

= 2006 Subway 500 =

The 2006 Subway 500 was the 32nd stock car race of the 2006 NASCAR Nextel Cup Series and the sixth in the ten @-@ race season @-@ ending Chase for the Nextel Cup . It was held on October 22 , 2006 , before a crowd of 65 @,@ 000 , at Martinsville Speedway in Martinsville , Virginia , one of five short tracks to hold NASCAR races . The 500 @-@ lap race was won by Jimmie Johnson of the Hendrick Motorsports team , after he started from ninth position ; Denny Hamlin finished second , and Bobby Labonte came in third .

Although Kurt Busch won the pole position , he was immediately passed by Jeff Gordon at the start of the race . 143 laps later Johnson took the lead for one lap . Gordon regained the lead on the next lap , only to lose it to Johnson again on the 153rd lap . Labonte moved into the lead on lap 406 and held it with 55 laps remaining , when he was passed by Johnson . At the race 's final restart on lap 495 Hamlin challenged Johnson for the lead , but the latter resisted Hamlin 's passing maneuver and won the race . There were 18 cautions and 16 lead changes by five different drivers during the race .

It was Johnson 's fifth win of the 2006 season , and the 23rd of his career . The result advanced him to third in the Drivers ' Championship , 41 points behind Matt Kenseth (who took over the championship lead when Jeff Burton retired during the race ; this caused Burton to fall to fifth in the championship , one point behind Hamlin) . Chevrolet maintained its lead in the Manufacturers ' Championship , 53 points ahead of Dodge and 61 ahead of Ford with four races left in the season .

= = Report = =

= = = Background = = =

The Subway 500 was the 32nd of 36 scheduled stock car races of the 2006 NASCAR Nextel Cup Series and the sixth in the ten @-@ race season @-@ ending Chase for the Nextel Cup . It was held on October 22 , 2006 at Martinsville Speedway in Martinsville , Virginia , one of five short tracks to hold NASCAR races ; the others are Richmond International Raceway , Dover International Speedway , Bristol Motor Speedway and Phoenix International Raceway . The standard track at Martinsville Speedway is a four @-@ turn , 0 @.@ 526 @-@ mile (0 @.@ 847 km) oval . Its turns are banked at eleven degrees , and neither the front stretch (the location of the finish line) nor the back stretch is banked .

Before the race Jeff Burton led the Drivers ' Championship with 5 @,@ 763 points , with Matt Kenseth second and Kevin Harvick third . Mark Martin and Dale Earnhardt , Jr. were fourth and fifth , and Denny Hamlin , Jimmie Johnson , Kasey Kahne , Kyle Busch and Jeff Gordon rounded out the top ten drivers competing for the 2006 Chase for the Nextel Cup . In the Manufacturers ' Championship , Chevrolet led with 237 points ; Dodge was second with 189 , followed by Ford with 183 . Gordon was the race 's defending champion .

After falling from seventh to tenth in the Drivers ' Championship at the previous race (at Charlotte Motor Speedway) , Gordon said he would try and win races to return to contention for the championship . Jeff Burton called the Subway 500 " another volatile race in the Chase " , and thought it would significantly impact the chase contenders . Although Kenseth felt that the race would be the toughest for his team , he believed that a good finish would put him in a better position for the championship because of his good results at the tracks following the Martinsville race . After a good finish at Charlotte , Earnhardt felt he was in " good shape " : " Jeff has been at this a long time , but I don 't look at him as indestructible . If he has a mistake or even a couple of bad runs , it will completely shake up the points . " After winning the Busch Series championship , Harvick focused on the Nextel Cup championship : " We 're excited about it , proud of what we 've done this year , and , hopefully , we can do what we need to do on the Cup side in the next five weeks . I have never had a season like this . " Hamlin thought he would perform well at Martinsville , where he felt comfortable , and he and his team did not rule themselves out of contention for the title .

