



Aaron's 499 Race Report
NASCAR Sprint Cup Series
No. 43 Cheerios/Betty Crocker Dodge
No. 45 Marathon/Wells Fargo/PVA Dodge
April 27, 2008
2.66-mile Talladega (Ala.) Superspeedway

RACE RESULTS:

1. Kyle Busch, Toyota
 2. Juan Pablo Montoya, Dodge
 3. Denny Hamlin, Toyota
 4. David Ragan, Ford
 5. Brian Vickers, Toyota
- 32. Kyle Petty, Marathon/Wells Fargo/PVA Dodge**
34. Bobby Labonte, Cheerios/Betty Crocker Dodge

Sunday's Aaron's 499 at the Talladega Superspeedway (TSS) ran almost to completion without 'The Big One,' the dreaded multi-car wreck that, more often than not, provides the signature event of most restrictor-plate races. Amid a throng of wildly spinning cars on the last lap, Kyle Busch took the checkered flag for his second NASCAR Sprint Cup victory of the season.

TSS routinely provides some of the most exciting racing on the circuit. Its 2.66-mile layout is 'interstate smooth' and wide enough to race four and five wide. The 2007 'fall' race, the first restrictor-plate race with the new car, saw a lot of single-file racing. Thanks to some rules changes by NASCAR, this race featured 52 lead changes among 20 different drivers.

Kyle Petty and the No. 45 Marathon/Wells Fargo/PVA Dodge finished 32nd in Sunday's event. Petty had to qualify for the event based on his qualifying lap. This meant that crew chief Stewart Cooper had to set the car up to make a fast lap during Saturday's time trials. However, after qualifying, the cars were impounded, meaning that the drivers had to start the race with the setup that they used to qualify.

"We didn't have the day we wanted, for sure, but we were racing on Sunday," said Petty. "It's hard to have to make these restrictor-plate races on time and then have to start the race with your qualifying setup. Race setups and qualifying setups are totally different. We gained some points, though, so in all it was a good day."

Bobby Labonte and the No. 43 Cheerios/Betty Crocker Dodge team came home with a disappointing 34th place finish at TSS. Labonte, the 1998 winner of this event, and crew chief Jeff Meendering had a great strategy for the race. It nearly paid off. The pair used several 'two tire' and 'fuel only' stops to keep Labonte in contention throughout the race. With only 20 laps to go, Labonte restarted the race in the 21st position. As was evident in Friday's practice session, Labonte knew that he had a strong 'drafting' car. Within five laps he had driven inside the top-10 and was looking to grab his best finish of the young season. On lap 173, however, he was collected in a wreck that was not of his own making. He was able to finish the race, but the damage was too severe to continue on as a factor.

"It doesn't take much here and you can get caught up in something," sounded Labonte. "Jeff had a great strategy for this race. When you have long green flag runs, like we had, the field can get stretched out. You just have to stay on your strategy. We did that and were in position at the end. The Cheerios/Betty Crocker Dodge was so good in the draft that I knew we could run with the leaders. It's just unfortunate that we didn't get to finish."

The NASCAR Sprint Cup Series will visit the Richmond (Va.) International Raceway next weekend for a Saturday night event. The race will be broadcast on FOX, the Motor Racing Network (MRN) and Sirius Satellite Radio channel 128.