



**Kobalt Tools 500 Race Report**  
**No. 43 Cheerios/Betty Crocker Dodge**  
**No. 45 Paralyzed Veterans of America Dodge**  
**March 9, 2008**  
**1.54-mile Atlanta Motor Speedway; Hampton, Ga.**

**RACE RESULTS:**

1. Kyle Busch, Toyota
  2. Tony Stewart, Toyota
  3. Dale Earnhardt, Jr., Chevrolet
  4. Greg Biffle, Ford
  5. Jeff Gordon, Chevrolet
- 12. Bobby Labonte, Cheerios/Betty Crocker Dodge**  
**41. Kyle Petty, Paralyzed Veterans of America Dodge**

Kyle Busch is now part of NASCAR lore. The Joe Gibbs Racing driver gave Toyota their first points-paying victory in the NASCAR Sprint Cup Series victory by taking the checkered flag in the Kobalt Tools 500 at the Atlanta (Ga.) Motor Speedway (AMS). Had it not been for a flat tire while leading Saturday's Nationwide Series event, Busch would have swept the weekend. He also scored a victory in Friday's Craftsman Truck Series race.

Competitors and fans were greeted by frigid temperatures as they arrived at the track. Snow fell early Saturday morning and the air felt ripe for another dusting on Sunday. The precipitation stayed away and the on-track action was enough to warm everyone.

Bobby Labonte and the No. 43 Cheerios/Betty Crocker Dodge team finished 12<sup>th</sup> in Sunday's event. Labonte, a six-time winner at AMS, began the race from the fifth position. This was the third straight year that he has started this race from inside the top-six. Early in the event, the No. 43 Dodge Charger started to suffer from a 'loose in, tight in the middle and loose off' condition. Despite this, Labonte could be found running some of the fastest lap times on the track. Dale Earnhardt, Jr. set a torrid pace at the start of the race and put many cars a lap down. Labonte, however, remained on the lead lap throughout the event. Crew chief Jeff Meendering tuned on the car throughout the eight caution flag periods. One caution period could be described as one of the highlights of the race for the No. 43 team. On lap 199, the caution fell as the leader was right on the rear bumper of the Cheerios/Betty Crocker Dodge. Not wanting to ruin this good fortune, the "Helping Hands" pit crew knocked off their best stop of the race and beat the famed No. 17 crew off pit road to gain Labonte some valuable track position. During a later

caution, Meendering called for Labonte to stay out to lead a lap. The five bonus points helped the team move up to 14<sup>th</sup> in the Sprint Cup points standings.

“You know, there were a lot of cars out there struggling today,” sounded Labonte. “It was a crazy race. My car was so inconsistent that it was hard to communicate with Jeff what I needed. We considered making some big changes and swinging for the fences, but we didn’t want to mess up a good run. That’s what we had today. It was another solid run. We needed that as we head to Bristol because anything can happen there.”

Kyle Petty and the No. 45 Paralyzed Veterans of America Dodge came home in the 41<sup>st</sup> position. Crew chief Bill Wilburn worked with Petty throughout the race to ‘tighten’ the No. 45 Dodge. Petty had to deal with a car that was loose at every end of the racetrack. When entering corners at almost 200 mph, as is the case at AMS, drivers want to feel a certain comfort level. A loose car can be breathtaking at AMS. On a day when several competitors were involved in high-speed altercations, Petty was able to nurse his Dodge home without incident.

“We were really looking to have a strong run that would allow us to gain some points,” said Petty. “The car was a handful today. Adjustments that should have tightened the car up had no effect. We’ve had some malfunctions with the bump rubbers this year. We’ll have to get it back to the shop to see if that was the case again.”

The next race for the NASCAR Sprint Cup Series will be Sunday’s Food City 500 from the Bristol (Tenn.) Motor Speedway. Sunday’s race will be televised live on FOX and broadcast live on PRN. Race coverage will begin at 1:30 EST.