

NASCAR 2011

By Gerald Hodges/the Racing Reporter

Harvick Beats Johnson at California

After five Sprint Cup races into the 2011 season, there have been five different winners.

Kevin Harvick's win Sunday at California made him the fifth winner.

"We had him (Johnson) beat last year and I gave it away," said Harvick. "This is our first win this year, but it isn't because we haven't had good cars. We've had a lot of adversity. Our cars have been fast and we showed it today."

Harvick made a pass around Johnson on the last lap that was about the only dramatic moment of a boring 200-lap race.

Kyle Busch was leading the race after a restart on lap 190. Johnson passed Busch with four-to-go, with Harvick right on his tail. Harvick dogged Johnson until the two cars were going down the back straightaway on the last lap.

Harvick put the nose of his No. 29 Chevrolet under the rear bumper of Johnson's car and pushed him as they entered the third turn. The extra momentum forced Johnson to slow down a little. Harvick went to the outside, took the lead, then cut down to the low part of the track, as the two cars headed to the checkered flag.

Harvick's margin of victory was about a car-length.

"We couldn't hold him off any longer," said Johnson, who has yet to win a race in 2011. "I was way loose there at the end. I hate to lose a race that close to the finish, but that was all we could do today."

Kyle Busch led the most laps (151), and had the dominant car for most of the day, but wound up third.

"We lost the handling on the car," said Busch. "I couldn't handle it going into the turns or coming out of the turns. We were in position to win, but I couldn't get it down."

The remaining top-10 finishers were Matt Kenseth, Ryan Newman, Carl Edwards, Clint Bowyer, Brian Vickers, Kasey Kahne, and polesitter, Juan Montoya.

Kenseth's fourth-place in the waning laps of the race led three Roush Fenway cars to finish in the top-11. Carl Edwards used a sixth-place finish to claim the Sprint Cup points lead; giving Roush Fenway the lead in both the Sprint Cup and Nationwide Series (Ricky Stenhouse Jr.)

Dale Earnhardt Jr. never led a lap and finished 12th. Tony Stewart had a strong car all day, but wound up 13th.

Top-12 Chase leaders after 5 of 36: 1. Edwards-187, 2. Newman-178, 3. Kurt Busch-177, 4. Kyle Busch-176, 5. Johnson-173, 6. Stewart-170, 7. Menard-164, 8. Montoya-161, 9. Harvick-157, 10. Kenseth-157, 11. Kahne-157, 12. Earnhardt-156

Kyle Busch Continues Nationwide Domination

Thanks to a two-tire call with 13 laps left, Kyle Busch won Saturday's Nationwide race at Fontana, CA over runner-up Carl Edwards.

It was Busch's third consecutive win in the Nationwide series and the fourth in the past five races at Fontana. He now has 46 career wins in the series, three short of the series record of Mark Martin, who finished eighth Saturday.

"I think it's pretty satisfying when you can win one like that," Busch said. "I mean, it's great to go out there and kick everybody's butt and win the race and just come to the media center and go home. But today, it's a little bit more fun."

During the last round of pit stops, Kyle Busch was the only driver to put on two tires. All the rest of the leaders took one.

"I did not think of two tires until we were jacked up on the left side of the car," Edwards said. "I thought, 'Man, this is kind of close to the end. I wonder if somebody will take two, but I didn't really think about it more than that."

"I guess it's a little bit of shame that it didn't come down to a real battle at the end, but it very well could have. A little bit of a slower stop on Kyle's car or a caution or something like that, and it was going to be an insane finish."

Kevin Harvick finished third. Ricky Stenhouse Jr. ran fourth and took the lead in the series standings by six points over Jason Leffler (11th Saturday). Elliott Sadler came home fifth.

Trevor Bayne, Joey Logano, Mark Martin, Aric Almirola, and Brad Keselowski rounded out the top-10



Kevin Harvick wins in California this past Sunday

finishes. Top-10 points leaders after 5 of 34: 1. Stenhouse-181, 2. Leffler-175, 3. Allgaier-155, 4. Almirola-155, 5. Sorenson-151, 6. Bayne-150, 7. Sadler-149, 8. K. Wallace-140, 9. Scott-138, 10. Bliss-125.

Commentary Many NASCAR drivers have gotten involved with Twitter and Facebook, some extensively, tweeting practically from the moment they wake up in the morning.

Dale Earnhardt Jr. isn't one of them.

Certainly, he understands Twitter's usefulness and his team's use of it, but he just can't get into it.

