



RCR Post Race Report -- Phoenix

NASCAR Sprint Cup Series

RACE: Fresh Fit 500

TRACK: Phoenix International Raceway

DATE: February 27, 2011

Race Highlights:

- RCR teammates finished fourth (Kevin Harvick), 17th (Paul Menard), 26th (Jeff Burton) and 27th (Clint Bowyer).
- Menard's 17th-place finish marks his best at the Avondale, Ariz.-based track.
- Harvick's fourth-place finish marked the RCR organization's 13th top-five finish at Phoenix International Raceway.
- Burton and Menard have been running at the end of every NSCS race contested at PIR.
- Burton's 26th-place finish marks only the third time that he has finished outside of the top 15 in the past 20 races.
- Bowyer has now completed the last nine races at PIR without a DNF.
- Bowyer gained six positions after coming back out on track after the accident.
- Jeff Gordon earned his 83rd career NSCS victory and was followed to the finish line by Kyle Busch, Jimmie Johnson, Harvick and Ryan Newman.
- The next NSCS race is the 14th annual Kobalt Tools 400 at Las Vegas Motor Speedway on Sunday, March 6, televised live on Fox and broadcast live on the Performance Racing Network and Sirius XM Satellite Radio beginning at 12:30 p.m. Eastern Standard Time.



Paul Menard Finishes 17th at Phoenix after a Late-Race Caution Puts the team One Lap Down

Paul Menard started the No. 27 Vertis/Menards Chevrolet from the 13th position in the Fresh Fit 500 and battled a tight-handling condition for the majority of the 312-lap event. Despite avoiding the melee that is notorious to the one-mile short track, a late-race caution fell immediately following the final pit stop by the Vertis/Menard's crew, trapping the No. 27 Impala a lap down to the leaders and relegating Menard to a 17th-place finish. The fender-to-fender battles began as soon as the green-flag dropped. Contact with the No. 11 car forced Menard to pit road under the lap-50 caution for left-side tires. During the ensuing green-flag run, Menard reported to crew chief, Slugger Labbe that he was unable to turn with the right-side tires that remained on the car. Labbe called his driver to pit road during the next caution for a four-tire pit stop, placing him deep in the field for the restart on lap 66. His position was fortunate because on the following lap, the "Big One" struck at Phoenix International Raceway, resulting in many damaged race cars. The No. 27 Vertis/Menards Chevrolet emerged unscathed as a result of the great communication from spotter, Stevie Reeves and the quick action of Menard. He remained inside the top 15 as the Vertis/Menards team continued to make adjustments to improve the car's handling. They pitted

one final time on lap 283 under the green flag for four tires and adjustments; however, the caution flag flew before the field could finish cycling through pit stops. The late-race yellow flag trapped the No. 27 Chevrolet one lap down to the leader for the remainder of the event.

Start - 13th

Finish - 17th

Laps Led - 0

Points - 11th

PAUL MENARD QUOTE:

"We just were not able to get the finish we wanted today. We battled a tight-off condition during the entire race and I just couldn't get the car pointed off the corner so that we could drive straight off. It was much better at the beginning of the long (green-flag) runs than it was towards the end. The Vertis/Menards team worked hard all day, had solid pit stops and we were really lucky and avoided the big pileup early in the race. We'll just reset and head to Las Vegas next weekend."



Harvick, Jimmy John's Team Notch First Top Five of the Season in Phoenix

Kevin Harvick and the No. 29 Jimmy John's Chevrolet team rebounded from trouble on pit road and an early race spin to finish fourth in Sunday's Fresh Fit 500 at Phoenix International Raceway. Harvick started the race in 17th position and soon found himself in the top 10 within 32 laps. A slow pit stop three laps later left Harvick mired back in 21st position. On lap 58, cars at the front of the field made contact and as Harvick attempted to slow down, the No. 5 car made contact with the No. 29 Chevrolet, which sent Harvick spinning and damaged the No. 29 car's left-rear quarter panel. The team pitted multiple times under the caution period to repair the damage and he restarted 31st. Shortly after the field took the green, the caution flag waved yet again as 14 cars were involved in a big wreck on the backstretch. Harvick made it through the carnage without any additional damage to the No. 29 Chevrolet. The race was red flagged for 14 minutes to clean up the track and Harvick restarted in 14th position when the field took the green flag on lap 72. Fast work by the No. 29 pit crew gained Harvick six positions on pit road at lap 128, moving him up to the fifth spot. He remained in the top six as green flag pit stops started at lap 184. Harvick was credited with leading a lap as the field cycled through pit stops and was back in fifth position when the caution flag waved on lap 218. Another fast stop by the No. 29 crew put Harvick in third position at lap 225. The No. 29 Chevrolet remained in the top four until the next round of green-flag stops. A couple of the other teams elected to take only two tires during that sequence of stops, while the No. 29 team changed all four. That, combined with a problem on the right-front during the stop, dropped Harvick back to sixth position when the caution flag waved at lap 285. The field took the green at lap 290 and in the closing laps Harvick raced his way up to fourth position.

