

= 2006 UAW @-@ Ford 500 =

The 2006 UAW @-@ Ford 500 was a stock car racing competition which took place on October 8 , 2006 . Held at Talladega Superspeedway in Talladega , Alabama before 160 @,@ 000 spectators , the 188 @-@ lap race was the thirtieth in the 2006 NASCAR Nextel Cup Series and the fourth in the ten @-@ race , season @-@ ending Chase for the Nextel Cup . Brian Vickers of Hendrick Motorsports won the race ; Kasey Kahne finished second , and Kurt Busch came in third .

David Gilliland , who had the pole position , was passed immediately by teammate Dale Jarrett . The race lead changed 63 times , with Dale Earnhardt , Jr. leading for the most laps ( 37 ) . Earnhardt was leading on the final lap when he and Jimmie Johnson crashed after Vickers clipped Johnson 's right quarter panel . Vickers ( Johnson 's teammate ) was criticized after the race , since the crash lowered Johnson in the points standings .

The victory was the first in Vickers ' career . After the race Jeff Burton maintained his Drivers ' Championship points lead , although that lead decreased significantly because he had a flat tire in the race 's final laps . Chevrolet maintained its lead in the Manufacturers ' Championship , fifty @-@ one points ahead of Dodge and fifty @-@ two ahead of Ford with six races remaining in the season .

= = Report = =

= = = Background = = =

Talladega Superspeedway is one of six superspeedways which host NASCAR races . The standard track is a four @-@ turn , 2 @.@ 66 @-@ mile ( 4 @.@ 28 km ) superspeedway . Its turns are banked 33 degrees , and its front stretch ( the location of the finish line ) is banked at 16 @.@ 5 degrees . The back stretch also has a two @-@ degree bank .

Before the race Jeff Burton led the Drivers ' Championship with 5 @,@ 511 points , with Denny Hamlin second and Mark Martin third . Matt Kenseth and Kevin Harvick rounded out the top five and Jeff Gordon , Dale Earnhardt , Jr . , Jimmie Johnson , Kyle Busch and Kasey Kahne rounded out the top ten drivers competing in the 2006 Chase for the Nextel Cup . In the Manufacturers ' Championship , Chevrolet led with 222 points ; Ford was second with 175 , and Dodge was a close third with 174 points . Dale Jarrett was the race 's defending champion .

After the previous race at Talladega ( the 2006 Aaron 's 499 ) , the track 's condition was beginning to deteriorate . Cracks in the third and fourth turns were beginning to cause handling problems with the cars , and a temporary storage unit was built outside the track to accommodate the asphalt needed for resurfacing the track . The entire track , including the skid pad and pit road , was resurfaced , with the work completed shortly before the 2006 UAW @-@ Ford 500 began .

= = = Practice and qualification = = =

Two 60 @-@ minute practice sessions were held the Friday before Sunday 's race . In the first session Jeff Gordon was the fastest , ahead of Jarrett in second and Robby Gordon in third . David Gilliland placed fourth and Dave Blaney followed in fifth , with Casey Mears , J. J. Yeley , David Stremme , Brian Vickers and Kurt Busch rounding out the top ten . Later that day , Robby Gordon paced the second session , with Bobby Labonte , Hamlin and Tony Stewart in second , third and fourth place . Blaney duplicated his first @-@ session result in fifth , followed by Yeley , Harvick , Scott Riggs , Ryan Newman and Tony Raines .

Forty @-@ nine cars were entered in the qualifier , although due to NASCAR 's qualifying procedure only forty @-@ three could race . Gilliland clinched his first career pole position with a time of 49 @.@ 950 seconds and was joined on the grid 's front row by Jarrett , his Robert Yates Racing teammate . Johnson , Jeff Gordon and Greg Biffle rounded out the top five positions , with Travis Kvapil , Chad Chaffin , Todd Bodine , Hermie Sadler , Kirk Shelmerdine and Kevin Lepage

failing to qualify .

