



RCR Post Race Report -- Charlotte Motor Speedway

NASCAR Sprint Cup Series

RACE: Coca-Cola 600

TRACK: Charlotte Motor Speedway

DATE: May 29, 2011

Race Highlights:

- RCR teammates finished first (Kevin Harvick), 15th (Clint Bowyer), 21st (Jeff Burton) and 29th (Paul Menard) in the Coca-Cola 600.
- RCR teammates currently rank second (Harvick), eighth (Bowyer), 20th (Menard) and 22nd (Burton) in the Sprint Cup Series point standings.
- Prior to a lap-240 accident, Menard spent 214 laps in the top 15.
- Menard has completed eight of nine contested NSCS races at Charlotte Motor Speedway, continuing a streak of six consecutive checkered flags.
- Bowyer spent 199 laps running in the top 15.
- Burton led on two separate occasions for a total of six laps.
- Harvick's win places him in a small yet prestigious group of drivers who have won all three of NASCAR's notable events -- Daytona 500, Brickyard 400 and Coca-Cola 600.
- Harvick made a last lap, last turn move for the win beating David Ragan, Joey Logano, Kurt Busch and A.J. Allmendinger to the checkered flag.
- The next Sprint Cup Series race is the STP 400 at Kansas Motor Speedway on Sunday, June 5, 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.



Bittersweet Night for the No. 27 Moen/Menards Team; Leaves Charlotte with 29th-Place Finish

Paul Menard lined the Moen/Menards Chevrolet up in the 16th position to start Sunday night's Coca-Cola 600 at Charlotte Motor Speedway. The Eau Claire, Wisc., native reported that the car was solid right from the start and remained in the top 15 as he settled in for the marathon 400-lap event. As the sun dipped below the horizon and the temperatures began to lower, the Slugger Labbe-led team made minor chassis and air pressure adjustments during each pit stop in order to keep up with the changing track conditions. When Labbe called for two-tires during the lap-173 pit stop while under caution, it elevated the No. 27 Moen/Menards Chevrolet into the top 10 and as the race neared the halfway point, Menard was turning his fastest circuits. On lap 240, Menard suddenly lost control of the car and spun in turn two. He brought the car to pit road for four tires and repairs to the damaged right rear. Throughout the remainder of the 600-mile affair, Menard returned to his pit stall for continued repairs to the right-rear quarter panel and deck lid of the No. 27 Impala. The ill-timed spin and costly damage placed him 19 laps behind the leader; however, he did take the checkered flag but not before helping his teammate Kevin Harvick to the win. In true Richard Childress Racing fashion, as teams faced the possibility of running out of fuel and were about to attempt a green-white-checkered finish, Menard was called upon to push teammates Jeff Burton and Harvick on the track's apron. Green-flag racing resumed on lap 400 and on the final lap, the lead cars ran out of gas and Harvick swept in for the victory. Although the 29th-place finish was bittersweet for the No. 27 team, they cheered loudly for the RCR family.

Start - 16

Finish - 29

Laps Led - 0

Points - 20

PAUL MENARD QUOTE:

"I just hate it for these guys (the No. 27 team); I feel just terrible. They built me a great car for this weekend. Their pit stops were fast and they gave 110% trying to fix the car after the spin. We'll just go to Kansas and have the weekend they deserved here."



