

Tony Stewart steals the Martinsville Cup race from Jimmie Johnson

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by Lou Modestino

Tony Stewart stole the Martinsville Cup race from Jimmie Johnson four laps from the finish of that long grind. JJ ended up settling for second best at the finish. "I did the right thing and didn't take him (Stewart) out," said a surprised and resigned Johnson. Getting the leftovers were Jeff Gordon for third then Kevin Harvick and Denny Hamlin for the top five. When all the dust settled, the Chase To The Nextel Cup points show Carl Edwards still in the lead, barely, with Tony Stewart -8, Kenseth -21, Kaselowski -27 and Johnson -43.

At that point, SPEED's Larry Mac quipped, "It's down to a four-man race now." Obviously Larry thinks that JJ can't make a comeback with his 43 point deficit to take his sixth straight championship. It's still slimly possible even though the odds are not in Jimmy's favor. Knowing Jimmie and his never-give-up driving style means that he'll be pouring it on and strategizing right down to the bitter end.

We seem to think that Stewart must be surprised that he's so close to the top of leader board. When The Chase started, his team effort was in much disarray, and he was quoted as actually saying, "I don't really deserve to be in The Chase." But this shows what can happen when the pressure is on and the "have not" teams finally turn the corner and get into a winning stride. Let's not forget that Smoke's been there before with NASCAR Sprint Cup championships in 2002 and 2004. He's close enough that he can "smell blood in the water." "Edwards better be worried. I'm ready to go for the championship. We made all of the right changes coming into the last ten races and they worked," said Stewart with an air of confidence after won the race. Yet a bit of concern showed through when he said, "The other 31 guys not in The Chase can dictate who's going to win it." Bolstering himself up again, "One of my assets though right now is that I've got a shop full of dedicated racers."

Jeff Gordon thought, "It was a crazy race." Brad Kaselowski didn't have too much to say after getting spun out close to the end. He was visibly upset yet maintained his cool. With a mile-and-a-half track on the near horizon, two masters of those venues include Stewart and Edwards, so it should be very interesting how the two challengers will fare.

With just three more races to go, this will be the culmination of Brian France's creation of The Chase To The Nextel Cup. This one appears to be the closest yet with four contenders among them capable of pulling it off, which we assume makes Brian happy. It

was his creation and idea, and he received much criticism about it, including from me. But France stuck to his original idea and tweaked it a bit from its original concept.

While the folks who follow F1 closely feel that the race in Austin, Texas, next year will peak the interest of the US race fans (with another in New Jersey in 2013) and will motivate American drivers to jump at the chance of competing on that world wide circuit, guess again! Formula 1 has and continues to be a hard sell in the USA. The F1 teams are looking for youngsters in their early 20's to replace their aging (in their 30's) drivers. Besides possessing talent, poise and anything else that the F1 fans can relate to, the American drivers don't seem to fit the F1 mold. Nor does the F1 racing concept. What works well in Europe, the middle east, Asia and South American doesn't work well here.

Another example of rejecting the F1 concept is major League soccer. It's been said by the US sports media, if it was not invented here, it's not going to work here. That's why the NFL is so successful. I'm not apologizing for the negativity on F1. I watch it and enjoy it, but it's been difficult to have sustained growth of F1 in the USA because the majority of US racing fan can't relate to it. It was different when years ago Mario Andretti went to F1 from the Indy Cars. In that case, his efforts in that series were followed by the media and the US race fans because he had a major following here. It's also been said that the movers and shakers in F1 are not partial to US drivers and team members. We cite a quote from Bobby Rahal when he got dumped as principal of a F1 team. Bobby called F1 "incestuous". So I guess we'll just leave it at that.

Denny Hamlin won the Camping World Truck support race at Martinsville beating Hornaday and Austin Dillon. At the inaugural GP of Indy in Delhi, Sebastian Vettel won his 11th race of the season with Jensen Button and Fernando Alonso making the podium. It's was Button's 41st podium and Alonso's 9th of the season. Next up for the F1 crowd is Abu Dhabi.

We found an interesting story in the Philly Burbs webpage (via StockCarGazette.com) by Ernie Saxton. Ernie questions that Sprint, given that companies' current bottom line and low stock price, may not renew their title sponsorship with the Daytona Beach sanction when it comes up for renewal in two years. We have also questioned the fact that given NASCAR's current TV ratings over the past few years, will the three networks, Fox, TNT and ESPN/ABC, pony up the same amount of money that NASCAR got last time? Obviously, there won't be an increase. We think that NASCAR will be very lucky to get the amount the three networks agreed to in their last negotiation sessions.

Legendary Drag Racers Don "Big Daddy" Garlits & Darrell "The Kid" Gwynn have renewed their racing rivalry as they are squaring off in "Garlits vs. Gwynn: Match Races for a Cause" at several NHRA events this season and will appear for the final time at the Auto Club NHRA Finals at the Auto Club Raceway in Pomona, Calif. on November 12-13. "Garlits vs. Gwynn: Match Races for a Cause" brings two NHRA Legends back to the track as the NHRA celebrates its 60th Anniversary. The match races are designed to raise money and awareness for the Darrell Gwynn Foundation and the Don Garlits

Museum of Drag Racing, Inc. The Darrell Gwynn Foundation's mission is to provide SUPPORT for people living with paralysis and PREVENT spinal cord injuries.

