



DuPont Motorsports Post-Race Report
Kobalt Tools 500
Atlanta Motor Speedway
March 7, 2010

Team DuPont Survives to Finish 18th in 'Crazy' Atlanta Race

With only 34 laps remaining of the scheduled 325, Jeff Gordon was two laps down in 31st position. When the checkered flag finally waved in Sunday's Kobalt Tools 500 at Atlanta Motor Speedway 16 laps past the scheduled distance, Gordon crossed over the start/finish line 18th – and on the lead lap.

Gordon, who was driving a specially painted No. 24 DuPont/National Guard Chevrolet, started from the fifth position. He ran in the top five early in the race before reporting a problem to the crew on lap 151.

"I've got a tire problem," Gordon radioed crew chief Steve Letarte. "I'm coming in (to pit)." Although he lost only one lap during the unscheduled four-tire pit stop, the four-time NASCAR Cup Series champion lost another when he was forced to "drive through" pit road to serve a penalty for speeding on pit road.

Mired in 31st two laps down with more than half the race remaining, Gordon and the No. 24 team battled hard to try to make the most of a frustrating race. They were still in that same position when they finally received some good fortune – in the form of a caution – on lap 288.

"I want you to stay out," Letarte informed the driver of the No. 24 Chevrolet Impala. All the lead lap cars pitted and returned to the track behind Gordon. Gordon – and the other drivers now between the pace car and the leaders – received the "wave around" from NASCAR. In Gordon's case, he was now only one lap down.

That same scenario occurred again on lap 322 – three laps from the scheduled end of the race – moving Gordon onto the lead lap.

New in 2010 is a rule that allows three attempts at a "green-white-checkered" (GWC) finish – a two-lap dash to the checkered flag. On the first attempt, Gordon lined up 21st and gained a spot in one lap before a seven-car accident brought out a caution. Letarte called Gordon onto pit road for four new tires during the caution period, and the 82-time winner lined up 19th for the second GWC attempt.

During the restart, Gordon had to avoid a spinning car and fell back to 23rd as the field received the white flag. On the final lap, he passed five cars to notch an 18th-place finish.

"That was a crazy finish and I'm proud that this team never gave up," said Gordon after the race won by Kurt Busch. "It was definitely a frustrating day, though.

"We had a fast car, but we just ran into some tire issues. And I didn't help the situation by getting that speeding penalty.

"Some guys had tire issues and others did not. We'll just have to analyze the situation to see if it was self-inflicted. If it was, then we need to make sure it doesn't happen again."

Gordon, who is now 11th in the standings, and the NASCAR Sprint Cup Series will take next weekend off before returning to action on March 21 at Bristol Motor Speedway for the Food City 500. FOX begins their live coverage at 1 p.m. ET while PRN Radio begins their coverage at 12 noon ET.

Kobalt Tools 500 results (unofficial)

1. Kurt Busch
2. Matt Kenseth
3. Juan Pablo Montoya
4. Kasey Kahne
5. Paul Menard
6. A.J. Allmendinger
7. Brian Vickers
8. Greg Biffle
9. Kevin Harvick
10. Scott Speed
- 18. Jeff Gordon**

Point standings (unofficial)

1. Kevin Harvick
2. Matt Kenseth
3. Greg Biffle
4. Jimmie Johnson
5. Clint Bowyer
6. Jeff Burton
7. Mark Martin
8. Tony Stewart
9. Paul Menard
10. Kurt Busch
- 11. Jeff Gordon**