

= 2009 Checker Auto Parts 500 =

The 2009 Checker O'Reilly Auto Parts 500 was the thirty @-@ fifth and penultimate stock car race of the 2009 NASCAR Sprint Cup Series and the ninth in the ten @-@ race season @-@ ending Chase for the Sprint Cup . It was held on November 15 , 2009 at Phoenix International Raceway , in Avondale , Arizona before a crowd of 90 @,@ 000 . The 312 @-@ lap race was won by Jimmie Johnson of the Hendrick Motorsports team after starting from third position . Jeff Burton finished second and Denny Hamlin came in third .

Martin Truex , Jr. won the pole position , although he was passed by Kurt Busch by the end of the first lap . Fifty @-@ six laps later , Johnson became the leader of the race . Many Chase for the Sprint Cup participants , including Jeff Gordon and Mark Martin ran in the top ten for most of the race . Johnson maintained the first position to lead the most laps of 238 , and to win his seventh race of the season . There were four cautions and nine lead changes among four different drivers during the course of the race .

The race was Johnson 's seventh win of the 2009 season , and the forty @-@ seventh of his career . The result kept Johnson in the lead of the Drivers ' Championship , one @-@ hundred and eight points ahead of Mark Martin and one @-@ hundred and sixty nine in front of Jeff Gordon . Chevrolet maintained their lead in the Manufacturers ' Championship , fifty @-@ eight ahead of Toyota , ninety @-@ five in front of Ford and one @-@ hundred and eight ahead of Dodge . The race attracted 5 @.@ 17 million television viewers .

= = Report = =

= = = Background = = =

Phoenix International Raceway is one of five short tracks to hold NASCAR races , the others being Richmond International Raceway , Dover International Speedway , Bristol Motor Speedway , and Martinsville Speedway . The standard track at Phoenix International Raceway is a four @-@ turn short track oval that is 1 mile (1 @.@ 6 km) long . The track 's turns are banked at eleven degrees , while the front stretch , the location of the finish line , was banked at three degrees . The back stretch , which has a dogleg shape instead of a straight , has nine degrees of banking .

Before the race , Jimmie Johnson led the Drivers ' Championship with 6 @,@ 297 points , and Mark Martin stood in second with 6 @,@ 224 points . Jeff Gordon followed in third with 6 @,@ 185 points , fifty @-@ nine ahead of Kurt Busch , and ninety @-@ eight in front of Tony Stewart in fourth and fifth . Juan Pablo Montoya with 6 @,@ 061 was eleven points ahead of Greg Biffle , as Denny Hamlin with 5 @,@ 975 points , was two ahead of Ryan Newman , and seventy @-@ seven in front of Kasey Kahne . Carl Edwards and Brian Vickers in eleventh and twelfth with 5 @,@ 857 and 5 @,@ 777 points rounded out the contenders for the Chase for the Sprint Cup . In the Manufacturers ' Championship , Chevrolet were leading with 247 points , fifty @-@ five ahead of their rival Toyota . Ford , with 158 points , were seven points ahead of Dodge in the battle for third . Johnson was the race 's defending champion .

= = = Practice and qualifying = = =

Two practice sessions were held before the Sunday race ? both on Saturday . A practice session scheduled for Friday morning was cancelled because of rain . The first session lasted 45 minutes , and the second and final session lasted 60 minutes .

Although forty @-@ six drivers 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 . Martin Truex , Jr. clinched his third pole position of the season , with a time of 26 @.@ 643 . He was joined on the grid 's front row by Kurt Busch . Johnson qualified third , Kahne took fourth , and Hamlin started fifth . Biffle , Kyle Busch , Stewart ,

Casey Mears and Martin completed the top ten positions . The three drivers that failed to qualify were Regan Smith , Kevin Conway and Brandon Ash . After the qualifier Truex said , " (Today) we were pretty good in practice . This is a weird track where you go out in practice , then expect to pick up a half @-@ second somehow (in qualifying) . We did . It 's strange , but it felt good . "

In the first practice session , Sam Hornish , Jr. was fastest , placing ahead of Kahne in second , and Kyle Busch in third . Biffle was fourth fastest , and Hamlin placed fifth . Montoya , Johnson , Martin , Stewart and Gordon rounded out the top ten fastest drivers in the session . Of the other drivers in the chase , Vickers was fifteenth fastest , while Newman placed seventeenth . Later that day , Johnson was fastest in the second and final practice session , ahead of Martin in second , and Dale Earnhardt , Jr. in third . Truex was fourth quickest , and Kurt Busch took fifth . Jeff Burton managed sixth . Gordon , Jamie McMurray , Joey Logano and Kahne followed in the top ten . Other chase drivers included Montoya in seventeenth and Edwards in twenty @-@ third . Kahne scraped the turn two wall and sustained minor damage to his right @-@ hand quarter .