Start - 17th

Finish - 4th

Laps Led - 1

Points - 22nd

KEVIN HARVICK QUOTE:

"First off, I have to thank everybody from Jimmy John's, Budweiser and Chevrolet and everybody from RCR for everything they do. We had a weird day. We wrecked once and about wrecked again and then got into it with a couple of cars and caved in both front fenders. I wish we could have raced the car and not been torn up. All-in-all, everything went well. This is what we expect every week. Everybody on this No. 29 team does a good job, and we know how we need to race. The guys on the pit crew did a great job on pit road for the most part of the day. Once they get that consistency down of working with each other on a week-to-week basis, they're going to be

hard to beat. It was a great day for everybody on our team. They did a great job. I think I got into a couple little bang ups and we got ourselves behind. In the end we were able to keep the fenders off the tires and get a top-five finish. So, it was a great day for us.



Burton Salvages 26th-place Finish Despite Early-Race Incident

Jeff Burton ran as high as third in Sunday's NASCAR Sprint Cup Series race at Phoenix International Raceway, but damage acquired during a lap-60, multi-car incident forced the Todd Berrier-led team to spend 32 laps making repairs to the No. 31 Caterpillar Chevrolet, effectively eliminating any chances of a victory. Instead, Burton & Co. finished 26th, 36 laps down to the leader. Although the South Boston, Va., native began the 312-lap event in 25th position, he was able to work his way into the top 10 within the first 40 laps of the race after pitting for right-side tires and fuel during a caution period on lap 34. Burton made his way to third in the running order, but fell back to 22nd after a lap-51 pit stop for four tires and fuel. Following the stop, Burton reported to his team that the No. 31 Caterpillar Chevrolet felt the best that it had all weekend; however, less than 10 laps later, the team fell victim to circumstance as the black and yellow No. 31 was collected in a multi-car incident on lap 60. Burton promptly drove to the garage area, and the RCR team went to work, making the Caterpillar Chevrolet suitable to return to the track. Quick work by the team allowed Burton to return to the track on lap 97, and he was able to salvage a 26th-place finish.

Start - 25th

Finish - 26th

Laps Led - 0

Points Position - 32nd

JEFF BURTON QUOTE:

"It looked like the No 83 (Brian Vickers) had some trouble on the outside. It was pretty slick on restarts and it looked like he got really loose and the field behind and everybody bottled up. The whole field was behind him and just nowhere to go. It's really frustrating for us. I thought we had an incredibly fast car. It seems like we just can't do anything right now. We'll keep our heads up and keep digging."



No. 33 Team Salvages 27th-Place Finish at Phoenix

Clint Bowyer and the No. 33 Cheerios/Hamburger Helper Chevrolet team salvaged a 27th-place finish in the Fresh Fit 500 at Phoenix International Raceway after being involved in an early accident on lap 65. Rolling off the starting grid in the 16th position, Bowyer battled a loose-handling race car until early cautions gave the Shane Wilson-led pit crew opportunities to make adjustments on the No. 33 Chevrolet. On lap 40, Bowyer came down pit road again and the "Helping Hands" pit crew changed only two tires, improving their running position to third. Bowyer remained in the top five for the next 10 laps until the caution flag flew on lap 49, allowing the Emporia, Kan., native to come down pit road and take four tires, fuel and more adjustments to tighten up the race car. After that, an incident occurred in front of Bowyer involving Carl Edwards

and Kyle Busch causing minor damage and setting the No. 33 Chevy back to 16th in the running order. On the ensuing restart, Bowyer was one of 13 cars caught up in PIR's version of "the big one," suffering major damage and sending the Cheerios/Hamburger Chevrolet back to the NSCS garage for repairs. After returning to the track 48 laps down to the leader and in the 32nd position, the team improved six positions on the track, gaining valuable points and bringing home a respectable 27th-place finish.

Start - 16th

Finish - 27th

Laps Led - 0

Points - 21st

CLINT BOWYER QUOTE:

"It is early in the year and everybody is trying to get what they can. Certainly if people are wrecking, then it is too aggressive. There is no question about that. I'm real proud of how we ran today. I thought we had a car that could win this race and for the second week in a row we are sitting here disappointed. These guys worked really hard to get our car back in the race and we gained valuable points in the big picture."