

27

RACE REPORT

PAUL MENARD

QUAKER STATE/MENARDS CHEVROLET

ATLANTA MOTOR SPEEDWAY

SEPTEMBER 6, 2011

Twitter:

@RCR27PMenard
@RCRRacing

Facebook:

Facebook.com/
PaulMenard27

The No. 27 Quaker State/Menards Chevrolet Team Finishes 18th at Atlanta

After persistent rain postponed Sunday night's AdvoCare 500, NASCAR Sprint Cup Series teams returned to Atlanta Motor Speedway on Tuesday morning, anxious to run the 25th points-paying event of 2011. Paul Menard had more than valuable championship points on the line throughout the 325-lap race – he was a finalist in the Sprint Summer Showdown and was battling for a \$3 million payout to be split between one lucky fan, Andrea Gay, his charity of choice, Habitat for Humanity, and himself. Unfortunately, Menard and the Quaker State/Menards team battled track position, additional inclement weather and inconsistent track conditions to bring the No. 27 Chevrolet Impala home in the 18th position. After starting 22nd, Menard was running 21st when the first caution of the morning came out on lap 11. He reported that the car's balance was neutral, but that he lacked grip. He brought the car to pit road for service, and the Slugger Labbe-led crew changed four tires with air pressure adjustments, put a piece of tape onto the front grill and packed the car with Sunoco E15. With some teams opting not to pit, Menard lost valuable track position and was forced to restart 35th. He fought his way back to 27th by the time the competition yellow was displayed by NASCAR at lap 30. Menard informed the team that the previous adjustments had hurt the drive off and he was now tight in the center of the turns. The pit crew changed four tires, added fuel and made additional air pressure and chassis adjustments in hopes of counteracting the handling challenges. He continued to fight both a tight-handling condition and traffic until green-flag pit stops began to occur around lap 75. As Menard drove his Chevrolet down pit road on lap 77 his quick reaction to the exiting No. 17 entry saved both teams heavy damage. Labbe called for four tires, fuel and a wedge adjustment by the Quaker State/Menards crew. Menard reported the car was much improved, but still suffered from slight tight-center condition and poor drive-off, handling characteristics that he would continue to battle for the remainder of the 500 miler. He and the No. 27 team continued to work diligently to get everything they could making a variety of air pressure and chassis adjustments with each visit to pit road and climbing as high as 13th. On lap 202, NASCAR officials displayed the red flag as rain began to fall, halting the field for nearly 25 minutes. When the precipitation finally left the area, Menard restarted strong and overtook the 11th position, his highest of the day. With the track's condition changed from the showers, Menard was faced with handling challenges and slipped to 21st. Labbe and Menard agreed that a track bar adjustment was their best bet with four fresh Goodyear tires and fuel on the final, green-flag pit stop of the afternoon. In the closing laps, the Eau Claire, Wis., native fought back to an 18th-place finish at the Hampton, Ga.-based facility.



Start – 22

Finish – 18

Laps Led – 0

Points – 20



“Unfortunately, we played catch-up all day. We were chasing track position, chasing the track’s condition and, when the Quaker State/Menards Chevrolet was handling well, we just seemed to always be stuck behind the group of cars that just couldn’t get moving. It was definitely a frustrating afternoon. At the beginning of the race, I really think we had a car that could run up front, we just couldn’t get there. I’m sorry I couldn’t get the Sprint Summer Showdown win for our fan, Andrea Gay, and for Habitat for Humanity and another win for my guys. That would have really helped our chances to make the Chase (for the Sprint Cup). We’ll just go to Richmond now, and do what we do each week, work our hardest, do our best and try to win.” — Paul Menard