= = = Race = = =

The race , the thirty @-@ fifth of a total of thirty @-@ six in the 2009 season , began at 3 : 15 p.m. EST and was televised in the United States on ESPN . Around the start of the race , weather conditions were sunny . Phoenix International Raceway chaplain Ken Bowers began pre @-@ race ceremonies by giving the invocation . Former J Records recording artist Tyrese Gibson performed the national anthem , and Senator John McCain commanded the drivers to start their engines . No driver had to move to rear of the grid at the start of the race .

Truex retained his pole position lead into the first lap . On the same lap , Kurt Busch passed Truex to become the new race leader . One lap later , Martin , who started tenth , fell to eleventh . On the 4th lap , Hornish had moved up to seventh position after passing Kyle Busch and Gordon . Two laps later , Montoya moved into the sixteenth position , as Martin passed Stewart for tenth on lap 7 . By the 9th lap , Kurt Busch had a one @-@ second lead over Truex . One lap later , Kurt Busch increased his lead to 1 @-@ 5 seconds . On lap 13 , Martin passed Kyle Busch to claim ninth . Two laps later , Martin moved into eighth .

Gordon who began the race in fourteenth , had moved up eight positions to sixth by lap 22 . Three laps later , Truex had reduced Kurt Busch 's lead to one second , as Martin moved into seventh on lap 28 . One lap later , Kurt Busch extended his lead over Truex to 1 @-@ 6 seconds , as Gordon moved into fifth position . On lap 33 , Johnson passed Truex for second ; Martin passed Gordon to claim fifth on lap 38 . Four laps later , Johnson closed to half a second from Kurt Busch . Twelve laps later , Earnhardt dropped to twentieth position . On lap 57 , Johnson passed Kurt Busch to claim the lead , with Martin moving to fourth one lap later .

By lap 60 , Johnson built up a 1 @-@ 5 second lead over Kurt Busch , while Hamlin moved into the third position . Green flag pit stops took place from lap 65 to 73 ; Kurt Busch reclaimed the lead at the end of the cycle . On lap 90 , Johnson passed Kurt Busch to take over the lead position . One lap later , Hamlin took over fifth position . On the 102nd lap , Martin and Gordon moved into third and fourth respectively . Four laps later , Montoya moved into fourth . Having started on pole position , Truex clinched sixth position on lap 107 . On lap 115 , the pace car moved on track because debris was spotted on the track . During the caution , most of the leaders made pit stops .

Johnson maintained his lead on the restart , followed by Martin and Gordon . Also , the second caution was prompted when Michael Waltrip damaged his car on that restart , Brad Keselowski was hit from behind and David Ragan spun sideways . None of the leaders chose to make pit stops , as the clean @-@ up crew came on track to clear debris and fluids . Johnson held the lead at the lap 127 restart . Gordon accelerated slower than the leaders and dropped to sixth position by the next lap . On lap 129 , Kyle Busch and Gordon made contact , but both managed to continue , without damaging their cars . By the next lap , Hamlin passed Martin for second position . On lap 134 , Johnson had a 1 @-@ 5 second lead , as Clint Bowyer moved into the fifth position . By the 138th lap , Johnson 's lead was increased to 2 seconds .

Kurt Busch and Montoya moved into fourth and ninth positions respectively on lap 141 . By the

150th lap , Johnson had built up a 2 @. @ 7 second lead over Hamlin . On lap 162 , Johnson 's lead of 3 @. @ 4 seconds was reduced to nothing when debris was spotted on the track , causing a caution . During the caution , some of the leaders elected to make pit stops . Johnson remained the leader on the restart , ahead of Bowyer and Hamlin . Two laps later , a multi @- @ car collision occurred on the front straightway as Earnhardt lost control of his car , and collected Logano , Scott Speed , Hornish , Bobby Labonte , Kenseth , Stewart , Vickers and Keselowski . The damaged cars headed to the pit road during the caution as crews cleaned up debris .

