

= 2007 Coca @-@ Cola 600 =

The 2007 Coca @-@ Cola 600 was the twelfth stock car race of the 2007 NASCAR Nextel Cup Series and the 48th iteration of the event . It was held on May 27 , 2007 , before a crowd of 175 @,@ 000 in Concord , North Carolina at Lowe 's Motor Speedway , one of ten intermediate tracks to hold NASCAR races . The 400 @-@ lap race was won by Casey Mears of the Hendrick Motorsports team , who started from 16th position . J. J. Yeley finished second and Kyle Petty came in third .

Ryan Newman won the pole position and kept the lead for the first ten laps before his Penske Racing South teammate Kurt Busch moved into the lead on lap 11 . Busch held the lead for 107 laps (longer than any other driver in the race) until Brian Vickers moved into the lead after the first round of green @-@ flag pit stops . Jimmie Johnson gained the lead from Vickers on lap 185 and held it for 83 laps , battling with Vickers and Matt Kenseth for the position . At the race 's final restart on lap 342 , Tony Stewart led and maintained his position until he made a pit stop for fuel 51 laps later . Mears became the leader after Dale Earnhardt , Jr. and Denny Hamlin made similar pit stops ; Mears held the lead after slowing to conserve fuel to win the race . There were thirteen cautions and 29 lead changes among fifteen drivers during the race .

As of 2016 , the 2007 race is Mears ' only win of the Nextel Cup Series , which is now known as the Sprint Cup Series . After the race , Jeff Gordon 's lead in the Drivers ' Championship was reduced because he crashed in the early part of the race . Chevrolet increased its points advantage in the Manufacturers ' Championship , placing it 41 points ahead of Ford . Dodge moved further ahead of Toyota in the battle for third place , with 24 races left in the season .

= = Report = =

= = = Background = = =

The Coca @-@ Cola 600 was the twelfth scheduled stock car race of the 2007 NASCAR Nextel Cup Series , out of 36 , and the 48th iteration of the event . It was held on May 27 , 2007 in Concord , North Carolina at Lowe 's Motor Speedway , now called Charlotte Motor Speedway , one of ten intermediate tracks to hold NASCAR races ; the others are Atlanta Motor Speedway , Chicagoland Speedway , Darlington Raceway , Homestead @-@ Miami Speedway , Kansas Speedway , New Hampshire Motor Speedway , Kentucky Speedway , Las Vegas Motor Speedway , and Texas Motor Speedway . The standard track at Lowe 's Motor Speedway is a four @-@ turn , 1 @.@ 5 @-@ mile (2 @.@ 4 km) -long , quad @-@ oval track . The track 's turns are banked at 24 degrees ; both the front stretch (the location of the finish line) and the back stretch (opposite the front) have a five @-@ degree banking .

Before the race , Jeff Gordon led the Drivers ' Championship with 1 @,@ 881 points , with teammate Jimmie Johnson in second and Matt Kenseth third . Denny Hamlin and Jeff Burton were fourth and fifth , and Tony Stewart , Kurt Busch , Kevin Harvick , Clint Bowyer , Carl Edwards , Kyle Busch and Jamie McMurray rounded out the top twelve . Chevrolet led the Manufacturers ' Championship with 96 points , 35 points ahead of its rival Ford in second . Dodge with 52 points was 19 points ahead of Toyota in the battle for third place . Kasey Kahne was the race 's defending champion .

The Coca @-@ Cola 600 was conceived by race car driver Curtis Turner , who built the Charlotte Motor Speedway . It was first held in 1960 in an attempt by NASCAR to stage a Memorial Day weekend race to compete with the open @-@ wheel Indianapolis 500 ; the two races were held together on the same day starting from 1974 . The race is the longest in terms of distance on the NASCAR calendar , and is considered by several drivers to be one of the sport 's most important races alongside the Daytona 500 , the Brickyard 400 and the Southern 500 . The long distance makes it the most physically demanding event in NASCAR , and teams adapt to changing track conditions because the race occurs between late afternoon and evening . It was known as the World 600 until 1984 when The Coca @-@ Cola Company purchased the naming rights to the race and

renamed it the Coca @-@ Cola World 600 in 1985 . It has been called the Coca @-@ Cola 600 every year since 1986 except for 2002 when the name changed to Coca @-@ Cola Racing Family 600 .