Early practice speeds approached 200 miles per hour ( 320 km / h ) . NASCAR had mandated before the qualifier that the holes in the cars ' restrictor plates be reduced by 1 7/64 inch ( 0 .04 mm ) , later conceding that the rule may have affected some teams more than others . According to Gilliland , " They threw a curveball at us this morning with the restrictor plate and ( engine builder ) Doug Yates wasn 't worried at all . He put the super @-@ tune on it and the thing ran great . " Earnhardt called the reduction in speed unnecessary : " The track is safe ... I don 't feel ( the late change in plate size ) is a very fair situation for everybody . Once you 're up around the 190s , what 's two miles an hour ? I don 't see what the big deal is . The speed average is up because the corner speed remains better with the new asphalt . As far as running in a straight line , we 're no faster than we 've always run here . " Despite the mandated change , NASCAR did not schedule an additional practice session .

== Race ==

Live television coverage of the race , the thirtieth of thirty @-@ six in the 2006 season , began in the United States at 1 : 00 p.m. Eastern Daylight Time on NBC . Rev. Mike Jackson gave the invocation at 2 : 20 , followed by the 151st Army Band 's rendition of the national anthem . The command for the drivers to start their engines was given by Gary Casteel of the UAW , and no driver had to move to the rear of the grid at the start .

The race began at 2 : 41 p.m. Jarrett passed Gilliland almost immediately to lead the first lap , but lost the lead to Jeff Gordon a lap later . Jamie McMurray passed Gordon for the lead on lap 4 ; by this time , Gilliland had fallen back to 30th after losing the draft . Three laps later Gordon regained the lead from McMurray , with drafting assistance from Vickers . On lap 18 McMurray reclaimed the lead from Gordon , and they exchanged the lead again two laps later . On lap 24 McMurray reclaimed the lead , and Kenny Wallace made a pit stop with his car smoking .

On lap 28 , Biffle took the lead from McMurray and Earnhardt moved into the top five . Green @-@ flag pit stops were made from laps 30 to 33 , with Biffle maintaining his lead . On lap 35 he was passed by Stewart , who lost the lead to Carl Edwards and Kyle Busch two laps later . On the 38th lap , Earnhardt took the lead . Busch passed him on lap 41 , with Earnhardt ( in the outside lane ) dropping back to seventh . On lap 46 Kenseth passed Kyle Busch for the lead , with Kurt Busch and Earnhardt passing Kenseth five laps later .

Earnhardt reclaimed the lead on lap 52 , losing it seven laps later to Elliott Sadler . Sadler refueled on the next lap , giving the lead back to Earnhardt . Kenseth took the lead on lap 61 , as Earnhardt and others made green @-@ flag pit stops . Kenseth stopped on lap 71 with Biffle and Edwards , with Biffle taking the lead as the pit @-@ stop cycle ended . Lap 72 saw the first caution , as Blaney 's left rear tire shredded and he made a pit stop . Biffle , Edwards and Sterling Marlin stayed out , while the others stopped .

Biffle led the field back up to speed at the restart , and was passed on lap 77 by Jeff Gordon . Three laps later , Sadler made a pit stop with a flat right rear tire . On lap 90 Kyle Busch took the lead , losing it to Gordon on the next lap . Earnhardt passed Gordon on lap 93 , holding the lead for nine laps . Vickers took the lead on lap 102 ; Earnhardt 's left front tire went flat the next lap , costing him a lap . Green @-@ flag pit stops began on lap 107 , with Vickers stopping on lap 108 and giving the lead to McMurray . After the pit stops , Vickers regained the lead .

On lap 121 Kyle Busch took the lead , losing it to Jeff Gordon two laps later . Within a lap Gordon lost the draft and fell back to 27th , allowing Kenseth to regain the lead . On lap 127 Clint Bowyer passed Kenseth , holding the lead for two laps until a second yellow flag was displayed due to debris . Hamlin and Michael Waltrip staggered their pit stops , enabling each of them to lead a lap under the caution . Bowyer regained the lead after Waltrip stopped , and the race restarted on lap 134 . Kenseth moved back into the lead on the next lap , with Bowyer falling back to tenth .

