



DuPont Motorsports Post-Race Report
Auto Club 500
Auto Club Speedway
February 21, 2010

Gordon Finishes 20th at Fontana After Spark Plug Issue Hampers Strong Run

The dark cloud above Auto Club Speedway on Sunday may have been there just for the No. 24 DuPont team, but that cloud may have had a silver lining as Jeff Gordon soldiered through engine issues to finish 20th in the Auto Club 500.

Gordon, who started 28th in the 500-mile event, wasted no time in showcasing his fast race car. The four-time NASCAR Cup Series champion knocked off 12 positions in the first nine laps, and he was into the top 10 by lap 30. During a caution period on lap 61, a quick four-tire stop allowed Gordon to enter the top five for the first time during the 250-lap event.

The climb did not stop there as Gordon maneuvered into the lead by lap 143. He paced the field for 11 laps before being passed by Jeff Burton and Kyle Busch -- both drivers with newer Goodyear tires. But Gordon delivered bad news to the team less than 20 laps later.

"We've got engine issues," Gordon radioed the crew while running third on lap 174.

"10-4," responded crew chief Steve Letarte. "Just run it as long as you can."

But while the issues were not terminal, they were intermittent. Gordon was up to speed a few laps later, then off the pace just as quickly. He had fallen to 21st when he made his final stop for fuel and four new tires on lap 221. Two laps later, a caution waved trapping the No. 24 Chevrolet a lap down. When it rains, it pours.

Gordon was "waved around" the caution car -- and back onto the lead lap -- and restarted 25th with 20 laps to go. He charged up to 18th in eight laps before the engine issues returned. Gordon lost only two positions during the remaining 12 laps while nursing an under-powered engine.

"We had a great car," Gordon said after the race won by teammate Jimmie Johnson. "We struggled on new tires, but it really came to life after five laps. I thought we had a top-three car with a chance at the win.

"One one hand, it's frustrating to have a fast car and not be able to fight for the victory. On the other, we were able to fight through it and still finish 20th."

The Hendrick Engine Department examined the No. 24 power plant following the event and determined the issue under the hood of the No. 24 DuPont Chevrolet was spark plug related.

Next Sunday, the NASCAR Sprint Cup Series visits Las Vegas Motor Speedway for the Shelby American. Fox Sports and PRN Radio will cover the 3 p.m. EST start live.

Auto Club 500 results (unofficial)

1. Jimmie Johnson
2. Kevin Harvick
3. Jeff Burton
4. Mark Martin
5. Joey Logano
6. Kurt Busch
7. Matt Kenseth
8. Clint Bowyer
9. Tony Stewart
10. Greg Biffle

20. Jeff Gordon

Point standings (unofficial)

1. Kevin Harvick
2. Clint Bowyer
3. Greg Biffle
4. Jamie McMurray
5. Jeff Burton
6. Mark Martin
7. Matt Kenseth
8. David Reutimann
9. Joey Logano
10. Carl Edwards

21 (tie). Jeff Gordon