The "Garlits vs. Gwynn: Match Races for a Cause" mark the first time that champion drag racer Darrell Gwynn has gotten back into a racecar and raced competitively since his racing accident 21 years ago that ended his career when he sustained a spinal cord injury. The two racers have match raced in Gainesville, Fla., Englishtown, N.J and Indianapolis this season and the series will culminate in Pomona, Calif. The series is title sponsored by Vision Airlines and Lucas Oil.

At the completion of the match race series on Sunday, November 13, NHRA President Tom Compton will hand over the Diehard battery powered replica dragsters driven by Gwynn and Garlits this year in a special ceremony to Steve Davis, President of Barrett-Jackson. The cars will be auctioned at Barrett-Jackson Scottsdale on January 15-22, 2012 to benefit the Darrell Gwynn Foundation. The Darrell Gwynn Foundation is an official charity of both the NHRA and Barrett-Jackson.

On Sunday, at November 13 at the Auto Club Raceway, the Darrell Gwynn Foundation, on behalf of its donors, will make a wheelchair donation to 16 year-old Alvin Jackson-Belles. Alvin, a native of Liberia, now resides in Huntington Beach, Calif. He sustained a spinal cord injury in Africa at 11 years-old. Unable to receive the proper care he needed, Ann Silcock, an American from Huntington Beach, adopted Alvin and got him the medical care he needed. Alvin is one of 59 children adopted by Ann and her family. Alvin lacked the proper wheelchair he needed and the Darrell Gwynn Foundation will donate a \$17,000 power wheelchair to give Alvin the gift of mobility, freedom and independence.

Garlits and Gwynn will square off in a best-of-three race series during the Auto Club NHRA Finals. The two competed frequently on the NHRA circuit until Gwynn sustained a spinal cord injury in a racing accident ending his career in 1990. Memorable matchups between Garlits and Gwynn include the Finals of the 1986 U.S. Nationals and Garlits' famous blow-over at the 1986 NHRA Supernationals in Englishtown. This year marked the 25th Anniversary of those races.

The NHRA will host a special fundraiser for the Darrell Gwynn Foundation on Saturday, November 12 at 7 p.m. at the Wally Parks NHRA Motorsports Museum. NHRA fans are encouraged to visit the museum and help give the gift of mobility by making a donation to the Darrell Gwynn Foundation. Admission is FREE but donations are encouraged.

The "Garlits vs. Gwynn: Match Races for a Cause" racing series kicked off in Gainesville, Fla. where Don Garlits won the first series taking the first two races before Gwynn came back strong and won race three at the Gatornationals. Garlits would take 2-of-3 races from Gwynn at the NHRA Supernationals in Englishtown, N.J. In Indianapolis, Gwynn won his first series at the Mac Tools U.S. Nationals taking 2-of-3 from Garlits. Garlits currently holds a 2-1 lead in the series and 5-4 lead in race victories over Gwynn. Gwynn can win the series by sweeping Garlits in Pomona or tie Garlits by

taking 2-of-3 races at the Auto Club NHRA Finals. Garlits can secure the match race series by winning 2-of-3 races in the finale.

The two stoic rivals race down the track in custom built DieHard Battery Powered Electric Replica Dragsters that were built by Brad Hadman, designed by Mike Gerry and graphics by Eric Reyes under the supervision of Jerry Gwynn. Fans can keep up with the standings of “Garlits vs. Gwynn: Match Races for a Cause” by visiting www.darrellgwynnfoundation.org/garlits-vs-gwynn.htm.

At the Auto Club Raceway the Darrell Gwynn Foundation will sell commemorative “Garlits vs. Gwynn” posters for a \$20 donation to benefit the Darrell Gwynn Foundation. The posters can be purchased at the DGF Compound located near the grandstand at the racetrack or online at www.darrellgwynnfoundation.org/store.htm.

Darrell Gwynn Foundation (Approximate) Schedule at the Auto Club NHRA Finals:

Date Event Location

11/12 at 10:55 a.m. Garlits vs. Gwynn: Match Race 1 Auto Club Raceway

11/12 at 11:38 a.m. Garlits vs. Gwynn: Match Race 2 Auto Club Raceway

11/12 at 7 p.m. DGF Fundraiser Wally Parks Museum

11/13 at 9:55 a.m. Garlits vs. Gwynn: Match Race 3 Auto Club Raceway

11/13 at 10:45 a.m. Barrett-Jackson Presentation Auto Club Raceway

11/13 at 10:48 a.m. WC Donation to Alvin Jackson-Belles Auto Club Raceway

Check RaceFanTV.com for what’s going on this weekend on the motorsports scene. Don’t forget to check our Track Talk Column on Saturdays in The Enterprise. (END)

NOTE: ITEMS FOR THIS STORY CAME FROM VARIOUS SOURCES AND PERSON NOTES.