In preparation for the race , NASCAR held the last of its test days for Nextel Cup entrants on October 16 ? 18 at Homestead @-@ Miami Speedway . Sessions began at 1 : 00 p.m. EDT , paused from 5 : 00 to 6 : 00 p.m. and concluded at 9 : 00 p.m. Fifty @-@ eight cars , a mix of Cars of Tomorrow and 2006 cars , participated in the October 16 afternoon session . Reed Sorenson was quickest with a speed of 171 @.@ 652 miles per hour (276 @.@ 247 km / h) , and Casey Mears had the highest speed of 173 @.@ 077 miles per hour (278 @.@ 540 km / h) in the evening session . During the third session (with 75 cars) , Kyle Busch had the fastest speed of 175 @.@ 382 miles per hour (282 @.@ 250 km / h) ; Gordon had the highest speed of the three days , at 175 @.@ 553 miles per hour (282 @.@ 525 km / h) in the fourth session . During the fifth session , on the afternoon of October 18 , 23 cars were tested . Scott Wimmer had the highest speed of 172 @.@ 364 miles per hour (277 @.@ 393 km / h) , and Jeff Green had the highest speed of 174 @.@ 639 miles per hour (281 @.@ 054 km / h) in the evening session .

One team substituted for its regular driver . Morgan @-@ McClure Motorsports driver Todd Bodine decided to concentrate on the Craftsman Truck Series title , and was replaced by Ward Burton , the 2002 Daytona 500 champion . Burton , who had not raced since 2004 , went to Motor Mile Speedway to reacquaint himself with NASCAR . According to crew chief Chris Carrier , Burton expressed a large amount of interest in driving at Martinsville : " He 's a Virginia driver and we 're a Virginia team . That makes for a great combination at Martinsville . " On October 18 , Roush Racing announced that Craftsman Truck Series driver David Ragan would drive the No. 06 car in four of the season 's five remaining races beginning with the Subway 500 . Ragan said that the experience would help him prepare for his full @-@ time debut in 2007 .

= = = Practice and qualification = = =

Three practice sessions were held before the Sunday race : one on Friday and two on Saturday . The first session lasted 90 minutes , the second 60 minutes and the third 45 minutes . In the first practice session , Gordon was fastest with a time of 19 @.@ 478 seconds ; Ryan Newman was second and Hamlin third . Johnson took fourth position , and Dave Blaney placed fifth . Kurt Busch , Sterling Marlin , Green , Sorenson and Kahne rounded out the session 's top ten drivers . Martin switched to a back @-@ up car after he crashed .

Although fifty 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 . Kurt Busch clinched his sixth pole position of the season , the ninth of his career and his first at Martinsville , with a time of 19 @.@ 408 . He was joined on the grid 's front row by Gordon , who was 0 @.@ 038 seconds slower and had the pole position until Kurt Busch 's lap . Hamlin qualified third , Newman fourth and Tony Stewart fifth . Blaney was sixth , with Earnhardt and Green seventh and eighth . Johnson , a Chase for the Nextel Cup driver , qualified ninth and Ken Schrader rounded out the top ten qualifiers . Harvick , another driver in the Chase , set the twelfth @-@ fastest time . The seven drivers who failed to qualify were Mike Bliss , Hermie Sadler , Chad Chaffin , Morgan Shepherd , Ted Christopher , Derrike Cope and Stanton Barrett . After the qualifier Kurt Busch said , " It was a great lap , unexpected for me , but this team has always qualified well at this track , Martinsville is the kind of track that you either love or hate , and I 've learned to do both . It 's a tough , challenging short track . "

On Saturday morning Marlin was fastest in the second practice session with a time of 19 @.@ 668 seconds , ahead of Kahne and Gordon . Dale Jarrett was fourth @-@ fastest ; Mears was fifth and Johnson sixth . Hamlin , Brian Vickers , Greg Biffle and Jeff Burton followed in the top ten . Of the other drivers in the Chase , Kyle Busch was 13th @-@ fastest and Martin set the 19th @-@ fastest time . During the second practice session , Scott Riggs (who had the forty @-@ third quickest time) had an engine failure in the session 's opening minutes and changed engines . Later that day , Johnson paced the final practice session with a time of 19 @.@ 722 ; Harvick was second and Biffle third . Marlin was fourth @-@ fastest , ahead of David Stremme and Hamlin . Earnhardt was seventh @-@ fastest , Kyle Busch eighth , Gordon ninth and Mears tenth . Other Chase drivers included Jeff Burton in 17th and Kahne in 17th ; all were within one @-@ tenth of a second of

Johnson 's time . The session was suspended when Kenny Wallace 's engine blew up , since the track then needed to be checked and cleaned , and Wallace changed engines . Jarrett spun out with a brake problem , but since he made only minor contact with the wall he did not have to switch to a back @-@ up car . After a similar collision , Michael Waltrip also did not have to switch cars .

