



Goody's Cool Orange 500 Race Report No. 43 Cheerios/Betty Crocker Dodge March 30, 2008 .526-mile Martinsville (Va.) Speedway

RACE RESULTS:

1. Denny Hamlin, Toyota
2. Jeff Gordon, Chevrolet
3. Jeff Burton, Chevrolet
4. Jimmie Johnson, Chevrolet
5. Tony Stewart, Toyota

25. Bobby Labonte, Cheerios/Betty Crocker Dodge

Virginia native Denny Hamlin scored a popular victory in Sunday's Goody's Cool Orange 500 at the Martinsville (Va.) Speedway. Jeff Burton came home second and will take the lead in NASCAR Sprint Cup points heading into this weekend's event at the Texas Motor Speedway, where he picked up a victory in 2007.

Temperatures hovered around 40 degrees for much of the day and, at times, it seemed as though rain would delay the finish of the event. However, much to the delight of the competitors, the track remained dry enough to complete all 500 laps. Weather has already played a huge roll in on-track activities in 2008.

Bobby Labonte and the No. 43 Cheerios/Betty Crocker Dodge team finished 25th in Sunday's event. They left Martinsville, however, thinking of what could have been. Labonte, the only driver to win in all three series at the paperclip-shaped oval, began the race from the 32nd position. When the green flag fell, he began to make quick work of the cars in front of him. By lap 43, when one of the 18 caution flags waved, Labonte had driven up to the 14th position. Under this yellow flag, crew chief Jeff Meendering made the call to stay out. The team was rewarded with five bonus points as Labonte led the field back to the green on the restart.

Labonte was content to maintain that valuable track position and allow Meendering to make some adjustments on a car that was "a little tight in the center of the corner." On lap 59, after dropping two spots to third, Labonte was spun by another competitor. In typical Martinsville fashion, the damage was not severe, but just bad enough that the handling characteristics of the car were vastly altered. The "Helping Hands" pit crew turned in another fine performance on Sunday as they made repairs to the car while losing only two laps. This work gave Labonte a chance to race for his laps back.

However, the remaining caution flags never fell the way of the team. Labonte will head to his home state of Texas in 21st place in NASCAR Sprint Cup points.

“That was going to be a really good race for the Cheerios/Betty Crocker Dodge team,” sounded Labonte. “The car was so strong coming off of turn four and that’s where you can pass a lot of people. We were really coming before the wreck. But the ‘8’ car didn’t mean to turn us. We’ve all done that at some point in our careers here. That’s just Martinsville. The car wasn’t terrible afterwards, but we lost those two laps and couldn’t make them up. But, you know, we’ve had good cars all year. Sooner or later we’ll get some good luck to go with them.”

The NASCAR Sprint Cup Series will visit the Texas Motor Speedway next weekend. The race will be broadcast on FOX, the Performance Racing Network (PRN) and Sirius Satellite Radio channel 128.