



## Three Time Champ!

### *Stewart Wins Wild Sprint Cup Race at Homestead To Score Third Career Title*

**Date:** Nov. 20, 2011  
**Event:** Ford 400 (Round 36 of 36)  
**Series:** NASCAR Sprint Cup Series  
**Location:** Homestead-Miami Speedway (1.5-mile oval)  
**Start/Finish:** 15<sup>th</sup>/1<sup>st</sup> (Running, completed 267 of 267 laps)  
**Winner:** Tony Stewart of Stewart-Haas Racing (Chevrolet)  
**Champion:** Tony Stewart of Stewart-Haas Racing (Chevrolet)

In a race that will go down as one of the best in NASCAR's long and storied history, Tony Stewart won Sunday's Ford 400 NASCAR Sprint Cup Series event at Homestead-Miami Speedway and clinched his third Sprint Cup championship.

Stewart, who led four times for 65 laps in the No. 14 Office Depot/Mobil 1 Chevrolet Impala for Stewart-Haas Racing (SHR), defeated Carl Edwards by 1.306 seconds to score his fifth win of the season and his third in 13 career Sprint Cup starts at Homestead.

He and Edwards both ended the season with 2,403 points, but Stewart's five wins in 2011 compared to Edwards' one win gave Stewart the tiebreaker advantage.

Stewart won Sprint Cup titles in 2002 and 2005 and, with this year's crown, became the first driver-owner to win a Sprint Cup championship since Alan Kulwicki in 1992. In addition, Stewart is the ninth driver to win three or more championships as he joins Richard Petty (seven), Dale Earnhardt (seven), Jimmie Johnson (five), Jeff Gordon (four), David Pearson (three), Darrell Waltrip (three) Cale Yarborough (three) and Lee Petty (three).

En route to winning, Stewart passed an incredible 118 cars throughout the 267-lap race.

"Our Office Depot/Mobil 1 Chevy was awesome and I can't thank Darian Grubb (crew chief) and everyone at Stewart-Haas Racing for all their hard work and all of our partners and sponsors for supporting us," Stewart said. "I feel like I passed half the State of Florida. I mean, 118 cars is a lot of cars to pass in one race. I don't care what series you're in or where you're at. To do it under the circumstances and the pressure that we had today, I'm very, very proud of that. And, man, I've been racing 31 years and I can't even remember some of the races I've won. But I would have to say that, under the circumstances, I've got to believe that this is definitely one of the greatest races of my life."

Stewart started 14<sup>th</sup> and near disaster struck the Office Depot/Mobil 1 team less than 15 laps into the race as an unidentified piece of debris punched a sizeable hole in the grill of the No. 14 machine. With the race under caution for light rain shortly thereafter, Stewart spent a couple of long pit stops that allowed his crew to repair the damage as best it could in order to return the Office Depot/Mobil 1 car to the track in the top possible form.

The repairs worked as Stewart, who restarted 40<sup>th</sup> on lap 22, moved all the way to 25<sup>th</sup> over the next eight laps. Meanwhile, Edwards, who had started on the pole, led 24 of the first 30 laps.

By lap 68, Stewart was up to 12<sup>th</sup> and, by lap 108, he had cracked the top-five in an amazing comeback from his early misfortune while Edwards continued to lead.

Suddenly, the Florida skies opened up on lap 109 and rain began falling, which forced NASCAR officials to red-flag the race for 1 hour, 14 minutes and 6 seconds. At the time of the red flag, Edwards was at the point and had led four times for 87 laps while Stewart was fifth and had yet to lead a lap.

After the engines refired once the red flag was lifted, Stewart, Edwards and the rest of the field headed to pit road under caution for routine pits stops and, for the lap-116 restart, Edwards was third while Stewart was right beside him in fourth. Stewart blew past Edwards on the restart and, on lap 123, passed four-time Sprint Cup Series champion Jeff Gordon and took the lead for the first time. He held the top spot for 13 laps before pitting under caution for four tires and fuel on lap 136.

Unfortunately, during the stop, the crew had a bit of an issue changing the right-front tire and Stewart was forced to restart ninth while Edwards restarted fourth. The green-flag stint lasted only five laps before another caution came out for a spin by Jimmie Johnson and the field lined up for yet another restart with Edwards now third and Stewart ninth.

In an incredible four-wide move on lap 148, Stewart blasted past Edwards and several other cars and suddenly found himself in third place while Edwards fell to fifth. Just four laps later, Stewart was back in front and stayed there for five laps before pitting under caution on lap 156.

Once again, however, issues in the pits hurt Stewart as a lugnut jammed in the rear-tire changer's air gun as he attempted to change the right-rear tire. The delay was enough that crew chief Darian Grubb cut short what was going to be a four-tire stop and sent Stewart back on track with just two new right-side tires.

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Stewart lined up for the lap-161 restart in 12<sup>th</sup> place while Edwards lined up in the fifth position. In just one lap, Stewart was up to seventh and, by lap 167, he was fourth with Edwards right ahead of him in third.