Harvick and No. 29 Budweiser Armed Forces Team Score Win in Coca-Cola 600

Kevin Harvick and the No. 29 Budweiser Armed Forces Chevrolet team scored their third victory of the season by stretching fuel mileage to pick up a win in one of NASCAR's marquee events, the Coca-Cola 600 at Charlotte Motor Speedway on Sunday night. Harvick's trip to Victory Circle came after overcoming an ill-handling race car that was tight on entry and loose on exit, getting caught a lap down twice as the caution flag waved during rounds of green-flag pit stops and late-race fuel strategy. As Harvick expressed his frustration with the handling of the No. 29 Budweiser Armed Forces Chevrolet during the first half of the race, crew chief Gil Martin and the No. 29 Budweiser-Armed Forces team dug in and continued making adjustments to improve the car as the sun began to set and the track started to change. The No. 29 Chevrolet was first caught a lap down to the leaders on lap 232 as the caution flag waved in the midst of a cycle of green-flag pit stops. Martin called for Harvick to stay out during the caution and take the wave around to get back on the lead lap. The scenario was repeated again when the caution flag waved again at lap 281. Martin called Harvick to pit road on lap 290 as most other teams stayed out, a move that would prove to be pivotal later in the race. The No. 29 Budweiser Armed Forces Chevrolet restarted in 23rd position at lap 292. Two caution periods later, the majority of the field elected to pit, moving Harvick up to the third position. After making an effort to conserve fuel under caution, the No. 29 team felt they could go the remainder of the race on one more fuel stop, the same as the rest of the field. The final stop of the night came at lap 345, which was just shy of the No. 29 team's fuel window to make it to the end of the race. Martin told Harvick to save as much as he could under caution, and the No. 29 Budweiser Armed Forces Chevrolet restarted in seventh position at lap 348. As the laps wound down, Harvick did his best to conserve fuel while maintaining his track position. With six laps to go, other teams started running out of fuel and making pit stops, moving Harvick up to the sixth position when the caution flag waved at lap 396. The driver of the No. 29 RCR entry continued to do his best to conserve fuel, and even received a push from teammates Paul Menard and Jeff Burton under caution. The field came to the green flag for a green-white-checkered finish and Harvick was able to quickly gain positions as cars started running out of fuel. As the field entered turns three and four on the final lap, leader Dale Earnhardt Jr. ran out of gas and Harvick passed him to take the checkered flag and score the victory.

Start - 28

Finish - 1

Laps Led - 2

Points - 2

KEVIN HARVICK QUOTES:

Congratulations. How do you feel? "I tell you what; I've got to give a huge credit to everyone on the race team - (crew chief) Gil Martin and all these guys. We started saving gas from lap one when the green flag fell, just hoping that we'd go to the end. I saw those guys up there racing and I knew how close we were on gas but it all worked for our Budweiser Chevrolet. I want to thank all the men and women who have served and are currently serving that give us a chance to do everything we do in this country."

You've led nine laps and won three races. That's pretty interesting. "Yeah, I mean, you know, it's just one of those deals I guess. The last two we earned and this one we conserved gas to be around at

the end. I can't stand driving at this place. This is a great facility, great management, great people running it, but it's just been a race track for me where I've struggled every time I've ever been here. Yesterday was probably the best day I've ever had in the Nationwide car and to be here in Victory Lane says a lot!"

Do you feel that this is the season that feels like you can really go after the championship hard?

"Well, it's one of those deals like today, when everybody started pitting and we said to heck with it. We're just going to try to save gas and try to get to one pit stop to go by saving gas. And, the caution came out with like four or five laps before we were supposed to pit. So, heck, it's just one of those deals where we had enough gas to get to the end and wound up winning the race."



Another Seasonal Bad Break for Burton, Cat Racing Team at Charlotte

After qualifying fifth for the annual Coca-Cola 600 at Charlotte Motor Speedway, Jeff Burton and the Todd Berrier-led team focused on turning their season filled with bad luck around. Instead, the luminous black cloud that has followed them from race track to race track appeared in the closing laps of the scheduled 400-lap showdown that erased a promising top-five run and turned it into a 21st-place result. Subsequent to leading twice for a total of six laps in the early goings of the 600 miler, the 21-time Sprint Cup Series race winner settled in and around the 20th position for much of the first half of the race while tussling with an ill-handling machine during daylight hours. As the sun set and the track changed, continuous adjustments made to the Caterpillar Chevrolet began to take shape with 100 laps remaining. Burton moved into 16th at lap 325, 13th at lap 340 and cracked the top 10 nine laps later. Calculated at two laps shy of fuel of completing the distance, Berrier instructed the veteran driver to conserve as much fuel as he can in the final 50 laps, hoping to not return to pit road. As the laps began to wind down, a couple of the frontrunners peeled off the racing surface to pit for fuel that allowed Burton to move into eighth when the night's final caution flag was displayed at lap 398, forcing the marquee event to finish under a green-white-checked ending. The South Boston, Va., native restarted sixth as a result of two more competitors in front of him pitting under caution and set his eyes of scoring his first top-five finish of the season. But, as the field took the green flag for the final time, the second-place car in the outer lane ran out of fuel, causing the drivers behind him to slow down. The circumstance sandwiched Burton between the Nos. 2 and 99 machines that, ultimately, sent the RCR driver spinning into the apron of the race track. He was able to gather himself together and cross the finish line one lap down to the leader in 21st.

