



Gordon and Team DuPont Lead Point Standings After Dover

Sunday's Dodge Dealers 400 at Dover International Speedway turned into a battle of attrition, and Jeff Gordon and Team DuPont survived to post an 11th-place finish in the second race of The Chase for the NASCAR NEXTEL Cup. The finish also moved Gordon into sole possession of first in the point standings, two markers ahead of Tony Stewart. Carl Edwards, who won the 400-lap event, moved into third, three behind Gordon.

Gordon, who started 27th, moved up quickly after the green flag waved to start the 400-mile race. On lap 8, the driver of the No. 24 DuPont Chevrolet made a three-wide pass to move into the top 20. By lap 54, he was up to eighth.

But changing track conditions hurt the handling on the No. 24 Chevrolet, and Gordon fought a loose condition through the halfway point of the race. Crew chief Steve Letarte made numerous changes during pit stops -- including air pressure, wedge, track bar and spring pressure changes -- but Gordon had fallen to 12th by lap 204 while battling the loose car.

After stopping for another set of chassis adjustments on lap 229, Gordon restarted 11th. When green flag pit stops began on lap 288, Gordon informed the changes had finally worked -- too well.

"We finally got it tight," Gordon radioed Letarte. "Too tight."

"10-4," Letarte replied. "But I need you to hang on for another 30 laps. The leaders are pitting now, but we can go another 30 laps."

Gordon finally made his stop on lap 314, and the four-time NASCAR Cup Series champion returned to the track one lap down in 16th position.

"If this race goes caution free, we can make it," Letarte told Gordon. "All but one or two guys are going to have to stop (for fuel), but we can make it."

Unfortunately for Team DuPont, that unneeded caution waved at lap 354 with Gordon a lap down in 16th. While he was unable to make up the lap before the end of the race, Gordon gained five positions over the final 40 laps to finish 11th and take over the points lead.

"It was just a day of survival," Gordon said after the race. "Jimmie (Johnson) had problems, Martin (Truex) had problems, Kurt (Busch), Matt Kenseth...they all had problems. It seemed half the Chase field had problems today, so we're somewhat happy to come away with a decent finish and the points lead.

"I don't know what it is, but we've struggled on the concrete tracks this year (Bristol and Dover). We tried a completely different setup today, but we struggled again.

"But this team never gave up, and that is what it's going to take for eight more races."

Next Sunday, the NASCAR NEXTEL Cup Series visits Kansas Speedway for LifeLock 400. ABC and MRN Radio will broadcast the race live beginning at 1 p.m. EDT.

Dodge Dealers 400 results (unofficial)

1. Carl Edwards
2. Greg Biffle
3. Dale Earnhardt, Jr.
4. Mark Martin
5. Kyle Busch
6. Casey Mears
7. Jeff Burton
8. Jamie McMurray
9. Tony Stewart
10. Juan Pablo Montoya
- 11. Jeff Gordon**

Point standings (unofficial)

- 1. Jeff Gordon**
2. Tony Stewart (-2)
3. Carl Edwards (-3)
4. Jimmie Johnson (-4)
5. Kyle Busch (-10)
6. Clint Bowyer (-18)
7. Martin Truex, Jr. (-46)
8. Jeff Burton (-75)
9. Kevin Harvick (-115)
10. Matt Kenseth (-116)
11. Kurt Busch (-151)
12. Denny Hamlin (-158)