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Johnson Dominates, 'Parties' in Pocono Victory Lane

No. 48 Leads 128 of 160 Laps En Route to Third Win at Tricky Triangle

Date: June 9, 2013
Event: Party in the Poconos 400 (Round 14 of 36)
Series: NASCAR Sprint Cup Series
Location: Pocono (Pa.) Raceway (2.5-mile triangle)
Start/Finish: 1st/1st (Running, completed 160 of 160 laps)
Point Standing: 1st (521 points, 51 ahead of second; 128 ahead of 11th)
Winner: Jimmie Johnson of Hendrick Motorsports (Chevrolet)

Hendrick Motorsports Finish: Jimmie Johnson (Started 1st, Finished 1st / Running, completed 160 of 160 laps)
Dale Earnhardt Jr. (Started 6th, Finished 3rd / Running, completed 160 of 160 laps)
Jeff Gordon (Started 11th, Finished 12th / Running, completed 160 of 160 laps)
Kasey Kahne (Started 7th, Finished 36th / Running, completed 141 of 160 laps)

Hendrick Motorsports Points: Jimmie Johnson (1st with 521 points, 51 ahead of second, 128 ahead of 11th)
Dale Earnhardt Jr. (4th with 439 points, 82 out of first, 46 ahead of 11th)
Kasey Kahne (8th with 400 points, 121 out of first, 7 ahead of 11th)
Jeff Gordon (11th with 393 points, 128 out of first, 2 behind 10th)

To say that Jimmie Johnson had the dominant racecar Sunday at Pocono (Pa.) Raceway in the Party in the Poconos 400 NASCAR Sprint Cup Series race is an understatement. Johnson, the driver of the No. 48 Lowe's/Kobalt Tools Chevrolet SS for Hendrick Motorsports, led five times for a race-high 128 laps en route to his third win at the 2.5-mile triangle. It was his first victory at Pocono since he swept both races there in 2004.

"That is the best car I have had in a long time," Johnson said. "What a racecar. Not only the car and the handling and the grip that it had, but also the engine and what was under the hood. When I would lean on the throttle, this baby would yard anybody and everybody. Hats off to everybody in every department at Hendrick Motorsports. I'm very happy for Lowe's/Kobalt Tools to get this car into Victory Lane. It's been a long time since I've won here and very excited to do it."

While Johnson definitely had the strongest car in the 43-car field throughout the 160-lap race, the run to victory lane still had its share of challenges.

Johnson took the lead for the final time at lap 130. But a flurry of cautions in the final stages of the 400-mile race forced Johnson to hold off his challengers on four restarts during the final 30 laps.

"I learned a lot racing with Ryan (Newman) on those restarts, and I was able to get the lead each time," Johnson said. "So I used that going into the final few times, but there are only so many things you can do down there in the zone. I knew that third place would lag back and try to get a good run on second. I was just hopeful we weren't three-wide getting down into the center of the corner in turn one because I was in a losing situation with that point. Luckily, I was able to stay in the throttle and get around those guys on the outside each time."

The victory was the 63rd of Johnson's Sprint Cup career and his third of the season.

Greg Biffle finished 1.208 seconds behind Johnson in the runner-up spot, while Dale Earnhardt Jr., Tony Stewart and Newman rounded out the top-five. Kyle Busch, Kurt Busch, Denny Hamlin, Kevin Harvick and Joey Logano comprised the remainder of the top-10.

There were six caution periods for 19 laps, with six drivers failing to finish.

With round 14 of 36 complete, Johnson continues to lead the Hendrick Motorsports contingent and the rest of the NASCAR field in the championship point standings. His 521 points give him a 51-point lead over second-place Carl Edwards. Earnhardt occupies fourth place with 439 points, 82 out of first and 46 ahead of 11th-place Jeff Gordon. Kasey Kahne is eighth with 400 points, 121 out of first and seven ahead of 11th. Gordon is 11th with 393 points, 128 behind Johnson and two points behind 10th-place Biffle.

Twelve races remain before the 12-driver, 10-race Chase for the NASCAR Sprint Cup begins Sept. 15 at Chicagoland Speedway in Joliet, Ill. Only the top-10 in points are locked into the Chase. Positions 11 and 12 in the Chase are wild cards, awarded to the two drivers between 11th and 20th in points with the most wins. If multiple drivers have the same number of wins, a driver's point standing serves as the tiebreaker.

The next event on the Sprint Cup schedule is the Quicken Loans 400 on Sunday, June 16 at Michigan International Speedway in Brooklyn. The race starts at 1 p.m. EDT, with live coverage provided by TNT beginning with its pre-race show at noon.

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