



Auto Club 500 Race Report
No. 43 Hamburger Helper Dodge
No. 45 Wells Fargo Dodge
February 25, 2008
2-mile Auto Club Speedway; Fontana, Calif.

QUALIFYING RESULTS:

1. Carl Edwards, Ford
2. Jimmie Johnson, Chevrolet
3. Jeff Gordon, Chevrolet
4. Kyle Busch, Toyota
5. Matt Kenseth

25. Bobby Labonte, Hamburger Helper "My Hometown Helper" Dodge

38. Kyle Petty, Wells Fargo Dodge

The rain showers that washed out all but 87 laps of the Auto Club 500 at the newly-named Auto Club Speedway (ACS) on Sunday were gone by Monday morning. The race was able to resume just after 10 am under blue skies. However, the drivers at the front of the field did not waver. Carl Edwards continued the dominance of Roush-Fenway Racing at the 2-mile venue as he held off Jimmie Johnson for his first win of the season.

The NASCAR Sprint Cup teams were held at ACS until around 11 pm on Sunday in an effort to complete the race. However, the track continued to seep rain water and that posed a problem for the high-speed venue. Several cars fell victim to this before NASCAR deemed the track unsafe.

Bobby Labonte and the #43 Hamburger Helper "My Hometown Helper" Dodge team finished the race in the 25th position. Labonte had his hands full early in Sunday's portion of the event as the car was very inconsistent in what it would do in the corners. Crew chief Jeff Meendering continued to bring Labonte down pit road during every caution period to adjust the handling of the car. As usual, Meendering's adjustments did the trick. By lap 74, Labonte was running in the 10th position. Then came the rain and the delay until Monday morning. The car was just not the same the next day on the "green" racetrack. The adjustments from Meendering would help only for short runs. On lap 166, Labonte received the "Lucky Dog Award" to put the team in position for another top-15 finish. However, the car would not respond like Labonte would have liked.

“Well, everyone is trying new front-end stuff with shocks and springs in order to get this car to turn,” sounded Labonte. “Last year it was coil-binding the front springs. Now we’re working with bump stops on the front shocks. We’re working hard to get a grasp of this, but we just missed a little bit somewhere today. I know we didn’t get the finish we wanted, but I think all of us learned a lot.”

Kyle Petty and the No. 45 Wells Fargo Dodge team finished Sunday’s event in 38th place. Crew chief Bill Wilburn gave Petty a car that was racy during the early portions of the race. However, just like Labonte, the adjustments that were made on Sunday had the car difficult to drive under the sunlight on Monday. On lap 178, Petty radioed to his crew that he had lost his brakes. The Wells Fargo team did a masterful job in repairing this problem. They got Petty back on track after losing minimal laps.

“You know, the rain delay hurt us,” said Petty. “In all honesty, we probably shouldn’t have started the race until Monday. The track wasn’t ready and a lot of good cars were torn up as a result. We had a good car early, but it was too loose on Monday morning. We did figure out that these cars need pretty big changes for you to feel it from the seat. That should help us at Las Vegas next week and at Atlanta.”

The next race for the NASCAR Sprint Cup Series will be Sunday’s UAW-Dodge 400 from the Las Vegas (Nev.) Motor Speedway. Sunday’s race will be televised live on FOX and broadcast live on PRN. Race coverage will begin at 3:30 EST.