



DuPont Motorsports Post-Race Report
Pepsi 500
Auto Club Speedway
October 11, 2009

Gordon Up to Fifth in Standings After Second-Place Finish in Fontana

Jeff Gordon passed teammate Jimmie Johnson on a late-race restart to take the lead with 11 laps to go in Sunday's Pepsi 500 at Auto Club Speedway. Unfortunately for the 82-time winner, Johnson passed him back on the next restart with six laps to go to secure the win -- and the points lead -- with six races remaining in the 2009 season. Gordon moved up to fifth and now trails his Hendrick Motorsports teammate by 105.

Gordon, who qualified 10th, was up to fifth just 21 laps into the 250-lap race.

"I'm a little bit tight getting to the middle of the corner," Gordon radioed crew chief Steve Letarte prior to his first pit stop. "But I'm loose off."

Letarte called for a track bar adjustment during the four-tire, green-flag stop on lap 38 and, after quick work by the No. 24 team, Gordon was running fourth in his DuPont/Pepsi Chevrolet. But the handling issues remained. In fact, it became worse as the cloud cover dissipated and the track temperature rose under the California sun.

The four-time NASCAR Cup Series champion was still fourth, though, when a caution waved on lap 117. After another fast stop by the DuPont crew, Gordon restarted second. Although he was able to get by leader Denny Hamlin on the restart, Hamlin drove by Gordon before the pair passed the start/finish line. With five bonus championship points awarded to each driver that leads at least one lap, Gordon would have to wait until the end of the run to collect those valuable points.

"I need you to pit this next lap," Letarte radioed Gordon on lap 161 during green-flag stops. "You just led that lap, but I got to have you this lap (before you run out of fuel)."

After the stop, Gordon returned to the track in fourth with just over 75 laps remaining. On lap 215, he bypassed teammate Mark Martin for third and, nine laps later, he passed Juan Pablo Montoya for second.

On lap 234, the deficit to leader Johnson was erased when a caution waved. Gordon wasted no time on the lap-238 restart, bypassing his teammate in turn 1. But a caution waved one lap later, and this time Johnson got the jump on the restart. Gordon held off a hard-charging Montoya on the final lap to secure his second consecutive second-place finish.

"It was a lot of fun on those restarts," Gordon said after the race. "Even when I would get the lead on him (Jimmie Johnson), I knew how strong he was. I tried to run the bottom there in three and four. On one of those last restarts, he just drove right by me on the outside. We had fun, but second is pretty much all I think anybody had today."

"I'm really proud of Steve and the whole team. The pit stops were great, the communication was great and I was real happy with all the adjustments. We were about an eighth-place car when this started and we got ourselves up to a second-place car."

"I am very proud of this team. We are making slow gains in the points. We need to make more gains, but we have a lot of racing left."

Next Saturday night, the NASCAR Sprint Cup Series visits Lowe's Motor Speedway for the NASCAR Banking 500 only from Bank of America. ABC will broadcast the race live beginning at 7 p.m. EDT while PRN Radio's live coverage begins at 6:15 p.m. EDT.

Pepsi 500 results (unofficial)

1. Jimmie Johnson
- 2. Jeff Gordon**
3. Juan Pablo Montoya
4. Mark Martin
5. Tony Stewart
6. Carl Edwards
7. David Ragan
8. Kurt Busch
9. Clint Bowyer
10. Kevin Harvick

Point standings (unofficial)

1. Jimmie Johnson
2. Mark Martin (-12)
3. Juan Pablo Montoya (-58)
4. Tony Stewart (-84)
- 5. Jeff Gordon (-105)**
6. Kurt Busch (-121)
7. Greg Biffle (-188)
8. Carl Edwards (-192)
9. Denny Hamlin (-219)
10. Ryan Newman (-223)
11. Kasey Kahne (-306)
12. Brian Vickers (-351)