

Jimmie Johnson holds off Dale Earnhardt Jr. to win Chase race at Dover

Jimmie Johnson's run toward a possible sixth NASCAR Sprint Cup Series championship shifted into high gear at Dover International Speedway.

On two fresh tires to polesitter Dale Earnhardt Jr.'s four, Johnson held off his Hendrick Motorsports teammate during a 26-lap green-flag run to the finish of the AAA 400 and made a significant dent in the series lead of Matt Kenseth, who finished seventh.

Johnson picked up his fifth victory of the season, his record eighth at the Monster Mile—breaking a tie with Richard Petty and Bobby Allison—and the 65th of his career. The driver of the No. 48 Hendrick Motorsports Chevrolet vaulted over fifth-place finisher Kyle Busch into second in the Chase standings, eight points behind Kenseth.

Johnson, however, had plenty of cause for concern when he lined up for the final restart with Earnhardt right behind him—on four fresh tires.

"Two (tires) worked good for us in practice," Johnson said. "And believe me, I wanted to see four tires line up in the fourth or fifth row. When they lined up right behind me, I thought I was going

to have my hands full. And I really did. Junior drove a whale of a race, and track position really gave me the advantage I needed to hold him off."

Johnson also took a moment to enjoy the magnitude of his record-breaking win.

"It's incredible," he said. "To do anything Bobby or Richard has done is quite an accomplishment. We've had a few sneak away from us here, too, over the years. I'm just happy to get that done and be the sole leader of race wins here. It's a very special day."

Johnson held a lead of nearly five seconds when NASCAR called the fourth caution of the race for debris in the form of a spring rubber that had dislodged from a car and landed on the concrete racing surface in Turn 3.

With every lead-lap car short on fuel—with the possible exception of Clint Bowyer's No. 15 Toyota—the yellow presented a welcome opportunity to refuel. Johnson's crew chief, Chad Knaus, opted to change right-side tires only, while Earnhardt's crew chief, Steve Letarte, called for a four-tire change.

Earnhardt restarted fourth on Lap 375 of 400 and quickly rocketed into second



Jimmie Johnson, driver of the #48 Lowe's / Kobalt Tools Chevrolet, does a burnout after winning the NASCAR Sprint Cup Series AAA 400 at Dover International Speedway on September 29, 2013 in Dover, Delaware. Credit: Justin Heiman/Getty Images

place, but couldn't catch the five-time champion.

Joey Logano ran third, followed by

Jeff Gordon and Busch, as Chase drivers claimed all top 10 finishing positions for the first time in Chase history.

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