

RACE REPORT

PAUL MENARD

DURACELL/MENARDS CHEVROLET

HOMESTEAD - MIAMI SPEEDWAY

NOVEMBER 20, 2011

27

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Paul Menard and the Duracell/Menards Team Wrap Season with 16th-Place Finish at Homestead

Paul Menard and the Duracell/Menards team endured a series of rain showers and a persistent tight-handling condition to finish in the 16th position in Sunday's NASCAR Sprint Cup Series finale at Homestead-Miami Speedway. With rain cancelling all track activity on Friday, NSCS teams had a packed Saturday with two practice sessions and time trials. A less-than-satisfactory qualifying lap put the No. 27 Duracell/Menards Chevrolet in the 23rd spot when the green flag dropped for the 267-lap affair. A light shower slowed the field under the caution flag on lap 13. Menard reported that the No. 27 machine was tight on entry and in the centers of the corners. Crew chief Slugger Labbe called for four new Goodyear tires, fuel and air pressure adjustments on lap 15. Restarting in the 23rd position, the Eau Clair, Wis., native continued to search for a line around the 1.5-mile race track where the Chevrolet Impala handled best, but told the team that the handling was a little improved. On a visit to pit road on the lap-34 caution period, Labbe instructed the pit crew to change right-side tires only, moving Menard into the top 10 for the re-start on lap 38. On the ensuing green-flag run, Menard reported that the car had very little grip early in the run, was loose on entry and tight on exit while maintaining a position in the top 20. Heavy rain began to fall on lap 107, requiring NASCAR to display the red flag and park the field on pit road while the jet dryers worked to return the track surface to safe racing conditions. One hour and 14 minutes later, engines were fired and the cars returned to the track under caution. Menard brought the Duracell/Menards Chevrolet to the attention of his pit crew where he received chassis and air pressure adjustments, four tires and fuel. The team also worked to repair fender and extensive rear quarter-panel damage received from contact with a competitor. For the remainder of the 2011 season finale, Menard continued to battle a slight tight-handling condition under the lights, but the continued efforts of Labbe and the team allowed him to compete in and around the top 15, taking the checkered flag in the 16th position. The Brickyard 400 winner earned a 17th-place result in the 2011 driver championship point standings, the best in his five-year NSCS career.

Start – 23

Finish – 16

Laps Led – 0

Points – 17

PAUL MENARD QUOTE:

"This was a great first year at Richard Childress Racing and I want to thank this No. 27 Duracell/Menards team for all of their hard work. We are so much further ahead than we were a year ago, and I am looking forward to getting back at it with them in 2012. We were a little too tight all night at Homestead (Miami Speedway), but we gained another position in the points, which we were working to do."