= = = Race = = =

Live television coverage of the race began at 12 : 32 p.m. Eastern Daylight Time in the United States on NBC . Rain showers were forecast for the day of the race , and at the start weather conditions were overcast and some rain had already fallen . The air temperature was around 48 ° F (9 ° C) . Cleaning trucks cleared the track before the start . Eldrid Davis of Raceway Ministries began pre @-@ race ceremonies with an invocation , the Martinsville High School marching band performed the national anthem and Subway spokesperson Jared Fogle commanded the drivers to start their engines . During the pace laps , Riggs and Wallace moved to the rear of the grid because they had changed their engines .

The race began at 1 : 00 p.m. Gordon accelerated faster than Kurt Busch off the line , and was ahead of him by the second turn . The first caution was given two laps later when Martin Truex Jr. spun sideways in turn four and Marlin , Sorenson and Kyle Petty sustained damage to their cars . Jeff Burton had front @-@ end damage to his vehicle when he contacted the rear of Joe Nemechek 's car . At the lap ten restart , Gordon maintained his lead over Kurt Busch and Denny Hamlin . Seven laps later , Hamlin passed Kurt Busch for second place . Earnhardt passed Kurt Busch for fourth place on the 44th lap . On lap 45 , he reported that one of his engine 's cylinders was misfiring and was worse coming out of the turns . Five laps later Gordon had a 1 @.@ 8 @-@ second lead over Hamlin , which grew to 2 @.@ 4 seconds on lap 60 ; Earnhardt had moved into second by that lap . On lap 64 , a collision between Mears and Newman in turn four prompted the second caution ; although Mears was spun around , he was able to continue . During the caution , all the leaders made pit stops for fuel and tires . Jeff Burton 's pit crew repaired his loose hood with tape on the right front . Biffle left the track on lap 67 with brake problems . Newman was sent to the rear of the longest line by NASCAR two laps later for his role in the incident with Mears , and Gordon maintained the top position at the lap @-@ 71 restart .

Eight laps later Earnhardt passed Raines for second position , and Gordon had a 1 @.@ 7 @-@ second advantage over Earnhardt by lap 80 . Raines was passed by Stewart for third on lap 83 , and Johnson took third place from Stewart six laps later . J.J. Yeley drove to pit road on the 94th lap with a flat left @-@ rear tire . On lap 106 , Burton (whose car was hot because of the tape on his hood) made contact with Gordon and escaped with minor damage after a three @-@ lap battle . Twenty @-@ four laps later Johnson passed Earnhardt for second place , and on lap 144 he passed Gordon for the lead . One lap later Gordon reclaimed first place , and built a quarter @-@ second lead by lap 150 . Johnson moved back into the lead on lap 153 . Two laps later Stremme spun sideways , prompting the third caution , and all the leaders made pit stops . Johnson remained the leader at the lap @-@ 161 restart , ahead of Gordon and Stewart . After the caution ended , Burton switched to a second ignition after feeling he had a problem with his engine . Forty @-@ two laps later Waltrip 's turn @-@ four spin prompted the fourth caution , although he was able to continue . During the caution , the leaders again made pit stops . Johnson , who had minor air @-@ pressure adjustments because of sunlight exposure at his pit stop , maintained his lead at the restart .

Jeff Burton drove to his garage on lap 218 when a carburetor problem caused him to run slower than his rivals ; Earnhardt and Stewart avoided a wreck on that lap . Four laps later , the fifth caution came out when David Gilliland made contact with Ward Burton in turn two ; although Burton spun , he avoided hitting the wall . Johnson maintained his lead at the lap @-@ 227 restart . The sixth caution was given on lap 231 when Sorenson spun after colliding with Riggs , causing Mike Skinner to contact the left front quarter of Harvick 's car and Travis Kvapil to spin sideways . Biffle sustained damage to his car 's nose , and turn three was temporarily blocked . Harvick , Kahne , Vickers and Biffle went to pit road for repairs , while the leaders remained on the track . Johnson led on the lap @-@ 238 restart . Four laps later Kvapil made heavy contact with the wall after being bumped and

Tony Raines ' car had a cut tire from contact with Ragan , prompting the seventh caution . Most of the leaders , including Johnson , again made pit stops . On lap 244 , it was announced that Jeff Burton had retired from the race . Gordon became the leader at the restart , ahead of Hamlin , Elliott Sadler , Kurt Busch and Nemechek .