In preparation for the race , NASCAR held several test sessions on May 7 ? 8 , 2007 , to allow teams to prepare for the May races at Lowe 's Motor Speedway . Sessions began at 2 : 00 p.m. EDT on May 7 and concluded at 9 : 00 p.m. On May 8 , sessions started at 1 : 00 p.m. and stopped at 9 : 00 p.m. Eighty @-@ two cars participated in the May 7 afternoon session ; Martin Truex , Jr. was quickest with a speed of 180 @.@ 596 miles per hour (290 @.@ 641 km / h) and David Stremme had the highest speed of the two days at 187 @.@ 000 miles per hour (300 @.@ 947 km / h) in the evening session . Towards the end of the second session , Hamlin lost control of his car and made heavy contact with an outside SAFER barrier ; he was evaluated at the infield care center and was later released to continue testing . During the third session with eighty @-@ four cars , Jeremy Mayfield had the fastest speed of 183 @.@ 667 miles per hour (295 @.@ 583 km / h) and Kurt Busch set the fastest speed of 185 @.@ 644 miles per hour (298 @.@ 765 km / h) in the fourth and final session held in the evening . David Gilliland spun but avoided contact with the wall .

There was one change of driver before the race . Starting at the 2007 Coca @-@ Cola 600 , 1988 NASCAR Winston Cup Series champion Bill Elliott returned to NASCAR on a part @-@ time schedule for the Wood Brothers Racing team , replacing the team 's regular driver Ken Schrader , who drove in the season 's first eleven races . Elliott was eligible to use six Champion 's Provisionals if the need arose . Elliott was looking forward to returning to racing : " I was pretty honored to get a call from the Wood Brothers to drive the 21 car . I 've seen them struggle the last few weeks , being outside the top 35 , and it breaks my heart to see them miss races . I hope I can get in the car , get us qualified well every week and see what we can make up in the points battle along the way . "

= = = Practice and qualification = = =

Three practice sessions were held before the Sunday race ; one on Thursday and two on Saturday . The first session lasted 90 minutes , the second 50 minutes and the third 60 minutes . In the first practice session , Elliott Sadler was fastest with a time of 29 @.@ 697 seconds ; Kahne was second and Ricky Rudd third . Johnson was fourth , and Casey Mears placed fifth . Kenseth , Joe Nemechek , Kyle Busch , Scott Riggs and Jamie McMurray completed the session 's top @-@ ten drivers . Sterling Marlin hit one of the walls lining the track and switched to a back @-@ up car . Michael Waltrip did not need to switch cars after a similar collision .

Although forty @-@ nine cars were entered in the qualifier ; according to NASCAR 's qualifying procedure only forty @-@ three could race . Each driver ran two laps , with the starting order determined by the competitor 's fastest times . Drivers who set their laps late in qualifying had an advantage because the track was at its coolest . Ryan Newman clinched his thirty @-@ ninth pole position of his career , with a time of 29 @.@ 140 seconds . He was joined on the grid 's front row by his Penske Racing South teammate Kurt Busch , and was the second @-@ to @-@ last driver to record his lap . Sadler qualified third , Dale Earnhardt , Jr. fourth , and Kenseth started fifth . Hamlin , Rudd , Dave Blaney , Bobby Labonte and Stremme rounded out the top ten qualifiers . Jeff Green wrecked his car in the second turn while on a lap and used a provisional to qualify . The six drivers that failed to qualify were Kevin Lepage , David Reutimann (who crashed on his lap) Waltrip (who lost control of his car in the second turn on his second qualifying lap , which tore off a front tire after hitting the inside wall and made contact with the wall a second time before stopping) , Mike Bliss , Paul Menard and Ward Burton . After the qualifier , Newman said he felt pressure to achieve Penske 's Racing South 's first victory at Charlotte Motor Speedway : " He 's only been trying here for like 20 years , so yeah it would be special . It 's been something that weighs on the drivers and the teams " . He also said he felt he could have recorded a faster lap time and was worried about teammate Kurt Busch 's qualifying form .

