



DuPont Motorsports Post-Race Report
Shelby 427
Las Vegas Motor Speedway
March 1, 2009

Team DuPont Overcomes Severe Left Front Fender Damage to Finish Sixth in Las Vegas; Gordon Now Points Leader

In Sunday's Shelby 427 at Las Vegas Motor Speedway, Jeff Gordon led his 20,000th lap in NASCAR Sprint Cup racing. But it was the determination of Team DuPont that allowed Gordon to recover from extensive left front fender damage to post a sixth-place finish and move into the points lead. Kyle Busch, who grew up racing in Las Vegas, won the event.

Gordon, who started 28th, methodically worked his way toward the front after the green flag fell in the 427-mile event.

"The car is real good in turns 1 and 2," Gordon radioed the crew while running 12th on lap 31. "But, in turns 3 and 4, the back end wants to step out."

When scheduled green-flag pit stops began on lap 50, the four-time NASCAR Cup Series champion was up to 10th. Gordon stopped for four tires, fuel and a minor chassis adjustment on lap 52 and, when pit stops were completed, he was running eighth.

A caution waved on lap 75, and crew chief Steve Letarte elected to gamble during the ensuing pit stop. Only right-side tires were changed, and Gordon exited pit road in fourth.

After restarting fourth on lap on lap 82, Gordon fought his way to second by lap 90. But the driver of the No. 24 DuPont Chevrolet would not lead the event until lap 149 when he bypassed teammate Jimmie Johnson for the top spot. Ten circuits later, Gordon would reach another milestone in his illustrious career -- 20,000 laps led in NASCAR's premier division.

But another caution would wave on lap 163, and this time Letarte called for four tires. Other teams chose to change only two tires, and Gordon exited pit road in sixth position.

The race resumed on lap 168, and Gordon was up to fourth as the field approached another round of green-flag pit stops at lap 215. But, when Gordon attempted to maneuver onto pit road on lap 220, he locked up the left front tire and missed the entrance. As he was circling the track, the left front tire exploded and sheared away the body work around the wheel on the No. 24 DuPont Chevrolet.

A caution waved for the debris, and Letarte and the No. 24 crew kept their cool and went to work. On lap 221, Gordon stopped for left side tires (to replace the shredded left front tire). On lap 222, right-side tires were changed. One lap later, Gordon was on pit road again while the crew repaired the damage. On lap 225, Gordon was in again so the crew could further repair the damage. All this was done without losing a lap.

On lap 227, Gordon restarted 14th. When another caution waved on lap 243, he was up to 10th. Letarte gambled again in an attempt to secure the best possible finish. He called for fuel only, and Gordon exited pit road third with only 22 laps remaining.

But the damage affected the handling, and Gordon was too tight during the closing stages of the event. He lost three positions before the checkered flag fell on lap 285, but the finish allowed Gordon to take over the points lead.

"It was an eventful day that's for sure," Gordon said after the race. "My hats off to this DuPont Chevrolet crew. They deserved a win with the effort they put out there. We had an awesome race car and it was a lot of fun up there battling for the lead with my teammate Jimmie (Johnson).

"I was coming to pit road and saw the guys behind me, and it looked like they were coming down on me pretty hard so I tried to get off on the apron. When I did, it just locked the left front up and I missed pit road. And then the left front blew. We kind of got fortunate in one sense that the caution came out.

"I'm just so proud of the job that the team did to get that fender cut off and still pull off a sixth-place finish. That's pretty amazing and all in all a good day.

"It's been a great start to the season and I'm really proud of this team. We're just bringing awesome race cars to the race track. Three weeks in a row I've felt like we have the car that can win and that's quite a change from last year. What an exciting time this is for this DuPont Chevrolet team."

Next Sunday, the NASCAR Sprint Cup Series visits Atlanta Motor Speedway for the Kobalt Tools 500. FOX begins their live coverage at 1:30 p.m. ET while PRN Radio begins their broadcast at 1 p.m. ET.

Shelby 427 results (unofficial)

1. Kyle Busch
2. Clint Bowyer
3. Jeff Burton
4. David Reutimann
5. Bobby Labonte
- 6. Jeff Gordon**
7. Greg Biffle
8. Brian Vickers
9. Jamie McMurray
10. Dale Earnhardt, Jr.

Point standings (unofficial)

- 1. Jeff Gordon**
2. Clint Bowyer
3. Matt Kenseth
4. Greg Biffle
5. David Reutimann
6. Kyle Busch
7. Kurt Busch
8. Tony Stewart
9. Carl Edwards
10. Bobby Labonte