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RACE REPORT

PAUL MENARD ZECOL/MENARDS CHEVROLET

CHICAGOLAND SPEEDWAY

SEPTEMBER 19, 2011

Fuel Mileage Costs Menard a Top-10 Finish at Chicagoland

After inclement weather postponed the first race in the Chase for the NASCAR Sprint Cup to Monday afternoon, Paul Menard and the Zecol/Menards team started the Geico 400 second and were a mainstay in the top 10 until a fuel mileage gamble left the No. 27 Chevrolet Impala one lap shy of the fuel needed to take the checkered flag under full power, forcing the team to coast to a 20th-place finish at Chicagoland Speedway. Under overcast skies, Menard took the green flag on the outside of the front row and settled into the third position after the first circuit around the 1.5-mile oval. He remained in the top five and was running fourth when a lap-30 competition caution was called. With Menard reporting that the racer was just a little tight in the center of the turns, the Slugger Labbe-led crew changed four tires with air pressure adjustments and packed the Chevrolet with fuel. Losing ground only to a team that opted for two tires, Menard restarted fifth on lap 35. A long green-flag run ensued and was halted on lap 69 when the yellow flag was displayed for debris with the No. 27 running fourth. Menard returned to pit road for additional air pressure adjustments to assist with a late-developing loose condition. Two additional pit stops while under caution and one under green-flag conditions allowed the Zecol/Menards team to work on the car's persistent loose handling with air pressure and wedge adjustments. Menard fell out of the top 10 only briefly from lap 185 until a lap-204 caution afforded him another visit to pit road where the No. 27 crew executed another speedy pit stop that catapulted him from 11th to the ninth position. With fuel mileage coming into play, Menard's final trip down pit road was for fuel-only on lap 214 and the No. 27 team held their breath for the closing 53 laps, knowing that it would be close. As he took the white flag in the seventh position, Menard reported that he was out of fuel. He joined many other competitors in coasting to the checkered flag, crossing the start finish-line in the 20th position.

Start – 2

Finish – 20

Laps Led – 0

Points – 23

PAUL MENARD QUOTES:

"We ran up front all day long but, unfortunately, just ended up on the losing side of the fuel mileage battle this weekend. We had a good car today and the No. 27 Zecol/Menards pit crew was damn good on pit road. Everyone worked really hard this weekend and we made a ton of ground up from where we started in practice on Friday. We have nine more races to go this season and we're going to go into each weekend looking to get another win."

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