In a multi @-@ car accident on the first turn of lap 137 Edwards and Mears collided , involving Biffle , Jeff Gordon , Hamlin , Harvick , Marlin , McMurray , Kyle Petty and Martin Truex , Jr . Gordon drove straight to the garage and others made pit stops , giving the lead to Burton . The race

restarted on lap 145 , during which many drivers topped up with fuel . Kenseth regained the lead ; Vickers passed him on lap 147 , with Johnson taking the lead a lap later . That lap Reed Sorenson 's engine failed , ending his race .

Truex Jr. stayed out of pit road , and led the field to the restart on lap 152 before Johnson passed him a lap later . On lap 154 Paul Menard took the lead , with drafting assistance from Earnhardt , before Johnson regained the lead a lap later . Kahne took the lead on lap 158 , losing it to Earnhardt on lap 165 . A five @-@ car accident on turn two of lap 173 , involving Yeley , Menard , Stewart , Stremme and Hamlin , prompted the fifth caution ; none of the leaders made pit stops during this caution .

The race restarted on lap 178 , with Earnhardt leading Johnson and Vickers . That lap , Burton ( in fifth ) had a flat left rear tire and lost a lap . The field then formed a single line , with most remaining in that formation for the rest of the race . On the final lap , Johnson and Vickers left turn two with Johnson moving out of line to pass Earnhardt . When Vickers tried to move out with Johnson to provide drafting assistance , he clipped Johnson 's right rear quarter panel . Johnson clipped Earnhardt , sending both drivers into the infield . The yellow flag went out and the field was frozen in place , with the order of finish determined by where the drivers were when the caution began . This gave Vickers the victory ( the first of his career ) , although he was booed by the crowd .

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

Vickers appeared in victory lane to celebrate his first career win in front of the crowd , earning \$ 228 @, @ 850 for the victory . Earnhardt was quick to forgive him for the last @-@ lap accident : " He didn 't wreck anyone on purpose . He was trying to push the 48 . I don 't think he thought , ' Oh , here 's my chance to knock them both out . ' He just got excited trying to push the 48 . " Johnson was less sanguine : " We had a great chance to make up some points and got crashed by a teammate ... I was real patient until the white flag was up . I got a good run inside the 8 and got a lot of help from behind ? too much help ... Knowing the situation we 're all in , I would hope someone would be a little more patient . " Johnson 's crew chief , Chad Knaus , was annoyed : " I just don 't think [ Vickers ] has the talent to understand what he has underneath him . "

Vickers , who would leave Hendrick Motorsports in 2007 for Red Bull Racing Team , said : " I would expect them to be a little upset . Jimmie is my friend , my teammate , and he is running for a championship . But he knows just as well as I do that if I wasn 't bump @-@ drafting , he never would have had a shot to pass Junior . " Additionally , he denied that he drove more aggressively because he was leaving . Third @-@ place finisher Kurt Busch argued Vickers was in a " Catch @-@ 22 " situation : " He was trying to help his teammate , " said Busch , who finished third behind Kasey Kahne . " It just didn 't turn out that way . Vickers was doing the best he could to help the 48 . He just didn 't anticipate the 8 car blocking as long as he did . " Vickers would later receive additional security during the next race weekend .

The result kept Burton in the lead in the Drivers ' Championship . After the race , Jeff Gordon ( who was involved in the lap @-@ 137 accident ) was less optimistic about his championship chances : " This pretty much does it for us as far as I 'm concerned for the championship . You knew exactly that something like that was going to happen . " In the Manufacturers ' Championship Chevrolet increased its point total to 231 ; Dodge moved into second place with 180 and Ford was a close third with 179 . The race took three hours , ten minutes and twenty @-@ three seconds to complete ; because it ended under caution , no margin of victory was recorded .

= = Results = =

= = = Qualifying = = =

= = = Race results = = =

= = Standings after the race = =