On Saturday afternoon in sunny and warm weather conditions , Newman was fastest in the second practice session with a time of 30 @.@ 562 seconds , ahead of Sadler and Kurt Busch . Mark Martin was fourth @-@ fastest ; Greg Biffle was fifth and Earnhardt sixth . Edwards , Rudd , McMurray and

Kahne followed in the top ten . During the session , teams were scuffing their tires ; in the first minute , Bowyer crashed after he spun in turn two and switched to a back @-@ up car in which he set five more lap times . Shortly afterward , Nemechek spun after exiting the second turn but avoided damaging his car . Later that day , Edwards paced the final practice session with a time of 30 @. @ 043 seconds ; Biffle was second and Newman third . Sadler was fourth @-@ fastest , ahead of J. J. Yeley and Truex . Kurt Busch was seventh @-@ fastest , Jeff Gordon eighth , Kenseth ninth , and Jeff Burton tenth . Kyle Busch damaged his right @-@ rear quarter after hitting the outside wall , but did not switch to a back @-@ up car .

= = = Race = = =

Live television coverage of the race began at 5 : 00 p.m. Eastern Daylight Time in the United States on Fox . Around the start of the race , weather conditions were partly cloudy with an air temperature between 70 and 87 ° F (21 and 31 ° C) and a track temperature which ranged between 85 and 130 ° F (29 and 54 ° C) . William K. Thierfelder , president of Belmont Abbey College in Belmont , North Carolina , began pre @-@ race ceremonies with an invocation . Country and pop music singer LeAnn Rimes performed the national anthem , and sponsored contest award winners commanded the drivers to start their engines . During the pace laps , three drivers moved to the rear of the field because of unapproved changes ; Bowyer had switched to his back @-@ up car , and David Ragan and Harvick had changed their engines .

The race began at 5 : 52 p.m. Newman maintained his pole @-@ position advantage heading into the first corner . After starting 21st , Jimmie Johnson moved up to 15th position by lap eight . Kurt Busch passed teammate Newman for the lead three laps later . By the 20th lap , Kurt Busch , Newman , Earnhardt , Kenseth and Yeley were running in the top five positions . Earnhardt got ahead of Newman for second place four laps later . Hamlin moved up to third position by lap 32 . Hamlin made up a further position on lap 43 after he passed Earnhardt for second and was 1 @. @ 2 seconds behind race leader Kurt Busch . The first caution of the race was shown four laps later when Biffle hit the turn two wall after his right @-@ front tire had been cut and dropped debris on the track . Biffle 's car sustained heavy damage to the right @-@ hand side , ending his race . All drivers elected to make pit stops for tires and fuel during the caution .

Kurt Busch , who made a 10 @. @ 4 @-@ second pit stop for fuel and no tires , maintained the lead on the lap @-@ 52 restart ahead of Hamlin , Kenseth , Earnhardt and Johnson . One lap later , a multi @-@ car collision occurred on the front stretch when A. J. Allmendinger lost control of his car in turn two and collided with the right @-@ rear quarter panel of Johnson 's car , which had a cut left @-@ rear tire that burst after leaving turn four . Johnson 's burst tire caused Blaney and Stewart to collide after Stewart slowed to avoid a collision with Johnson . Both drivers slid , collecting Gilliland , Sadler , Juan Pablo Montoya , Green , Bowyer , Truex , Marlin , Johnny Sauter , Kyle Petty and Harvick , all of whom had damage to their cars . The incident triggered the race 's second caution . Johnson and Stewart made pit stops to repair the damage to their cars ; both rejoined the race in eighteenth and twenty @-@ fifth positions .

Kurt Busch led on the lap @-@ 62 restart , ahead of Hamlin , Kenseth , Earnhardt , and Gordon . The third caution was prompted on the same lap when Tony Raines lost control of his car and slid sideways into Jeff Gordon , and both drivers were sent into the infield grass . Jeff Gordon went back up towards the outside wall and was hit by Allmendinger at the start @-@ finish line , which resulted in the former going airborne ; Robby Gordon and Burton were also involved in the accident . Gordon was unhurt ; drivers involved in the accidents , which caused the second and third cautions , made pit stops for repairs . Kurt Busch maintained his lead at the lap @-@ 70 restart , followed by Hamlin and Kenseth . Eight laps later , Burton caused the fourth caution after heavy contact with the turn three wall . During the caution , most of the leaders made pit stops ; Newman stopped for a track bar adjustment and had a new shifter ball installed . Kurt Busch and Kenseth chose not to pit and remained the leaders at the lap @-@ 83 restart , with Rudd in third place . Ten laps later , Newman , who was in eighth position , reported his car was " extremely tight " after the adjustments made at his pit stop . Stewart had moved back to eleventh and Johnson was thirteenth by lap 96 . Kurt Busch

's lead was four seconds over Kenseth after 100 laps , with Brian Vickers following in third , Ragan fourth and Kyle Busch in fifth . Johnson passed Yeley for seventh position eleven laps later .