Start - 5

Finish - 21

Laps Led - 6

Points - 22

JEFF BURTON QUOTE:

"It's very disappointing to position yourself to finish, at least, in the top five, let alone contend for the win with two laps to go and finish 21st. Unfortunately, that's how our season has been all year and we just can't seem to shake off the bad luck. Our Caterpillar Chevrolet ran good at the end so we'll keep building fast cars and try our luck again next week at Kansas."



No. 33 Team Survives Coca-Cola 600, Brings Home Top-15 Finish

Clint Bowyer and the No. 33 Cheerios/Hamburger Chevrolet fought tight conditions for 400 laps and salvaged a top-15 finish in the Coca-Cola 600 at Charlotte Motor Speedway. After qualifying in the top 10 on Thursday, the Richard Childress Racing Chevrolet was tight from the beginning of the 600-mile event. By lap 75, Bowyer had dropped to 16th while Shane Wilson and the "Helping Hands" pit crew made minor adjustments to the car's setup under caution-flag periods while waiting for track temperatures to change when the sun went down over the 1.5-mile oval. After the sun set, the handling on Bowyer's car did not improve and became so tight that Wilson decided to make major chassis changes to the No. 33 Chevrolet. On lap 173, under yellow-flag conditions, Bowyer brought his Chevrolet Impala down pit road, not once, but twice for wholesale changes intended to free the car up. The extended time on pit road cost the team track position, dropping them back to 24th. The Emporia, Kan., native still complained of a tight condition when the race went back to green, but he slowly started passing cars on the track, working his way up to as high as 14th until a bizarre incident with the No. 14 Chevrolet under caution on lap 243 caused moderate damage to the left-rear quarter panel of the car. After looking at the damage, Wilson decided it wasn't enough to warrant a pit stop, but told Bowyer that if it got any worse, and the car was unable to turn, to bring it down pit road for service. The car's sheet metal held up great and Bowyer was able to turn competitive lap times on the track until a caution flag on lap 296 gave the "Helping Hands" a chance to fix the damage and make more adjustments on the car's setup for a 100-lap shootout to the checkered flag. Restarting 25th on lap 302, Bowyer started gaining positions and worked his into the top 10 with 50 to go for the first time since early in the event. As the long green-flag run went on late into the night, Bowyer would settle into the 11th position until a yellow flag was displayed with five laps to go, setting up a green-white-checkered finish. With Wilson concerned about having enough Sunoco E15 fuel to make the finish because of the extra laps, he decided to bring the four-time Sprint Cup Series winner to pit road for two right-side tires and enough fuel to make it to lap 402. Bowyer would restart 11th with three laps to go, but an incident just in front of him involving multiple cars, including RCR teammate Jeff Burton, caused him to slow down and fall back to 15th position where he held for the remainder of the race. With the 15th-place result, Bowyer maintained eighth-place in the NASCAR Sprint Cup Series driver championship point standings. He now sits 80 markers out of first.

Start - 10

Finish - 15

Laps Led - 0

Points - 8

CLINT BOWYER QUOTE:

"Man, this track just isn't our friend sometimes. It was a long night fighting a tight car and we turned it into a 15th-place finish. These guys worked hard all night to keep me on the lead lap and we just missed a top-10 finish there at the end. I am proud of everyone on the Cheerios/Hamburger Helper Chevrolet team. It was just a long night."