

Kevin Harvick and the No. 33 Rheem Team Capture Third-Place Finish in California

FONTANA, Calif. (March 27, 2011) — The NASCAR Nationwide Series carried the action out west for the Royal Purple 300 on Saturday at Auto Club Speedway in Fontana, Calif. Bakersfield, Calif. native Kevin Harvick put the No. 33 Rheem Chevrolet Impala on the outside pole for the start of the 150-lap race around the two-mile track.

At the drop of the green flag Harvick powered to the lead taking the high line while polesitter Carl Edwards worked the lower groove. The two battled door-to-door around the track, swapping positions until the field slowed for the first caution of the day at lap seven. Running in the second position at the time of caution, the No. 33 team opted to stay on track which gave Harvick the top spot as race leader Edwards made the decision to come down pit road.

Harvick led the field back to green-flag racing at lap 11. The driver was shuffled out of the top position in the first lap back to green but in two short laps retook the first position at lap 13.

The caution flag waved for the second time at lap 18 for a car spinning in turn four. Harvick and his Kevin Harvick Inc. (KHI) team made the call to come down pit road during the caution period for four tires and fuel. Happy with the handling of the Rheem Chevrolet, the crew made no adjustments during the stop. The driver took the lap 24 restart from the ninth position.

Just as quickly as the race resumed green-flag conditions, the yellow waved again on lap 25. The caution period was short and the field was brought back to green at lap 29. Harvick muscled his way up to the third position by lap 30 and in a matter of five laps, was on the bumper of the leader once again racing door-to-door fighting for the first position.

The two-time Nationwide Series champion made the pass on race leader Edwards at lap 40 and quickly put a solid 2.5-second cushion between he and the No. 60 car of Edwards. The No. 33 KHI team was preparing for a green-flag pit stop just as the caution flag flew for fourth time of the day at lap 64. Harvick led the lead cars down pit road during the caution period and made a stop for four tires and fuel.

The field came roaring back to full speed with a lap 69 restart. Harvick, who restarted in the third position, guided the No. 33 Rheem machine into another side-by-side battle for the lead. As the race crossed the halfway point, the driver was again engaged in a fight for the lead with the No. 60 car. Just as Harvick was getting a solid run on Edwards for the first position, the race was brought under yellow-flag conditions for a fifth time at lap 93. The KHI co-owner brought his Chevrolet down pit road to the attention of his crew. A solid stop by the Rheem team for fuel and four fresh tires put their driver back on track for the lap 98 restart in the lead position.

As the field returned to green-flag racing, the lead cars went three wide through turns one and two and down the backstretch. In the three-wide shuffle, Harvick slipped out of the lead and back to the third position. By lap 111, Harvick regained the second position and marched towards Edwards who was again the race leader. The two resumed their nose to tail battle and at lap 114 Harvick pulled ahead of Edwards for the lead.

With 25 laps to go in the 150-lap contest, Harvick held a lead of seven car lengths over the second position. The KHI team made their final stop of the day for four tires and fuel at lap 137, returning Harvick to the field in the third position. Back on track the driver worked to chase down the leader. Harvick was able to close in on the top two cars but when the checkered flag flew sailed by the flagstand in the third position.

Harvick led 64 laps en route to the solid third-place finish. The driver also led his 7,000th lap during the race, placing him third all-time behind Kyle Busch and Mark Martin. The top-five finish moves the No. 33 up two positions to third in the Nationwide Series Owner's Point standings, 14 markers out of first.

The NASCAR Nationwide Series will return to action April 8 at Texas Motor Speedway. Driver Paul Menard will make his first start of the season behind the wheel of the No. 33 Menards Chevrolet in the Lone Star State. Tune in to ESPN2 at 8:30 p.m. EST and 8:00 p.m. EST on PRN.

RACE RECAP:

March 26, 2011
Auto Club Speedway

Race: 5 of 34

Started: 2nd

Finished: 3rd

Owner's Point Standings: 3rd (-14)

Up Next on the Nationwide Series
Schedule:

Date: April 8, 2011

Track: Texas Motor Speedway

Driver: Paul Menard

Event Name: O'Reilly Auto Parts 300

Broadcast: ESPN2 8:30 p.m. EST,
PRN 8:00 p.m. EST