Green @-@ flag pit stops began on lap 112 , with Kenseth pitting on the same lap for tires and a wedge change . Kurt Busch made his stop two laps later , handing the lead to Vickers for twelve laps . Kyle Busch took the lead on lap 126 with an advantage of ten seconds over Johnson by lap 131 . Kyle Busch made his pit stop on the next lap , handing the lead to Johnson for one lap . Stewart took over the lead until his stop on lap 133 , when Yeley became the race leader . Edwards and Elliott both held the lead in the next two laps . After the pit stops , Vickers regained the lead . On lap 140 , Vickers ' six @-@ second lead was reduced to nothing when the fifth caution was triggered after debris was spotted on the backstretch . Most of the leaders elected to make pit stops . Mears was observed speeding , and was required by NASCAR to drop to the rear of the longest line .

Racing resumed on lap 146 with Vickers leading Kyle Busch , Earnhardt , Yeley and Stewart as daylight began to fade . Mears was afflicted with an alternator issue on lap 149 , and switched to a back @-@ up battery . A flat tire slowed Earnhardt on lap 154 ; he pitted for new tires two laps later . Ragan moved back into the top five by lap 160 . Ten laps later , debris was spotted in the turn two groove , causing the sixth caution , during which all of the race leaders made pit stops . Vickers led on the lap @-@ 173 restart , followed by Kurt Busch and Martin . Kurt Busch drove down to the track 's inside and passed Vickers for the lead on lap 175 ; three laps later , Newman drove to his garage to retire with an engine failure . Mears ' team installed a new battery into his car , and switched between his main and back @-@ up battery to ensure engine power was maintained . Vickers retook the lead from Kurt Busch on the 181st lap , and Stewart got ahead of Kyle Busch one lap later . Johnson took the lead from Vickers on lap 185 .

On lap 186 , Kurt Busch nudged the turn two wall with his right @-@ rear side and spun on the backstretch , triggering the seventh caution . He regained control of his car to run in ninth place . Most of the leaders made pit stops . Johnson led at the lap @-@ 190 restart , followed by Vickers and Kenseth . Johnson held a one @-@ second lead over Vickers by the 200th lap , by which time Edwards had moved in front of Stewart . Vickers retook the lead from Johnson on lap 206 . Fifteen laps later , the eighth caution was triggered when Edwards 's car suffered a cut right @-@ rear tire , slowed on the track and spun at turn four while driving cautiously to the pit road . Edwards collected his teammate , Ragan , who was run into by Elliott . Mears was close by the incident but avoided damaging his car . On lap 222 , Vickers reported a power steering problem , and Kyle Busch was losing battery power . Most of the leaders , including Vickers , made pit stops . Kyle Busch 's car had a replacement battery fitted and Vickers topped up with more fluids ; both drivers rejoined in twelfth and thirteenth positions . Johnson led at the lap @-@ 227 restart , with Kenseth in second place . One lap later , Kenseth passed Johnson to take over first place , while Kyle Busch made heavy contact with the wall on his right side ; a caution was not needed . Johnson reclaimed the first position from Kenseth on the backstretch on the 245th lap . Kyle Busch 's right @-@ front tire was cut , and went into the turn four wall on lap 252 , triggering the ninth caution . During the caution , most of the leaders , including Johnson , chose to make pit stops . Johnson made changes to his car 's left and right rear spring rubber , and Stewart 's car 's air pressure was adjusted .