"I used to have a Myspace.com page and I used to have a Facebook page, (but) I don't anymore because it was just too much responsibility," he said. "I felt like you had to plug in and be involved with it so much and I thought personally I don't need to do it. I understand we use it on the business side and how it works for JRM, but personally, you know, it would be fun for about a month and then I would start to feel like it was a job where people expected me to do it."

Meanwhile Trevor Bayne, the surprise winner of this year's Daytona 500 still doesn't have a ride for this year's All-Star race at Charlotte. His regular team, the Wood Brothers running a limited schedule, without the All-Star race.

There was speculation that Roush Fenway, who

builds the Fords used by the Wood Brothers, might sponsor him.

Roush Fenway President Steve Newmark said the team has no plans to sponsor him in the All-Star event.

"It's not anything we've had discussions about," Newmark said. "We're focused on having Trevor run in Nationwide and try to win the championship. We're hopeful that the Wood Brothers will figure out a way to get Trevor in the All-Star race, but we haven't had any discussions about putting him in any of our vehicles."

Weekend Racing: It's back to Martinsville, the oldest and smallest track on the NASCAR circuit for the Cup and Truck teams this weekend. The Nationwide teams are off.

Martinsville opened in 1947 with 750 seats and the track configuration has not changed.

Sat., Apr. 2, Camping World Truck Series race 4 of 24, Starting time: 2 pm; TV: Speed.

Sun., Apr. 3, Sprint Cup Goody's 500, race 6 of 36, Starting time: 12 pm; TV: Fox.

All times are Eastern. **Racing Trivia Question:** Where is Kevin Harvick's hometown?

Last Week's Question: Who is the actual car owner of Jimmy Johnson's No. 48? **Answer:** The majority owner is Jeff Gordon.

You may contact the Racing Reporter at hodges@race500.com

Customer Appreciation Weekend festivities at The Lodge at Copperhead

The North Georgia Idol Contest

The North Georgia Idol Contest is being hosted by The Lodge at Copperhead, Blairsville, GA, on Friday April 1st, 8 pm. The contest is open to all singers, emerging through seasoned performers, with the exception of those who earn their living exclusively from performing. The deadline for entering is Noon, March 31, 2011. "If you have been told you can sing, this is an opportunity to shine," said Michelle Evans, spokesperson for the Lodge at Copperhead.

Information and registration for the North Georgia Idol contest is available at www.TheLodgeAtCopperhead.com/

idol. The entry fee for competing is \$25 per singer and payable when registering at the website. Registration is limited to the first thirty-five entrants. Early registration is recommended to compete for a professional recording studio session package produced by five-time International Telly Award winner, dvmediaworld.com Murphy, N.C. and Miami, FL. The 2nd and 3rd place winners will win cash and other great prizes.

Contestants are encouraged to invite their family and friends to support them during the competition for North Georgia Idol. The public is welcomed



Compete for a recording contract!

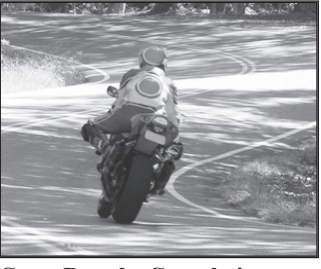
to attend the show with no cover charge when dining in The Lodge at Copperhead restaurant.

The Running of the Gauntlet

The Running of the Gauntlet is an attraction open to motorcyclists and sports car enthusiasts of all skill levels, and features a challenging and scenic 133-mile route through the Blue Ridge Mountains. The Lodge At Copperhead and Biker Barn, LLC of Blairsville, Georgia have announced the inaugural running of the Gauntlet on April 2, 2011, with departure at 10 a.m. E.S.T. from The Lodge at Copperhead.

"North Georgia's mountains have the most unspoiled beauty in the country and we want to share that with our guests," said Michelle Evans. "The Gauntlet allows the tourist to see the area through the eyes of the locals." Participants will check in at Gauntlet Headquarters - The Lodge at Copperhead at 8 a.m. where they'll be given a map detailing a route that features some of North Georgia's most challenging roads and scenic vistas. Runners of the Gauntlet will depart from The Lodge at Copperhead at 10 a.m. on paved

roads that traverse Georgia's highest peak, from where they can view several states on a clear day, and will enjoy refreshing stops at scenic overpasses. "This is not a race," Evans said. "It's a journey: The first such journey since the Tail of the Dragon near Deals Gap. We're really proud of this, and can't wait to get it kicked off." Upon successfully running the Gauntlet participants will be able to purchase t-shirts, hats, bandanas, pins, and patches to commemorate their achievement, as well as celebrate with other Gauntlet runners. "We have so many motorsports enthusiasts who come to our area for our roads and natural beauty, but they'll never find the amazing roads we'll send them on with their GPS," Evans said. "And that's not to mention the fun they're in for when they get back." Brad Betters, spokesperson for the Biker Barn said, "We are trying to put forth a team effort to bring tourism to our local area to help improve the economy."



