

Martinsville: Junior Wins; Four Contender Drivers have Rough Day

Story by Phillip Prichard, Photos: MSA Staff

Dale Earnhardt secured the win at the Goody's Headache Relief Shot 500 Sprint Cup Series race at Martinsville Speedway for his 4th win of the season. This was Earnhardt's first victory at Martinsville in 30 career starts at NASCAR's oldest track. Junior was leading with twelve laps to go when Kyle Larson spun, to bring out the second red flag of the race. On a gutsy call, Crew Chief Steve Letarte had Junior pit for tires when the caution came out, only three cars did not pit – Stewart, Stenhouse and Regan. Junior passed Stewart with two laps to go and powered to the checkered flag with teammate Jeff Gordon trying to catch the 88.

As an astute historian of NASCAR, Junior stated he treasured the Grandfather Clock trophy. He stated he had wanted one since he was a young boy, as he admired the ones that Dale Sr. had won. In somber phrase, Junior remembered the many friends lost in the Henderick plane crash tragedy that occurred ten years ago.

The jubilant driver greeted each of

his crew members in victory circle by jumping up and down and hugging each member. Rick Hendrick greeted him with a big hug. Junior stated that he tried for years to get this emotional win. He stated that the crew was going to celebrate the victory tonight.

Jeff Gordon finished second, posting his 35th top-10 finish in 44 races at Martinsville Speedway. It is his 21st top-10 finish in 2014. Jeff Gordon leads the series among active drivers with eight wins at Martinsville. On Lap 192, Gordon was penalized for too fast entering pit lane, and had to restart in back of the longest line. He clawed his way to the front to battle Junior, finishing second.

#31-Newman finished third; #14-Stewart, fourth; #22-Logano, fifth; #20-Kenseth, sixth; #15-Bowyer, seventh; #11-Hamlin, eighth; #47-Allmendinger, ninth; and #34-Ragan, tenth.

Among the Chase drivers, #4-Harvick suffered damage after contact with #20-Kenseth. He had to go behind the wall for repairs and finished 33rd. #2-Keselowski



had a rear end issue with less than 70 laps to go and finished 31st. Carl Edwards finished 20th after being involved in the big crash with 64 laps to go.

There were 24 lead changes among 11 drivers. There were 15 cautions for 105 yellow flag laps. The race was red flagged twice, one on lap 436 for nearly 11 minutes and on lap 490 for almost 9 minutes,

both for track cleanup after accidents.

Martinsville was a good day for Dale Earnhardt Jr and the sport of NASCAR winning at the grassroots of racing, a short track. Junior stated the Chase beat him and his crew down, the Martinsville's win boosts the team for next year and a better opportunity to win.



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