (affectionately known as the JoePa dome) in University Park, Pa. Pictured above are 13-year-old division winners Casey Wade (second place) and Kyle Schoen (third place) with Penn State's punter Jeremy Boone (#41). Also earning second-place honors in his 8-year-old age group was Forbes' third-grader Brycen Hohman, who is not pictured. These students entered the competition sponsored by the Mercersburg Jaycees in September. These kids want to thank the Mercersburg Jaycees for the opportunity and all the Nittany Lion players who helped with the event and cheered them on. Also to Penn State for the opportunity to play in Holuba Hall, which may be one of the most prestigious football practice facilities in the world. It should be noted that these three Forbes students honed their football skills with their own initiatives; placing highly in a Pennsylvania state-wide competition highlighting these skills.

Red Cross Blood Services Says Supply Of Blood Types Low

Inventories of Type O negative, universal blood type, below a day's supply

When planning blood collections for their current fiscal year that began on July 1, officials of the Greater Alleghenies Region of American Red Cross Blood Services state they anticipated a 5 percent growth in blood usage for patient care at the 97 hospitals the 100-county blood region serves.

However, according to Jim Starr, CEO, "Patient usage is outpacing our collections growth. Despite achieving 101 percent of year-to-date annual collections goal, regional supplies of O positive, O negative, A negative and B negative blood types remain at just a 1 1/2 day supply.

"Meeting blood collection targets aren't enough. We need to do more because area patients and their families are counting on us."

Starr urges local residents to give blood as November begins a period when blood collections historically decrease as people begin to get busy with winter holiday preparations.

"Hundreds of people each day continue to need life-sustaining blood transfusions, even while others are beginning to prepare for holiday celebrations," he stated. "Every two seconds, someone in our country needs a blood transfusion."

"The Red Cross must continue to collect enough blood each day in order to supply area hospital blood banks. Trauma cases, planned and emergency surgeries, and cancer treatments do not stop during this time, and all can require blood transfusions as part of those patients' medical care."

To donate blood, individuals: Must be at least 17 years old (in Kentucky, Maryland, Pennsylvania and Virginia, 16-year-olds may donate blood with parental consent)

Be in generally good health

Many individuals taking medication for chronic conditions may continue to donate blood. Those with specific eligibility questions should call 1-800-542-5663 and ask to speak to someone in Nursing Collections.

Donation appointments may be scheduled at many Red Cross blood drives. To schedule your blood donation appointment where available, or to find a blood drive near you, visit www.redcrosslife.org or call 1-800-GIVE LIFE (1-800-448-3543).

Local residents and patients are among those served through American Red Cross Blood Services, Greater Alleghenies Region. This region directly serves hospitals, patients and donors in a 100-county area in Kentucky, Maryland, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Virginia and West Virginia, and also supports blood needs experienced by patients elsewhere in hospitals served through Red Cross Blood Services.

Historic Bridge Burned In Pa.

ERIE, Pa. (AP) - Police say an arsonist set fire to a historic covered bridge near Erie.

The Gudgeonville bridge is in Girard Township, Erie County. Investigators say someone set fire to it on Friday night and the bridge was heavily damaged.

The bridge was built in 1868 and is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. It is the oldest of three covered bridges still standing in Erie County.

Pennsylvania State Police have ruled it arson and are searching for suspects.

Budget Cuts Mean Philly Officers Won't Patrol I-95

PHILADELPHIA (AP) - State troopers will soon be patrolling Interstate 95 in Philadelphia.

City officials say the three Philadelphia police vehicles assigned to patrol the interstate are getting new assignments. That's because of budget cuts announced by Mayor Michael Nutter.

Last week, Nutter announced that the city was anticipating a \$1 billion budget shortfall. He says the city will close libraries and swimming pools, cut more than 800 jobs and trim some salaries.

Officials say budget cuts forced the removal of the three cars from Interstate 95. Those officers will now be assigned to cover other streets in the city.

They will take over patrols on Kelly Drive, Lincoln Drive and Roosevelt Boulevard. The unit that had patrolled Kelly and Lincoln drives is being dissolved.

Hancock Variety Show Takes Place This Weekend

The Hancock Arts Council has announced that it will present a fall variety show on Friday, November 14, at 7 p.m. in the Hancock Town Hall auditorium. Local talent will again be highlighted and a true variety of acts will take the stage, including musical groups, singing, dancing, poetry and storytelling. This year's event will also showcase a performance on the electric organ, tap dancing, and tribal dancing accompanied by drum music.

Admission to the variety show is free but donations are accepted. Free cider and gingerbread will also be served. According to Hamilton, all proceeds from the event will help the Arts Council to deliver future cultural and community programs in Hancock.

For more information or to reach the Hancock Arts Council, e-mail Sinclair.Hamilton@verizon.net or call 301-678-5719.

Chafardon Plays On Winning PSU Team



Erin Chafardon, a McConnellsburg High School graduate who now plays as a freshman on the Penn State Altoona women's soccer team, helped her team capture the 2008 Allegheny Mountain Collegiate Conference Championship, along with an automatic bid to the NCAA Division 3 soccer tournament next week.

They won the game after double overtime and a penalty kick shootout. It is the first time in school's history the girls team finished with an undefeated season 18-0-1. It is also the first conference title at Altoona for women's soccer.

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