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AUTO CLUB SPEEDWAY EVENT BEGINS 'TEST' FOR TEAM DUPONT

FONTANA, Calif. (February 17, 2009) - With no testing during the offseason, the real test for Jeff Gordon and Team DuPont starts this weekend in the Auto Club 500 at Auto Club Speedway.

Last week in Daytona, the four-time NASCAR Cup Series champion won a Gatorade Duel qualifying race. In NASCAR's "Super Bowl" on Sunday, he led 14 laps before battling back from a lap down to finish 13th in the season-opening, rain-shortened Daytona 500. But that was one of only four events this season where restrictor-plates are required.

"Because it's a restrictor-plate track, I don't think last Sunday's results have any meaning on what kind of year you're going to have," said Gordon. "I think you get a better understanding of how you stack up against the other teams after the races at California and Las Vegas.

"Without testing, I think the teams that were successful on the intermediate tracks last year will probably be strong again. But that's a double-edged sword. When you're successful, you're afraid to change too much. Teams that weren't strong may roll the dice and look outside the 'box,' and they may hit on something.

"We are one of those teams that haven't adapted to this new car as quickly as we would have liked, so we may have to change our thought process."

(more)

This “new” car is the “Car of Tomorrow” (CoT), and it was raced in selected events in 2007 – a season that Gordon collected a modern-day record 30 top-10 finishes. Although his numbers were not quite that good in 2008 (19 top-10's in 36 events) when the CoT was mandatory at all events, he posted top-10 finishes in each of the intermediate-track races during the “Chase for the NASCAR Sprint Cup.”

“You can’t compare ‘07 to ‘08,” said Gordon, who has three wins, two poles and eight top-fives in 17 starts at Auto Club Speedway. “We raced the ‘old car’ on intermediate tracks in 2007, and we had that car ‘dialed in.’ This new car is a whole different animal.

“I think we made a lot gains as we progressed through last year, and it showed in our finishes. That’s why I’m really looking forward to this weekend. I want to see if we have closed the gap even more.

“I feel we are a team that may have to look outside the box. If we do, we might just hit on something.”

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