Come Run the Gauntlet!

"By getting tourist to stay in our local area, we will help all local businesses." To celebrate the first Running of the Gauntlet, weekend events will feature live music by Mike Watson's Band, as well as Comfort Food with Attitude, and all the other refreshments the Lodge has become famous for. Once the Gauntlet has been properly kicked off, The Lodge at Copperhead will sponsor a variety of events taking advantage of it. One such event, scheduled for April 9, is a treasure hunt for the Rumble for Relay Motorcycle Ride to benefit the American Cancer Society.

2nd Annual Car & Bike Show

The 2nd Annual Car & Bike Show will be held Saturday, April 2, 2011, from Noon - 4 pm at The Lodge at Copperhead.

Advance registration is open through Noon, March 31st with day of event registration, at 8 a.m. E.S.T.

Registration fee is \$15 per entry which includes ten percent food discount, 2 pool passes and live music by Mike Watson's Band from 1-4 p.m. and 6-9 p.m.

"Participants will have photo opportunities provided by Studio One Photography, favorites cooked on the outdoor grill, chair massage by Ways of Well-

ness, and great music by Mike Watson's Band." "Plus," Evans added, "winners in each category will be awarded cash prizes."

There is no general admission fee for the show.

The community is invited to participate in the show and the Customer Appreciation Weekend Events at The Lodge at Copperhead.

The Lodge at Copperhead is North Georgia's premier vacation destination and special events venue. A rustic mountain lodge surrounded by cabins nestled in a resort community offering Lodging, Casual Fine Dining,



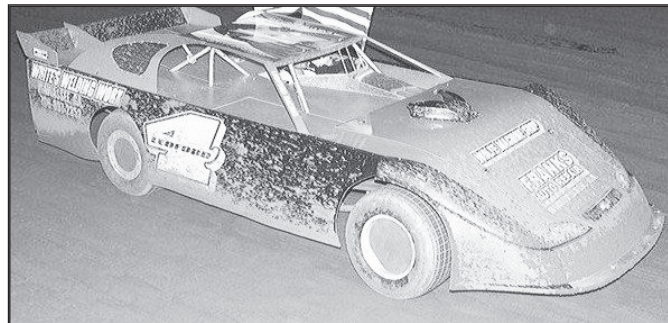
Enjoy the 2nd Annual Car & Bike Show

Weekly Entertainment, and Special Events. NT(Mar30,C5)ac

Local Racing Action

By: Carl Vanzura

Danny Ledford shines in season opener at Tri-County



Hiwassee driver Danny Ledford won big at Tri-County (#4) Racing Action

Hiwassee hot shoe driver Danny Ledford became only the sixth driver in the long history of Brasstown's Tri-County Racetrack to turn a 12 second lap in qualifying. Starting on the inside pole, Ledford held the lead for the 25-lap main event as rain started falling slightly as the checkers fell.

A battle between Shawn Chastain and David Payne saw the two Murphy drivers blasting around the high-banked oval inches apart. With five laps to go, Chastain pulled into the pits with an ailing car. Payne held on to second place with Blairsville's Jacob Grizzle in a strong third in front of George Mashburn and Rodney Weeks.

Charlie Parker out paced Hiwassee based Bobby Painter's car for victory in the Limited/Crate feature. Hiwassee's Kevin Bradshaw made a great pass in the fourth turn for third place finish.

Other winners Friday

night were Jeffrey Woods, Charles Toomey and Justin Woodard. Tri-County has changed from Saturday racing to every other Friday night. The next date will be April 8th.

Almost every track in the country fell to the rain as well as all the Saturday tracks in Georgia. Cleveland Speedway North Georgia Speedway. Westminster Speedway and Hartwell Speedway will all try it again this coming week. Boyds Speedway ran Friday night and former SAS champion Jamie Perry took the win.

Blairsville's Jonathan Davenport has already started a good 2011 season with a \$10,000 win at Cherokee Speedway in Gaffney, South Carolina a couple weeks ago. Friday at Ocala, Florida in the World of Outlaw Late Model Dirt Series \$10,000 to win feature. Davenport led the first 18 laps until winner Darrell Lanigan got past him. Davenport held on to finish third. NT(Mar30,C2)



Blairsville's Jonathon Davenport took home \$10,000 two weeks ago.