Kyle Busch drove to his garage with a broken brake motor on the 254th lap and Mayfield led the field back up to speed for the restart on the 256th lap , ahead of Kenseth , Vickers , Stewart and Johnson . Mayfield dropped to third place as Kenseth and Vickers moved into first and second places on lap 257 . Kenseth held a 2 @-@ 2 @-@ second lead over Stewart , who moved up to second and was closing on Kenseth by lap 265 . The race 's tenth caution was triggered two laps later when Kahne lost control of his car and hit the turn two outside wall . Most of the leaders , including Kenseth , elected to make pit stops . Johnson led the field on the lap @-@ 272 restart , followed by Kenseth and Stewart . Kenseth passed Johnson to reclaim the first position four laps later . Vickers and Rudd made contact while leaving the fourth turn on lap 281 but no caution was needed . Johnson retook the lead from Kenseth two laps later . Mayfield spun 360 degrees on the front stretch and went into the infield grass after trying to avoid a slower car on his outside on lap 291 , causing the eleventh caution . The leaders , including Johnson , made pit stops for tires under caution . Rudd took over the lead for one lap before pitting on lap 293 . Johnson regained the lead

after the pit stops , maintaining it at the lap @-@ 297 restart ; he was followed by Kenseth and Earnhardt . Kyle Busch rejoined the race on the same lap . Kurt Busch lost control of his car on the backstretch on lap 298 ; his car spun off and hit the inside wall , causing the twelfth caution . He drove to his garage to retire .

Johnson led the field back up to speed at the lap @-@ 301 restart . Kenseth retook the lead from Johnson on the 311th lap , and Johnson reclaimed the position one lap later . Stewart got ahead of Kenseth for second place on lap 314 ; he was six @-@ tenths of a second behind race leader Johnson . After receiving a free pass from the tenth caution , Petty was running in ninth place by lap 316 ; he battled Reed Sorenson for eighth place . Fourteen laps later , Mears moved up into third position . The thirteenth (and final) caution of the race was triggered on lap 337 when Vickers hit the turn two wall , damaging his car 's right @-@ hand side , sustaining a cut right @-@ front tire and dropped debris onto the track . The leaders , including Johnson , made pit stops ; Johnson 's pit crew dropped a left @-@ rear lug nut , which cost him time while his mechanics looked for it , and he fell to tenth position . Stewart led the field on the lap @-@ 342 restart , ahead of Mears and Earnhardt . Johnson moved up to fourth place by lap 367 ; three laps later , Stewart had a 1 @-@ 1 @-@ second lead over Mears and had extended it to 2 @-@ 7 seconds by the 380th lap .

The second round of green @-@ flag pit stops for fuel began on lap 381 , as Earnhardt got ahead of Mears for second place on the following lap . Mears lost third place to his teammate Johnson on lap 390 . Johnson made his pit stop on the next lap and avoided a collision with Mears . Stewart drove slowly down the pit road on the 393rd lap because he was two laps short of fuel , allowing Earnhardt to move into first place before his own stop one lap later . Hamlin took over the lead before his pit stop on lap 395 , allowing Mears to take over the first position . By lap 398 , Mears held a ten @-@ second lead over Yeley , who was closing the gap , and felt his car was tight when he drove to the track 's outside , but held a strong line at the track 's bottom when he moved out of traffic . Mears conserved fuel after slowing his pace following persuasion by his crew chief Darian Grubb ; he maintained his lead for the remaining two laps to win his first race in the Nextel Cup Series . He ran out of fuel on his cool @-@ down lap ; his engine cut out shortly after crossing the start @-@ finish line . Yeley finished second , ahead of Petty in third , who secured his first top @-@ five finish since the 1997 MBNA 400 . Sorenson was fourth and Vickers came in fifth . Stewart , Rudd , Earnhardt , Hamlin and Johnson completed the top @-@ ten finishers . The race had thirteen cautions and 29 lead changes among 15 drivers . Kurt Busch 's total of 107 laps led was the highest of any competitor . Mears led for one period in the race , for a total of six laps .