On lap 175, Edwards took the lead and, on lap 180, Stewart moved into second place right behind him to set up a fantastic championship battle with less than 100 laps remaining in the season.

Edwards, who by now had clinched the valuable bonus point for leading most laps in the race, headed to pit road on lap 201 for four tires and fuel.

Stewart inherited the lead from Edwards and stayed out in front until lap 211, conserving fuel in hopes that if he stopped late enough, he would not have to pit again before the race ended.

Finally, on lap 212, Stewart headed to pit road for four tires and a full load of fuel while Edwards rocketed around him and took the lead.

Just one lap later, the Florida skies opened up once again and a light rain began falling, bringing out a caution while NASCAR officials attempted to dry the track. Grubb and Stewart's call to stretch their fuel mileage worked to perfection as NASCAR kept the cars circling under caution for 17 laps in order to help the track-drying process, which also greatly assisting Stewart as he attempted to save gas.

Meanwhile, on lap 214, Edwards headed to pit road for his final stop of the day, when he took two tires and fuel.

For the final restart of the day on lap 231, Stewart lined up third while Edwards was fifth and the two cars in front of Stewart still needed to pit.

Little did it matter as Stewart passed Kyle Busch and Brad Keselowski just after the restart to take the lead on lap 232 and never looked back, leading the final 36 laps en route to victory.

"You know, I didn't question what the plan was or why the plan was," Stewart said. "I just stuck to what he (Grubb) told me and, the lap that he called us in, he called us in going into turn one and, when I came off turn two, the fuel pressure dropped, the motor laid down a little bit but was still running. When I got to turn three, I shut it off, coasted around to turn four, kicked the switch, kicked the clutch, drove down pit road. We did the stop and he's, like, 'Keep it revving, keep it running;' and I'm staring at a fuel-pressure gauge that's not building. It's sitting at two pounds. And we dropped the jack. 'Leave.' I get 50 feet from the last timeline and it dies. I mean, it's dead. It's out. And I'm, like, we just lost this thing, and we roll about a hundred feet and it takes off and the needle goes up and we are fourth at that point, and Carl has to come back in, and it's like, 'Wow, that is the call of the race, the call of the Chase, and it gave me the opportunity to do what I love doing best, letting it all hang out and putting it all on the line with the restart.'

"And that was the one probably hairy moment of anything that I did all day where I felt like, 'Oh, maybe I just lost this,' and got loose underneath the 18 (Busch) and the 2 (Keselowski), and it was a three-wide drag race down into three, and the way this thing drove all day, it had really good side bite. I knew I could bury it down in the corner. I just didn't know if I was going to make the front end stick out the back, and we drive back out with the lead. And, at that point, you just sit there and go, 'All you can ask for is where we are at right now and, whatever happens, it happens.'"

Ryan Newman, driver of the No. 39 U.S. Army Chevrolet Impala for SHR, finished 12<sup>th</sup> and ends the 2011 campaign 10<sup>th</sup> in points. Newman and Denny Hamlin each finished the season with 2,284 points and one victory, but Hamlin finished second once while Newman did not have a runner-up result. Thus, Hamlin was awarded ninth in the standings while Newman was slotted 10<sup>th</sup>.

Martin Truex Jr., finished third in the Ford 400 while Matt Kenseth and Gordon rounded out the top-five. Clint Bowyer, Kasey Kahne, Kevin Harvick, Hamlin and Jeff Burton comprised the remainder of the top-10.

There were eight caution periods for 54 laps, with nine drivers failing to finish the 267-lap race.

With the racing season over, Stewart and his Sprint Cup brethren head to Las Vegas for the annual awards banquet Dec. 2. Once there, Stewart – the new series champion and first since Jimmie Johnson's unprecedented five-year reign – will be honored, along with the rest of the drivers who competed in the 2011 Chase for the Sprint Cup.

The final Chase standings for the 2011 season are as follows:

<b>1.</b>	<b>Tony Stewart (2,403 points)</b>
2.	Carl Edwards (2,403 points)
3.	Kevin Harvick (2,345 points, -58)
4.	Matt Kenseth (2,330 points, -73)
5.	Brad Keselowski (2,319 points, -84)
6.	Jimmie Johnson (2,304 points, -99)
7.	Dale Earnhardt Jr. (2,290 points, -113)
8.	Jeff Gordon (2,287 points, -116)
9.	Denny Hamlin (2,284 points, -119)
<b>10.</b>	<b>Ryan Newman (2,284 points, -119)</b>
11.	Kurt Busch (2,262 points, -141)
12.	Kyle Busch (2,246 points, -157)

The 2012 Sprint Cup season kicks off Feb. 16-26 with the traditional Speedweeks at Daytona (Fla.) International Speedway. The 54<sup>th</sup> Daytona 500, the first points-paying race of the season, is scheduled for Feb. 26 and will be broadcast live on FOX.

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