Hamlin passed Gordon for the lead on lap 256 . Twenty @-@ three laps later Bowyer made contact with Kenseth , spinning him in turn four (although he kept his car off the wall) and prompting the race 's eighth caution . During the caution , most of the leaders (including Hamlin) made pit stops . Kyle and Kurt Busch 's pit crews made track @-@ bar adjustments to their cars . Hamlin had tape added to the front of his car to fix a handling problem , and Sadler narrowly avoided a collision with Kahne . Johnson regained the lead after the pit stops , maintaining it at the lap @-@ 286 restart . Fourteen laps later Kurt Busch passed Earnhardt for second place , and Gordon moved back up to fifth by lap 318 . On lap 331 , the ninth caution was given ; Schrader collided with the wall , made contact with Ragan going into turn two and both drivers hit Jarrett . Schrader retired from the race because of the collision , but Ragan and Jarrett continued . The leaders , including Johnson , made pit stops during the caution . Kurt Busch gained the lead after the pit stops , maintaining it at the lap @-@ 341 restart . Six laps later Raines made contact with Skinner , forcing him to collide with the inside wall and prompting the tenth caution . With severe damage to his car 's rear end quarter , Skinner stopped before the start @-@ finish line . Kurt Busch maintained his lead at the lap @-@ 353 restart , ahead of Johnson and Earnhardt .

Johnson moved into the lead on the same lap after passing Kurt Busch , who dropped two more places on the lap . Two laps later Ragan spun after contact with Elliott Sadler , prompting the eleventh caution ; none of the leaders made pit stops . Johnson led at the lap @-@ 361 restart , ahead of Earnhardt and Hamlin . The twelfth caution came out two laps later when Kurt Busch tried to pass Riggs and the drivers made contact coming off turn four . Kurt Busch was spun while crossing the start @-@ finish line and hit the inside wall , requiring a pit stop for repairs . Johnson maintained his lead at the lap @-@ 371 restart and was followed by Earnhardt , Hamlin , Kurt Busch and Gordon (who made a pit stop for an air @-@ pressure adjustment during the caution) . Hamlin passed Earnhardt for second place ten laps later . The thirteenth caution was prompted on lap 399 when Bobby Labonte made contact with Jamie McMurray in turn two , sending him spinning sideways but avoiding the wall . Most of the leaders , including Johnson , made pit stops . Johnson adjusted his air pressure , and Hamlin 's pit crew removed a front fender .

Labonte led on the lap @-@ 406 restart , followed by Mears and Gordon . Elliott Sadler went to his garage with motor problems on lap 411 . By lap 437 , Johnson had moved into second position . Seven laps later he passed Labonte for the lead , and Hamlin passed Gordon for fourth a lap later . Lap 447 saw the fourteenth caution ; Ragan spun sideways at turn four and Kyle Busch collided with the wall to avoid him , sustaining minor damage to his car 's right side . One lap later , Kyle Busch went to pit road for repairs . The race restarted on lap 453 , with Johnson leading Labonte and Hamlin . On the 460th lap Gilliland caused Mears to spin sideways coming out of turn four , prompting the fifteenth caution ; Johnson maintained his lead at the restart . On lap 468 , Bowyer triggered the sixteenth caution after spinning sideways at turn three . Four laps later , Martin drove to pit road for engine troubleshooting .

