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Johnson Kisses the Bricks Once Again

Dominating Run at Indianapolis Nets Sprint Cup Record-Tying Fourth Brickyard 400 Win

Date: July 29, 2012
Event: 19th Annual Brickyard 400 (Round 20 of 36)
Series: NASCAR Sprint Cup Series
Location: Indianapolis Motor Speedway (2.5-mile oval)
Start/Finish: 6th/1st (**Running, completed 160 of 160 laps**)
Point Standing: 4th (704 points, 27 out of first; 116 ahead of 11th)
Winner: **Jimmie Johnson of Hendrick Motorsports (Chevrolet)**
Hendrick Motorsports Finish: **Jimmie Johnson (Started 6th, Finished 1st / Running, completed 160 of 160 laps)**
Dale Earnhardt Jr. (Started 20th, Finished 4th / Running, completed 160 of 160 laps)
Jeff Gordon (Started 9th, Finished 5th / Running, completed 160 of 160 laps)
Kasey Kahne (Started 15th, Finished 12th / Running, completed 160 of 160 laps)

Hendrick Motorsports Points: Dale Earnhardt Jr. (1st with 731 points, 143 ahead of 11th)
Jimmie Johnson (4th with 704 points, 27 out of first; 116 ahead of 11th)
Kasey Kahne (13th with 579 points, 152 out of first; 64 out of 10th)
Jeff Gordon (15th with 564 points, 167 out of first; 79 out of 10th)

Jimmie Johnson, driver of the No. 48 Kobalt Tools Chevrolet for Hendrick Motorsports, scored his Sprint Cup record-tying fourth career victory in Sunday's 19th annual Brickyard 400 NASCAR Sprint Cup Series race at Indianapolis Motor Speedway. And it came in thoroughly dominating fashion.

Johnson started sixth, wasted little time making his way toward the front and went on to lead five times for a race-high 99 of 160 laps around the historic 2.5-mile oval. The victory – to go with Johnson's 2006, 2008 and 2009 wins at the Speedway – tied him with Hendrick Motorsports teammate Jeff Gordon as the winningest Brickyard 400 drivers with four victories apiece. Johnson and Gordon are also tied for second on the all-time Indianapolis Motor Speedway win list with four-time Indianapolis 500 winners A.J. Foyt, Al Unser and Rick Mears. Seven-time Formula 1 champion Michael Schumacher is the track's all-time leader with five U.S. Grand Prix victories at Indianapolis.

"Wow, man, that victory lap to go around the track is something special – a big thank you to all the fans out there cheering. It lets it really soak in," said Johnson, who led five times for a race-high 99 laps en route to his third victory of 2012 and the 58th of his career. "To come here and win is a huge honor. Then, to have four wins, I'm at a loss for words. I can tell you this – I'm so proud of my team, I'm so proud of everybody at Hendrick Motorsports, Lowe's, KOBALT Tools and Chevrolet. (Crew chief) Chad Knaus gave me one heck of a racecar today, and pit road was awesome, too. It was a total team effort and we put it on them today. That was nice."

Certainly not lost on Johnson this day was the historic achievement, which put his name alongside Indianapolis legends Foyt, Mears and Unser, and put him within one Indianapolis win of tying Schumacher's mark.

"It's wild – and (Jeff) Gordon, as well," Johnson said. "I looked up to him and it was really wild for me to get my start driving a Cup car for him. To tie all of those guys and what they've accomplished, again, I just hoped to come here and race. I had no idea this would turn out. I can remember back when I watched the (Indianapolis) 500 with my grandfather and my dad sitting on the couch. My grandfather told me stories about Indy and that he came here and was at the racetrack. I'm glad to have my own memories here for my family and, also, I must say I couldn't do it without the support of my wife and daughter. It's a total team effort on all fronts."

Today's milestone victory for Johnson never appeared to be in doubt from the drop of the green flag. From his sixth starting position, the five-time Sprint Cup champion Johnson was on the back bumper of polesitter and race leader Denny Hamlin before the race was two laps old. He calmly settled into position behind Hamlin for the rest of the opening fuel-and-tire run, then moved ahead of Hamlin and ultimately into the lead for the first time thanks to quick work by the No. 48 Kobalt Tools crew on the day's first green-flag pit stop on lap 27.

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Another quick two-tire stop during the day's first caution period on lap 41 put Johnson back on track ahead of everyone but Brad Keselowski, who opted not to pit. But Johnson had little trouble driving around the outside of Keselowski and back into the lead on the lap-46 restart. And such was the case on or shortly after subsequent restarts when Johnson simply thundered into the lead. He got by Keselowski for his third lead of the day on lap 100, and he took the lead for the final time when he blasted past Greg Biffle on lap 132.

Johnson led the final 29 laps and held a comfortable margin on the rest of the field, finishing a hefty 4.758 seconds ahead of runner-up Kyle Busch. Greg Biffle, Dale Earnhardt Jr., and Gordon rounded out the top-five. Polesitter Denny Hamlin, Newman, Martin Truex Jr., Brad Keselowski and Stewart comprised the remainder of the top-10.

There were five caution periods for 25 laps, with nine drivers failing to finish the 160-lap race

With round 20 of 36 complete, Earnhardt continues to lead Hendrick Motorsports in the championship point standings. He took over the points lead with 731 points, and he has a 143-point cushion over 11th-place Busch. Johnson remains in fourth with 704 points, 27 behind leader Earnhardt and 116 ahead of 11th. Kahne dropped one spot to 11th with 579 points, 152 behind first and 64 out of 10th. Gordon moved up two spots to 15th with 564 points, 167 out of first and 79 out of 10th.

The next event on the Sprint Cup schedule is the Aug. 5 Pennsylvania 400 at Pocono (Pa.) Raceway. The race starts at 1 p.m. EDT with live coverage provided by ESPN beginning with its pre-race show at noon.

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