



Life Lock 400 Race Report
NASCAR Sprint Cup Series
No. 43 Marathon American Spirit Motor Oil Dodge
No. 45 Marathon American Spirit Motor Oil Dodge
June 15, 2008
2-mile Michigan International Speedway

RACE RESULTS:

1. Dale Earnhardt, Jr., Chevrolet
2. Kasey Kahne, Dodge
3. Matt Kenseth, Ford
4. Brian Vickers, Toyota
5. Tony Stewart, Toyota

29. Terry Labonte, No. 45 Marathon American Spirit Motor Oil Dodge

31. Bobby Labonte, No. 43 Marathon American Spirit Motor Oil Dodge

Dale Earnhardt, Jr. scored the win in Sunday's Life Lock 400 at the Michigan International Speedway (MIS). In the process he picked up his first points-paying win with his new team, Hendrick Motorsports, and ended a 76-race winless streak. Kasey Kahne, Matt Kenseth and Brian Vickers placed second through fourth to give each of the four Sprint Cup manufacturers a spot inside the top-four finishers.

MIS is a two-mile, D-shaped oval that has many grooves. This allows the drivers to search for the line that their car enjoys the most. As a result, many races are completed with minimum cautions. Fuel strategy often plays a role in the final standings. Sunday's race was no different. Many teams were a few laps short on their fuel; however, a caution with three laps left gave most of those teams a chance to come in for tires and a splash of gas. The only two cars that didn't were the cars of Earnhardt and Kahne, as they used extreme fuel strategy to garner the top-two spots.

Terry Labonte and the No. 45 Marathon American Spirit Motor Oil Dodge team finished Sunday's race in the 29th position. T. Labonte, making his 55th start at MIS, began the race in 36th place as a result of rain that washed out qualifying. At the drop of the green flag, T. Labonte had to deal with a car that was loose on all sections of MIS. While crew chief Stewart Cooper did not have many chances to improve the handling, due to the limited number of cautions, he was able to make adjustments to allow T. Labonte to pass several cars.

“That was a typical Michigan race, not many cautions and fuel mileage,” said T. Labonte. “The No. 45 Marathon Dodge was not far off, but the leaders set a fast pace early and we didn’t have many chances to make the car better. The car got better after each stop and that is encouraging. Stewart and the guys on pit road did a great job.”

Bobby Labonte and the No. 43 Marathon American Spirit Motor Oil Dodge team finished 31st in Sunday’s event. Like his older brother, B. Labonte was loose getting into the high-speed corners of MIS. The “high line” was the preferred way around MIS. However, B. Labonte, a three-time winner on the two-mile circuit, could not make his car work there. Crew chief Jeff Meendering made several adjustments to the car’s wedge, tire pressure and track bar to try to get B. Labonte some all-important grip. The team was set to gamble on fuel strategy late in the race, but they came down pit road when the caution flag flew with three laps remaining.

“The top was obviously the fast way today, but I just could not get comfortable up there,” said B. Labonte. “We’re still learning, trying to figure these new cars out. I think we would have been in pretty good shape to capitalize on our fuel strategy, but the late caution canceled that out. We were short by ½ a lap and I believe that Earnhardt and Kahne were shorter than that. But we had solid pit stops again and that helped us gain a few spots throughout the race.”

The NASCAR Sprint Cup Series will head to the Infineon (Ca.) Raceway next weekend for the first road course event of the 2008 season. Friday’s qualifying session will be telecast on the Speed Channel. It will be broadcast on the Performance Racing Network (PRN) and Sirius Channel 128.