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JOHNSON WINS SIXTH SPRINT CUP SERIES CHAMPIONSHIP

No. 48 Lowe's Racing Team Finishes Ninth at Homestead To Secure Sixth Title in Eight Seasons

Date: Nov. 17, 2013
Event: Ford EcoBoost 400 (Round 36 of 36)
Series: NASCAR Sprint Cup Series
Location: Homestead-Miami Speedway (1.5-mile oval)
Start/Finish: 7th/9th (Running, completed 267 of 267 laps)
Point Standing: 1st (2,419 points, 19 ahead of second)
Winner: Denny Hamlin of Joe Gibbs Racing (Toyota)
Champion: Jimmie Johnson of Hendrick Motorsports (Chevrolet)

Hendrick Motorsports Finish: Dale Earnhardt Jr. (Started 21st, Finished 3rd / Running, completed 267 of 267 laps)
Jimmie Johnson (Started 7th, Finished 9th / Running, completed 267 of 267 laps)
Jeff Gordon (Started 26th, Finished 11th / Running, completed 267 of 267 laps)
Kasey Kahne (Started 13th, Finished 13th / Running, completed 267 of 267 laps)

Hendrick Motorsports Points: Jimmie Johnson (1st with 2,419 points, 19 ahead of second)
Dale Earnhardt Jr. (5th with 2,363 points, 56 out of first)
Jeff Gordon (6th with 2,337 points, 82 out of first)
Kasey Kahne (12th with 2,283 points, 136 out of first)

Jimmie Johnson scored a ninth-place finish in the season-ending Ford EcoBoost 400 NASCAR Sprint Cup Series race Sunday at Homestead-Miami Speedway to pick up the sixth series championship of his 13-year career. Johnson, the driver of the No. 48 Lowe's Chevrolet SS for Hendrick Motorsports, started seventh in the 43-car field and avoided a mid-race incident at the 1.5-mile oval en route to scoring his 272nd top-10 finish in 435 career Sprint Cup starts, eighth top-10 in 13 races at Homestead and 24th top-10 of the 2013 season.

"I am at a loss for words, but I am so proud and so thankful for this opportunity at Hendrick Motorsports," Johnson said. "I'm thankful that Jeff Gordon and Rick Hendrick gave me this opportunity back in 2002. I'm thankful that Lowe's came on board – and I want to say hello to all the Lowe's employee-owners that are watching and everybody back at Hendrick Motorsports in all departments. This sport is about people, and our people at Hendrick Motorsports, especially on this No. 48 Lowe's car, rose up and got the job done. I am so thankful to be able to drive for this race team and so honored and excited to have a six-pack."

The 267-lap event had tense moments for Johnson. The No. 48 Lowe's Chevrolet suffered some minor sheet metal damage during a mid-race restart in which Johnson was shoved into the rear of the No. 20 car of Matt Kenseth. Johnson was shuffled back in the running order, but the damage proved to be minimal, and he was able to race his way back into the top-10 as the laps wound down.

"I had contact from behind that pushed me up into the 20, and both of us were out of control and sliding toward the outside fence at that point," Johnson said, recounting the incident. "I didn't know what to think. They got us mired back in traffic and made the last 50 laps kind of interesting. We still had an awesome racecar and got the job done. I'm just so happy to win this sixth championship. I want to encourage everybody to go to Lowe's tomorrow. There is a \$48 tool box out there for you, so go pick it up."

Johnson's sixth Sprint Cup championship pulled him to within one title of tying the record of seven Sprint Cup championships earned by NASCAR Hall of Famers Richard Petty and Dale Earnhardt. But Johnson is the first driver to win six championships over a span of only eight seasons.

"It's a huge honor," Johnson said about being compared to Petty and Earnhardt. "I have six, and we will see if I get seven. Time will tell."

Hendrick Motorsports owner Rick Hendrick earned his 11th NASCAR Sprint Cup Series owner championship, the most ever. It's also the organization's 14th NASCAR national series owner championship, extending its all-time record.

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“I can't believe it,” Hendrick said. “I always wanted to win one of these things. I never thought we would win 11. It's unbelievable. I can't really describe it. I didn't want to get excited until tonight and until it was over. It's part of history, and I'm proud of our guys. For Jimmie to have six and us to have 11, it's still hard to believe.”

The 2013 title also is Team Lowe's Racing crew chief Chad Knaus' sixth Sprint Cup championship, all coming with Johnson. Knaus remains second on the all-time championship crew chief list behind Dale Inman, who won eight titles.

“I just can't thank everybody at Hendrick Motorsports enough,” Knaus said. “A lot of effort went into this No. 48 car this season. Everybody on the No. 48 team has dug in really deep. We had a whole lot of new players on our team this year, from engineers to mechanics to pit crew members, and everybody played a very important role into what it was we needed to do this year. Everybody at Lowe's and Hendrick Motorsports – we couldn't be more proud.”

Johnson entered the final race of the 10-race Chase first among the 13 Chase drivers with a 28-point advantage over his nearest pursuer, Kenseth. Johnson needed to finish only 23rd or better at Homestead, regardless of Kenseth's finish, to clinch his sixth Sprint Cup championship.

“This is extremely sweet,” Johnson said of the sixth championship. “I feel like those five years were a blur, and things happened so fast. It's not that I didn't enjoy it or appreciate it or didn't respect what happened. It just went by so fast, it seems like. I'm really going to slow things down here and enjoy it. This is so, so sweet.”

Denny Hamlin won the Ford EcoBoost 400 to score his to score his 23rd career Sprint Cup victory, his first of the season and his second at Homestead.

Kenseth finished .799 of a second behind Hamlin in the runner-up spot, while Dale Earnhardt Jr., Martin Truex Jr. and Clint Bowyer rounded out the top-five. Brad Keselowski, Kyle Busch, Joey Logano, Johnson and Kevin Harvick comprised the remainder of the top-10.

There were eight caution periods for 37 laps, with five drivers failing to finish the 267-lap race.

The final Chase standings for the 2013 season:

- 1. Jimmie Johnson (2,419 points) +/-0 position**
2. Matt Kenseth (2,400 points, -19) +/-0
3. Kevin Harvick (2,385 points, -34) +/-0
4. Kyle Busch (2,364 points, -55) +/-0
- 5. Dale Earnhardt Jr. (2,363 points, -56) +/-0**
- 6. Jeff Gordon (2,337 points, -82) +/-0**
7. Clint Bowyer (2,336 points, -83) +1
8. Joey Logano (2,323 points, -96) +1
9. Greg Biffle (2,321 points, -98) -2
10. Kurt Busch (2,309 points, -110) +/-0
11. Ryan Newman (2,286 points, -133) +/-0
- 12. Kasey Kahne (2,283 points, -136) +/-0**
13. Carl Edwards (2,282 points, -137) +/-0

The 2014 Sprint Cup season kicks off Feb. 14-23 with the traditional Speedweeks at Daytona (Fla.) International Speedway. The 56th Daytona 500, the first point-paying race of the season, is scheduled for Feb. 23 and will be broadcast live on FOX.

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