== = Post @-@ race comments == =

Mears appeared in victory lane to celebrate his first win in the Nextel Cup Series in front of the crowd ; the win earned him US \$ 377 @-@ 425 and is his only career win as of 2016 . Mears was delighted with his victory , saying in the post @-@ race press conference , " This is unbelievable . I 'm very , very excited about it and , at the same time , very relieved . I was afraid Darien [Grubb] was going to call me in . I 'm glad he didn 't . The only way we could win was to gamble and that 's what we did . " Mears said he had " a fourth place car at best " . It was the first time since 1991 a person with the surname Mears had won in auto racing . Yeley , who finished second , said , " This is probably the first time in two years of Cup racing I didn 't catch the bad break . I 've always run into bad luck . " , and , " At the end , we were a top @-@ five car at best " . Third @-@ place finisher Petty said , " In all honesty , it 's just a race . We didn 't change the world tonight . It feels good to come back and race with these guys . I guess third place was just the cherry on the sundae . " He also said he had a car that was capable of finishing in the top ten and that he would not have been able to run with the top drivers . Petty also praised Mears for his victory and said he felt Mears would have similar success in the future . Hamlin said he felt the top @-@ five finishers were lucky to achieve their finishing positions and that his crew chief Mike Ford said there was " no glory in winning a fuel @-@ mileage race , other than saying you didn 't run hard and were saving fuel " .

Kurt Busch , who led 107 laps (more than any other driver) was frustrated after his lap @-@ 298 crash : " How in the world we can be so strong during the day here and almost in an instant go

completely in the opposite direction is beyond my comprehension . We have to get a handle on it sooner or later . I 'm frustrated and down right now , but we 'll just keep plugging along looking for the answer . " Newman , who led the first ten laps of the race , was happy despite retiring from the race : " We had a good car . We had just gotten the lucky dog and we were going to be one of the 15 cars on the lead lap . Everybody at Penske Racing has been doing a great job . We 've just got to keep it up and stay focused . " After finishing the race in fifth place (then the best finish for a Toyota car) Vickers said it was " rough " driving without the use of power steering that cut in and out but he felt Red Bull Racing Team had " the best car " for the race . Stewart 's crew chief Greg Zipadelli was disappointed his driver could not take the victory : " If we hadn 't had an opportunity to win , I 'd say that finishing sixth and leading laps would be awesome , But sitting where we are right now , it seems that everything is stacked against us . We were probably a second- or third @-@ place car at worst , so it 's disappointing . " Eighth @-@ place finisher Earnhardt said he thought he secured a second @-@ place finish and was unaware the leaders had made pit stops . He said was happy with the way his team ran the race .

After retiring from the race on lap 221 , Elliott blamed himself for the collision with Ragan , saying he waited too long to react and was heavily committed to driving down the racetrack . He was also unable to remove his foot from his brake pedal . Ragan said he felt he should have passed Roush Fenway Racing teammate Edwards , who spun up the racetrack . Edwards also said he was trying to avoid wrecking himself . According to Montoya , who was involved in the multi @-@ car collision on the 53rd lap : " I saw a car flying , and as soon as I saw the car flying I checked up . We actually slowed down the car and everything . The ten car or somebody came right in behind us and just pushed us through the whole mess . " Jeff Gordon said he was " fine " after the accident and that it " looked a lot worse than it really was ... Unfortunate because , man , what an awesome race car we had . I was so proud of Steve Letarte and the guys . When we bring race cars like that to the track , it just makes me have a whole lot of fun . I was having a blast out there and I hate we are out of it . But I am ok . " Allmendinger claimed responsibility for causing the crash and asked his spotter to apologize to Johnson 's spotter , who relayed the message to Johnson via radio .

The result meant Jeff Gordon maintained his lead in the Drivers ' Championship with 1 @,@ 921 points , ahead of teammate Johnson with 1 @,@ 789 . Kenseth remained in third with his points advantage over Hamlin reduced to thirty @-@ two . Burton remained in fifth place and Stewart remained in sixth . Harvick moved into seventh position while Edwards moved up two positions to eighth . Kurt Busch 's non @-@ finish meant he slipped to ninth and Bowyer was tenth . Kyle Busch and McMurray rounded out the top twelve . In the Manufacturers ' Championship , Chevrolet with 105 points extended its lead to forty @-@ two points over its main rival Ford . Dodge increased its points advantage over Toyota in the battle for third place . The race took four hours , thirty @-@ six minutes and twenty @-@ seven seconds to complete , and the margin of victory was 9 @.@ 561 seconds .

= = Results = =

= = = Qualifying = = =

= = = Race = = =

= = Standings after the race = =