



## **RCR Post Race Report -- California**

**NASCAR Sprint Cup Series**  
**RACE: Auto Club 400**  
**TRACK: Auto Club Speedway**  
**DATE: March 27, 2011**

### **Race Highlights:**

- RCR teammates finished first (Kevin Harvick), seventh (Clint Bowyer), 15th (Jeff Burton) and 16th (Paul Menard).
- Menard recorded his best start (14th) and finish (16th) at Auto Club Speedway and continues his streak of finishing each contested race at the Fontana, Calif.-based race track.
- Menard ranks seventh in the Sprint Cup Series point standings, his highest placement in his Sprint Cup Series career.
- Harvick's win gave RCR its first Sprint Cup Series victory at Auto Club Speedway in 65 starts.
- Harvick recorded his 15th Sprint Cup Series career win and, in the process, vaulted six positions, to ninth, in the overall point standings.
- Bowyer jumped seven positions, to 17th, in the championship point standings with his top-10 result.
- Bowyer has finished in the top 10 in the last four races held at Auto Club Speedway.
- Bowyer earned a bonus point for leading lap 33.
- Burton advanced four spots, to 25th, in the point standings and is 16 markers in arrears from cracking the top 20.
- Burton's 15th-place finish is his best performance of the 2011 season thus far.
- Harvick scored the win with a last lap, last turn pass on Jimmie Johnson while Kyle Busch, Matt Kenseth and Ryan Newman rounded out the top-five finishers.
- The next Sprint Cup Series race is the Goody's Fast Pain Relief 500 at Martinsville Speedway on Sunday, April 3, televised live on Fox and broadcast live on the Motor Racing Network and Sirius XM Satellite Radio beginning at 12:30 p.m. Eastern Daylight Time.



### **Menard and the No. 27 Serta/Menards Team Leave the Inland Empire with a 16<sup>th</sup>-Place Finish**

Coming off of their fifth-place finish last weekend at Bristol, Paul Menard and the No. 27 Serta/Menards team entered the weekend at Auto Club Speedway with high expectations; however, handling issues plagued the No. 27 Chevrolet early in the 200-lap race and Menard quickly slipped backwards from his 15<sup>th</sup>-place starting position. The Slugger Labbe-led team made adjustments during each pit stop in order to neutralize the tight condition that Menard was battling. Labbe called for a two-tire pit stop on lap 75, gaining Menard valuable track position. By lap 120, Menard moved the Serta/Menards Impala inside the top 10, where he remained until the caution flag was displayed on lap 170. He hit pit road for four new tires, Sunoco E15 fuel and an additional air pressure adjustment. On the restart, Menard was shuffled from ninth back to 16<sup>th</sup>, and reported to the team that the car's handling had turned drastically tight once again. The final caution of the day fell on lap 185 and Menard brought the No. 27 Chevrolet to pit road for four tires with air pressure changes. Buried deep in the field in the 21<sup>st</sup> position for the restart on lap 191, Menard battled back to the 16<sup>th</sup> position, where he took the checkers and recorded his best finish at the two-mile speedway.

**Start - 15<sup>th</sup>**

**Finish - 16<sup>th</sup>**

**Laps Led - 0**

**Points - 7<sup>th</sup>**

**PAUL MENARD QUOTE:**

"The Serta/Menards team had a really good day in the pits; we just struggled on those last two restarts today. We expected a much better finish than 16<sup>th</sup>, especially after running in the top 10. As we do after each weekend, we'll take a look at things, go over our notes and learn from it. We have a lot of racing ahead of us, and now, we'll turn our focus to next week's race at Martinsville (Speedway). These guys work really hard, and I have the utmost confidence in them. We all know what we are capable of and set high expectations for ourselves."



**Harvick, No. 29 Team Score the Win at Auto Club Speedway in SoCal**

Kevin Harvick and the No. 29 Jimmy John's Chevrolet team scored a thrilling win by passing Jimmie Johnson on the final lap of the Auto Club 400 at Auto Club Speedway in Southern California on Sunday afternoon. The Bakersfield, Calif., native started the race from 24<sup>th</sup> position and moved up to 16<sup>th</sup> before the team's first pit stop at lap 32. Before the stop, Harvick told the team that the car was tight when he got back in the throttle off the corners, so crew chief Gil Martin called for four tires, fuel and an air pressure adjustment on the visit to pit road. Harvick cracked the top 10 at lap 55 just after radioing to the team that the car was a little loose at the start of the run, but that it was "getting better every lap." While Harvick's car was fast on long runs, the handling on the No. 29 Chevrolet took a few laps to come in after each restart, costing the team several spots after each of the four caution periods. However, after 10 or so laps, Harvick was able to close back in and move toward the front of the field. Harvick remained inside the top 10 during the second half of the race and moved into third position on lap 129. The team's final pit stop of the day came at lap 169 and the caution flag waved on the following lap. Harvick lined up third for the restart and was running fifth when the caution flag waved again at lap 186. Harvick and Martin discussed whether or not the team should stay out or come to pit road for right-side tires. Martin made the call to stay out as there would be less than 10 laps to go when the field took the green flag. The No. 29 Chevrolet restarted fifth and Harvick methodically picked off positions, moving up to fourth at lap 193, third at lap 196 and second at lap 198. Harvick raced his way past Johnson on the final lap, in the final turn and claimed his first win at Auto Club Speedway by a margin of 0.144 seconds. The victory was Harvick's first since last August's win at Michigan International Speedway, and it marked the first Sprint Cup Series win at the two-mile track for Richard Childress Racing.

