



DuPont Motorsports Post Race Report
USG Sheetrock 400
Chicagoland Speedway
July 15, 2007

At Chicago, Team DuPont Scores Another Top-10

Heading into Sunday's USG Sheetrock 400 at Chicagoland Speedway, Jeff Gordon and Team DuPont believed they could battle for the victory at the 1.5-mile track. But the team struggled with the handling on the No. 24 DuPont/Nicorette Chevrolet throughout the race and finished ninth. Gordon now leads the point standings by 303 over second-place Denny Hamlin.

Gordon, who won this event last year, started 11th. While he maneuvered up to sixth during the first round of pit stops at lap 50, he returned to the track after the four-tire stop in 11th place. When the day's first caution waved on lap 58, interim crew chief Jeff Meendering called Gordon onto pit road for fuel only. The move allowed Gordon to restart fifth.

By lap 107, Gordon was running fourth.

"I'm starting to get real loose in and real loose off," Gordon said over the team radio. "But I'm tight in the middle."

Gordon stopped on lap 112 of the 267-lap race for fuel, new tires and chassis adjustments. When he returned to the track, he was still battling the loose condition.

"I'm sideways loose," he explained to the team.

When the race's second caution waved on lap 153, the entire field visited pit road for service. Gordon entered the pit area in eighth and, after quick work by Team DuPont, he exited in seventh.

He remained in seventh when another caution waved on lap 163. Meendering took a calculated risk and called Gordon onto pit road -- for fuel only -- while many of the leaders stayed on the track.

"We can now make it to the end of the race with only one more stop," Meendering explained to Gordon. "Everybody else will have to stop twice."

Gordon restarted 13th and it appeared the gamble might pay off as the race approached the 200-lap mark. With teams averaging 50 laps per run, the leaders were expected to make their stops at lap 210 -- forcing them to make an additional stop before the completion of the 267-lap race. Gordon was scheduled to stop at lap 220, ensuring he could make it to the end.

But that scenario never occurred due to a caution flag period at lap 201. Now, every team was on the same pit sequence with the No. 24 car mired in heavy traffic in 14th place.

Gordon stopped two additional times before the end of the race -- during caution periods -- for new tires. The last time occurred at lap 246, and Gordon restarted 14th with 18 laps to go. He was able to gain five spots before the race ended, securing Team DuPont's 17th top-10 finish in 19 races this season.

"It was definitely frustrating," Gordon said after the race. "I thought we'd be better but we never could find the balance on the DuPont/Nicorette Chevrolet today."

"Track position was key, and we lost it with our gamble on fuel mileage. I thought it was a good gamble because we had run so many laps without cautions. But it didn't work out for us, and we were forced to stop several more times to try and improve the handling."

"While it was frustrating, I guess I can't complain when our 'bad' days are ninth-place finishes."

The NASCAR NEXTEL Cup Series will take next weekend off before racing 17 consecutive weekends to close out the 2007 season. The series will return to action on July 29 in the Allstate 400 at The Brickyard at Indianapolis Motor Speedway. ESPN/ABC and the Indianapolis Motor Speedway Radio Network will broadcast the race live beginning at 1 p.m. EDT.

USG Sheetrock 400 results (unofficial)

1. Tony Stewart
2. Matt Kenseth
3. Carl Edwards
4. Kevin Harvick
5. Casey Mears
6. Kurt Busch
7. Jeff Burton
8. Ryan Newman
- 9. Jeff Gordon**
10. Clint Bowyer

Point standings (unofficial)

- 1. Jeff Gordon**
2. Denny Hamlin
3. Matt Kenseth
4. Jeff Burton
5. Carl Edwards
6. Tony Stewart
7. Jimmie Johnson
8. Kevin Harvick
9. Kyle Busch
10. Clint Bowyer

