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Oops, He Did It Again!

Johnson Earns Second Straight Maximum Points Day with Win at Texas

Date: Nov. 4, 2012
Event: AAA Texas 500 (Round 34 of 36)
Series: NASCAR Sprint Cup Series
Location: Texas Motor Speedway in Fort Worth (1.5-mile oval)
Start/Finish: 1st/1st (Running, completed 335 of 335 laps in a green-white-checkered finish)
Point Standing: 1st (2,339 points, 7 ahead of second)
Winner: Jimmie Johnson of Hendrick Motorsports (Chevrolet)

Hendrick Motorsports Finish: Jimmie Johnson (Started 1st, Finished 1st / Running, completed 335 of 335 laps)
Dale Earnhardt Jr. (Started 19th, Finished 7th / Running, completed 335 of 335 laps)
Jeff Gordon (Started 16th, Finished 14th / Running, completed 335 of 335 laps)
Kasey Kahne (Started 13th, Finished 25th / Running, completed 334 of 335 laps)

Hendrick Motorsports Points: Jimmie Johnson (1st with 2,339 points, 7 ahead of second)
Kasey Kahne (4th with 2,281 points, 58 out of first)
Jeff Gordon (6th with 2,267 points, 72 out of first)
Dale Earnhardt Jr. (12th with 2,188 points, 151 out of first)

Jimmie Johnson said it was “go time” last weekend at Martinsville (Va.) Speedway, and he “went” by leading the most laps and winning that race from the pole. He gave an encore performance Sunday at Texas Motor Speedway in Fort Worth, earning his second straight “maximum points day” by starting from the pole, leading the most laps and winning the AAA Texas 500 to score his 60th career NASCAR Sprint Cup Series victory.

Despite having a fast car throughout the race, the victory was hard-fought as Johnson had to overtake his closest championship competitor, Brad Keselowski, as the laps wound down. The two battled ferociously during one of the late-race restarts, making contact as they raced for the lead. Johnson maintained control of the No. 48 Lowe’s Chevrolet and second place despite nearly losing control of the car during the contact with Keselowski. It appeared that Keselowski would drive off for the win until an accident that unfolded on the frontstretch resulted in the caution being displayed on lap 331, giving Johnson one last shot at scoring the victory in a green-white-checkered finish.

Johnson restarted the race in second place, on the outside of Keselowski, and wasted no time in showing the nose of the Lowe’s Chevrolet to the lead. He then stretched his lead to almost a full second by the time the checkered flag waved.

“It was an awesome race,” said Johnson. “The gloves are off, and it’s bare-knuckle time. I have a lot of respect for that No. 2 team (Keselowski). Those guys are doing a great job. Today I think our cars were pretty equal throughout the course of the race. At the end of the race, we were on four (tires) and had to take advantage of it. That second-to-the-last restart was pretty sketchy with how hard we were racing, but luckily we brought the cars back and had another caution come out, and we got a great restart and got by him. I knew we had the speed if we could just get by him, and we got this Lowe’s Chevy to victory lane.”

Johnson maintained the top spot in the championship point standings, building his lead over Keselowski to seven points, with only two races remaining on the 2012 schedule. The series travels west for next weekend’s race at Phoenix, where five-time Sprint Cup champion Johnson has four career Sprint Cup victories.

“I expect a lot of hard racing,” Johnson said in regard to what will happen during the last two races. “That’s what we’ve seen all year long and all Chase long. You can’t count those guys (No. 2 team) out. They’re keeping us honest and pressing us hard, but I’m very proud of this Lowe’s team and everything they’ve done.”

“One last thing, I’d like to let everyone know about the Racing for Relief fund – Hendrick Motorsports and myself are matching what Lowe’s is doing, and I just want everyone up in the Northeast that’s trying to recover from (Hurricane) Sandy that we’re thinking of them.”

The victory was Johnson’s fifth of the season and his second at Texas. The win marked the 700th Sprint Cup victory for Chevrolet and made Johnson only the eighth driver in Sprint Cup Series history to record 60 or more wins.

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Keselowski finished .808 of a second behind Johnson in the runner-up spot, while Kyle Busch, Matt Kenseth and Tony Stewart rounded out the top-five. Clint Bowyer, Dale Earnhardt Jr., Kurt Busch, Kevin Harvick and Greg Biffle comprised the remainder of the top-10.

There were nine caution periods for 49 laps, with 11 drivers failing to finish the 335-lap race, which was extended one lap by a green-white-checked finish.

With the eighth race of the Chase completed, Johnson has 2,339 points, seven ahead of second-place Keselowski. All four Hendrick Motorsports drivers made the Chase. Kahne is next behind Johnson among Hendrick drivers in the point standings in fourth with 2,281 points, 58 out of first. Gordon shares sixth place with Matt Kenseth, each with 2,267 points, 72 out of first. Dale Earnhardt Jr., who missed two weeks for medical reasons, remains 12th with 2,188 points, 151 behind Johnson.

With only two races remaining before a champion is crowned following the season finale Nov. 18 at Homestead-Miami Speedway, the top-12 drivers competing for the title rank as follows:

- 1. Jimmie Johnson (2,339 points) +/-0 position(s)**
2. Brad Keselowski (2,332 points, -7) +/-0
3. Clint Bowyer (2,303 points, -36) +/-0
4. Kasey Kahne (2,281 points, -58) +/-0
5. Matt Kenseth (2,267 points, -72) +3
6. Jeff Gordon (2,267 points, -72) +/-0
7. Denny Hamlin (2,266 points, -73) -2
8. Tony Stewart (2,259 points, -80) +2
9. Martin Truex Jr. (2,259 points, -80) -2
10. Greg Biffle (2,256 points, -83) -1
11. Kevin Harvick (2,238 points, -101) +/-0 (mathematically eliminated from championship contention)
12. Dale Earnhardt Jr. (2,188 points, -151) +/-0 (mathematically eliminated from championship contention)

The next event on the Sprint Cup schedule – the penultimate race of the 10-race Chase – is the Advocare 500k on Nov. 11 at Phoenix International Raceway. The race begins at 3 p.m. EST, with live coverage provided by ESPN beginning with a pre-race show at 2 p.m.

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