**Start - 24<sup>th</sup>**

**Finish - 1<sup>st</sup>**

**Laps Led - 1**

**Points - 9<sup>th</sup>**

**KEVIN HARVICK QUOTES:**

"You know those guys (Kyle Busch and Jimmie Johnson) started racing and they got side-by-side and we were able to pull up in there. The more cycles that got on our tires, the better off we were. But, I was really nervous about that last call staying out but it all worked out in our favor and we were able to make up ground. The guys on this Jimmy John's Chevrolet did a great job today. I just have to thank everybody from Budweiser, Rheem and Chevrolet for letting us put these cars on the track."

Well, we have just had a lot of adversity that we have fought through. We knew our cars were fast enough to win races. We just haven't had the circumstances go right. We had a fast car and the circumstance played in our favor."



### **Late-Race Bad Break Leads to Unfortunate Finish for Burton, Caterpillar Team**

A short series of unfortunate events in the waning stages of the Auto Club 400 at Auto Club Speedway in Fontana left Jeff Burton and the No. 31 Caterpillar team with a 15<sup>th</sup>-place finish after looking to post a strong, and needed, top-10 finish. Burton qualified seventh for the 200-lapper in Southern California and ran in the top seven until a pit road penalty for speeding during a green-flag stop on lap 69 dropped the No. 31 Chevrolet a lap down in 26<sup>th</sup> place. A caution just seven laps later provided Burton with the Lucky Dog free pass back onto the lead lap. The South Boston, Va., native picked up eight positions by lap 98 and, after another caution, resumed his run to the top 10. The Caterpillar Chevrolet was 13<sup>th</sup> by lap 120 and moved into the top 10 on lap 176. Coming in for tires under caution on lap 190, Burton restarted in 10<sup>th</sup> place with just nine laps remaining. Unfortunately, the right-side only tire change didn't produce the desired results and the No. 31 lost five spots before the checkered flag waved. Despite the setback, the Cat Racing team picked up four spots in the point standings and is now in 25<sup>th</sup> place after five races, just 16 points out of the top 20.

***Start - 7<sup>th</sup>      Finish - 15<sup>th</sup>      Points Position - 25<sup>th</sup>      Laps Led - 0***

#### **JEFF BURTON QUOTE:**

"We took two tires on that last stop and the car just didn't like two tires. We ended up having to restart behind a guy that hadn't run well all day. He spun the tires on the restart, and that cost us three or four (positions). Then, we got real loose and couldn't make (the laps) up. It was a pretty frustrating end to what had been a pretty strong day for the Caterpillar team."



### **Bowyer Gets Back on Track with Top-10 Finish in California**

Clint Bowyer and the No. 33 Ronald Reagan Presidential Foundation Centennial Celebration Chevrolet team bounced back with a solid seventh-place finish in the Auto Club 400 at Auto Club Speedway. Starting from the 17<sup>th</sup> position after an encouraging final practice session on Saturday, Bowyer climbed 12 positions to fifth within the first 24 laps, proving that he would, once again, be a contender at the two-mile oval that's nestled in the San Bernardino mountains. During green-flag pit stops on lap 33, Bowyer was able to stay out on the track long enough to lead a lap, earning a valuable championship bonus point. Towards the end of the 75-lap green-flag segment that started the race, the Emporia, Kan., native reported that the car lost grip over long runs. Two back-to-back caution flag periods gave the Shane Wilson-led "Helping Hands" pit crew an opportunity to make adjustments and tighten up the car while Bowyer continued to be a mainstay in the top 10, racing between the fifth and eighth positions while never falling lower than 13<sup>th</sup> on the track for the entire race. As the race progressed, clouds moved in over the Fontana, Calif.-based facility and Wilson decided to make no changes to the car on the final four-tire pit stop of the day on lap 167. Bowyer picked off competitors and worked his way up the leaderboard to as high as fourth position with 19 laps to go before a caution flag setup a 10-lap dash for the checkered flag. After restarting fourth, Bowyer's Chevrolet Impala loosened up in a big pack on the restart yet he was able to control the car and bring home a seventh-place result while also jumping up seven positions to 17<sup>th</sup> in NASCAR.

Sprint Cup Series driver championship point standings.

**Start - 7<sup>th</sup>      Finish - 15<sup>th</sup>      Points Position - 25<sup>th</sup>      Laps Led - 0**

**CLINT BOWYER QUOTE:**

"Overall, the No. 33 Chevrolet was strong again this weekend here in California. I felt like we had a car that was capable of winning the race and we were, actually, gaining on the top-three cars until that last caution with 14 laps to go. We just got too loose on the last restart but ended up with a solid top 10. It was a good points day and a great way to bounce back after last weekend in Bristol."