Johnson maintained his lead at the restart . On lap 179 , Earnhardt headed for his garage because of an oil leak . Three laps later , Vickers and Labonte retired from the race , and Gordon dropped to tenth position . By the 186th lap , Johnson rebuilt his lead to 2 @. @ 3 seconds , as Bowyer passed Gordon to claim third . Five laps later , Martin and Gordon moved into sixth and ninth positions respectively . Johnson 's lead over Kurt Busch was three seconds by lap 196 . Four laps later , Edwards moved up to eighteenth position , while Montoya moved to eighth , one lap later . By lap 203 , Johnson maintained a 3 @. @ 4 second lead , while Burton was passed by Martin for fifth position five laps later . Johnson 's lead was increased to 4 @. @ 3 seconds by the 215th lap .

On lap 219 , Hamlin moved into the third position , and one lap later , Martin moved up another place to fourth . On lap 222 , Johnson increased his lead over Kurt Busch to almost five seconds . Six laps later , Earnhardt rejoined the race . Green flag pit stops began on lap 240 ; Johnson made a pit stop on lap 242 , giving the lead to Kenseth . After pit stops , Johnson regained the first position . By lap 277 , the drivers reported their cars becoming loose as track temperatures began to drop . Twelve laps later , Burton passed Hamlin for the second position . On lap 296 , Gordon passed Ambrose to claim ninth , while Truex moved into the fifth position . By lap 302 , Johnson maintained a 1 @. @ 8 second lead over Burton . Two laps later , David Reutimann moved back into the top ten after passing Ambrose , while Kurt Busch moved up to sixth on lap 310 . Johnson maintained his lead to win his seventh race of the 2009 season . Burton finished second , ahead of Hamlin in third , Martin in fourth , and Truex in fifth . Kurt Busch , Bowyer , Montoya , Gordon and Reutimann rounded out the top ten finishers .

= = = Post @- @ race = = =

Johnson appeared in victory lane to celebrate his seventh win of the season in front of 90 @, @ 000 who attended the race . Johnson also earned \$ 267 @, @ 001 in race winnings . Afterward , he said , " I guess it could have been a statement we were sending . There was a lot of pressure . All week long , we wondered if we could step up like we did today . I 'm very proud how we rose to the occasion . " , he continued , " When I go home tonight , I 'm going to be (mentally) driving laps , what I think I need to do in qualifying trim so I can put my best effort in on Friday . Same thing for race practice on Saturday , and go racing Sunday . Texas was such a good lesson . And I hope that the points we lost in Texas isn 't what keeps us from winning this championship . "

Burton , who finished second , was happy with his performance , " [New crew chief] Todd Berrier has come in and done a great job , the team ? s done a great job . We had one hiccup early on pit road but the rest of them we picked out our spots every single time , and that ? s what it takes ; it takes a team effort . " In the subsequent post @- @ race press conference , Hamlin said , " Anytime that Jimmie is down is not usually because of performance , it 's usually because of an incident like last week . There was no doubt in my mind they were going to come this week and make a statement . Obviously leading all the laps pretty much and winning the race sends a statement out there that he is the best , that they 're not going to be denied this year . "

The race result left Johnson maintaining the lead in the Drivers ' Championship with 6 @, @ 492 points . After the race , Martin who finished fourth , was less optimistic about his championship chances , " We 've still got to go to Homestead and run like this again because we 've still got that threat behind us , Jeff Gordon , especially . " Gordon maintained third with 6 @, @ 323 points , forty @- @ two ahead of Kurt Busch and one @- @ hundred and sixteen in front of Stewart . In the Manufacturers ' Championship , Chevrolet maintained the lead with 256 points . Toyota remained second with 198 points . Ford followed with 161 points , six ahead of Dodge in fourth . 5 @. @ 17

million people watched the race on television . The race took two hours , forty @-@ nine minutes and twenty @-@ six seconds to complete , and the margin of victory was 1 @.@ 033 seconds .

= = Results = =

= = = Qualifying = = =

= = = Race = = =

= = Standings after the race = =