The race restarted on lap 476 , when a seventeenth caution was issued because Earnhardt made contact with Kahne after trying to pass him ; Earnhardt spun at turn three . Martin again went to pit road because of water problems , and Johnson maintained the lead at the restart . On lap 484 , Hamlin passed Labonte for second place . Five laps later Wallace spun coming out of turn two after being hit by McMurray , prompting the race 's eighteenth (and final) caution , but was able to continue . Johnson remained the leader at the lap @-@ 495 restart , with Hamlin close behind . Hamlin bumped Johnson coming out of turn two , causing Johnson to move to the outside lane , and went to the inside lane to draw alongside him on the back stretch . They remained side by side for one lap , when Johnson drew ahead of Hamlin at turn four . He pulled away , holding the lead for the remaining six laps to win the race . Hamlin finished second , ahead of Labonte in third , Stewart in fourth and Gordon in fifth . Mears , Kahne , Green , Harvick and Petty rounded out the top ten finishers . The race had a total of 18 cautions and 16 lead changes by five drivers . Johnson led

seven times for a total of 245 laps , more than any other competitor . The win was the 23rd of Johnson 's Cup Career , as well as his final of five victories he posted in the 2006 season .

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

Johnson appeared in victory lane after his victory lap to celebrate his fifth win of the season in front of the crowd ; the win earned him \$ 191 @,@ 886 . He was pleased with the result , saying he was happy to have taken the victory : " We 've been running up front the last three of four races and haven 't been able to close the deal . Today we did . " Hamlin was disappointed with his finish as he felt he had a faster car after the race 's final restart but admitted Johnson would not be beaten : " It was my only shot to get around him . I wasn 't going to get under him completely . There was no way possible . I was doing the best I could to win the race . " He later admitted that he made contact with Johnson and that it was on purpose . Labonte said about his third @-@ place finish , " I feel like I stole something . " Jeff Burton was philosophical about his retirement from the race : " These things happen . Everybody has had an issue in this Chase , and we had ours today . This thing is not over for us by any means . " Kenseth , who finished eleventh , was optimistic about his chances of winning the Drivers ' Championship : " It 's great to be the leader , but we 've got to start running good , It 's still pretty wide open . It 's going to be pretty exciting , I think , coming down to the last race . "

Earnhardt admitted that he was to blame for the collision with Kahne on lap 476 . He said was anxious to pass him and was underneath him when he made the maneuver but his rear brakes locked which caused him to spin . Kahne thought Earnhardt was driving too hard in turn three : " I guess I need to get somebody on [the radio] to preach to me to have more patience because I definitely can 't take control of myself . " After retiring from the race , Schrader said of his collision with Ragan , " I moved him earlier because you can 't run like that two laps down . Got back around him and he paid me back for moving him , but he was two laps down . " Ragan denied intentionally wrecking Schrader , saying that he over @-@ drove his car going into the first corner and his brakes locked . Stewart saw Ragan 's lap @-@ 447 spin (which caused Kyle Busch to collide with the wall) , and believed that NASCAR should have disqualified Ragan from the race .

According to Mears , who was involved in an incident with Newman on the 64th lap , " [Newman] was kind of holding everyone up . When I got up to him , he tried to park me in the center of the corner . [He] just got on the brakes and I got into the back of him . Got him a little loose . He didn 't wreck , but he came around the next lap and wrecked me . " Although Mears was also angry about the incident with Gilliland 396 laps later , he praised his car 's handling and said it was the first time a car had worked in his favor . Three days after the race , NASCAR announced that Waltrip @-@ Jasper Racing crew chief Tommy Baldwin , Jr. was fined \$ 5 @,@ 000 for violating four NASCAR rules . The fines were for " actions detrimental to stock car racing " , car , car parts , components and / or equipment used in the race that was not compliant to NASCAR rules and for entering the car @-@ servicing area without a fire @-@ resistant uniform or helmet .

The result left Kenseth leading the Drivers ' Championship with 5 @,@ 848 points , ahead of Harvick with 5 @,@ 812 . Johnson moved into third with 5 @,@ 807 , six points ahead of Hamlin . After the race , Jeff Burton (who fell to fifth) was still upbeat about his championship chances : " We have as good a shot as anybody . We 've run well enough to win the championship ; we just got to put the next four races together . " Earnhardt , Martin , Kahne , Gordon and Kyle Busch rounded out the top ten . In the Manufacturers ' Championship , Chevrolet maintained the lead with 246 points . Dodge remained in second with 195 , eight points ahead of Ford . The race took three hours and forty @-@ four minutes to complete , and the margin of victory was 0 @.@ 544 seconds .

= = Results = =

= = = Qualifying = = =

== Race results ==

== Standings after the race ==