



DuPont Motorsports Post-Race Report
Southern 500 presented by GoDaddy.com
Darlington Raceway
May 9, 2009

'Perseverance by an Awesome Race Team' Leads to Fifth-Place Finish at Darlington for Gordon

"That was one hard-fought fifth-place finish," Jeff Gordon told the media following the Southern 500 presented by GoDaddy.com at Darlington Raceway on Saturday night. Gordon and the No. 24 team fought back from a lap down to challenge for the win, but Mark Martin's late-race pit strategy allowed the driver of the No. 5 Chevrolet to secure his second win of the season.

Gordon, who drove a specially painted DuPont/National Guard Chevrolet during the 367-lap event, qualified second. He passed Matt Kenseth for the lead 17 laps into the race and paced the field until a caution waved at lap 20.

During the caution period, Gordon stopped for four new tires while some of the leaders elected for a right-side tire change only. The four-time NASCAR Cup Series champion restarted sixth, and the pit strategy provided an early indication of how important track position would be during the race.

"I'm real tight behind these guys in traffic," Gordon radioed the crew on lap 67 while running fifth. "I'm so tight in traffic that I can't get close to them."

During a lap 74 caution, Gordon stopped again for new tires, fuel and a chassis adjustment. Once the race restarted, he was up to third by lap 96, but he was forced to stop again during green-flag conditions on lap 98 due to a loose right-front wheel.

Now down a lap in 32nd position, Gordon battled hard for position while racing the treacherous Darlington track in an attempt to regain that lost lap. If he was scored the first car one lap down when a caution waved, Gordon would be the recipient of NASCAR's "free pass" onto the lead lap.

Although Gordon was gaining positions, the leader was constantly lapping additional cars. By lap 200, the No. 24 driver was up to 26th but still the second car scored one lap down. On lap 212, he passed Bobby Labonte for that position and, two laps later, Gordon earned the "free pass" when a caution waved.

After a four-tire stop with chassis adjustments on lap 217, Gordon restarted 24th on lap 219 and began to charge through the field. By lap 235, the 82-time winner was up to 15th and, by lap 271, he was running in the top 10.

With less than 50 laps to go, Gordon was up to third when a caution waved on lap 319. Letarte called Gordon onto pit road for right-side tires only, but several teams -- including the team of eventual winner Martin -- elected to stay out for track position.

Gordon restarted 10th on lap 325 and was up to sixth when the night's final caution waved only 10 laps later. Although he was able to bypass teammate Brad Keselowski quickly after the restart, he battled hard with Ryan Newman -- but was unable to pass him -- before the checkered flag waved.

"Perseverance by an awesome team led to a great top-five effort," said points leader Gordon. "We had an incredible race car and the team never gave up.

"We had so many things to overcome, and I'm so proud of Steve and all the guys on this team. I really thought our two-tire stop at the end was going to work. It did for a short period of time, but the car just 'stopped' after a few laps."

Next Saturday night, Gordon will participate in the Sprint All-Star Race -- a non-points event for race winners -- at Lowe's Motor Speedway. The special event will be broadcast live on SPEED beginning at 7 p.m. EDT while MRN Radio's live coverage begins at 6:45 p.m. EDT.

Southern 500 presented by GoDaddy.com
results (unofficial)

1. Mark Martin
2. Jimmie Johnson
3. Tony Stewart
4. Ryan Newman
- 5. Jeff Gordon**
6. Martin Truex, Jr.
7. Brad Keselowski
8. Greg Biffle
9. Joey Logano
10. Matt Kenseth

Point standings (unofficial)

- 1. Jeff Gordon**
2. Tony Stewart
3. Kurt Busch
4. Jimmie Johnson
5. Denny Hamlin
6. Jeff Burton
7. Kyle Busch
8. Ryan Newman
9. Greg Biffle
10. Matt Kenseth

