



## STANDINGS

### Final 2005 standings NEXTEL CUP

- Final 2005 standings
1. **Tony Stewart**  
6,533; previous: 1
  2. Greg Biffle  
6,498; previous: 4
  3. Carl Edwards  
6,498; previous: 3
  4. Mark Martin  
6,428; previous: 5
  5. Jimmie Johnson  
6,406; previous: 2
  6. Ryan Newman  
6,359; previous: 6
  7. Matt Kenseth  
6,352; previous: 7
  8. Rusty Wallace  
6,140; previous: 8
  9. Jeremy Mayfield  
6,073; previous: 10
  10. Kurt Busch  
5,974; previous: 9



**Jimmie Johnson** dropped three spots to fifth in the final standings after a disappointing 40th-place finish in the Ford 400.

### BUSCH SERIES

#### Final 2005 standings

1. **Martin Truex Jr.**  
4,937; previous: 1
2. Clint Bowyer  
4,869; previous: 2
3. Carl Edwards  
4,601; previous: 3
4. Reed Sorenson  
4,453; previous: 4
5. Denny Hamlin  
4,143; previous: 5
6. Paul Menard  
4,101; previous: 7
7. Kenny Wallace  
4,068; previous: 6
8. David Green  
3,908; previous: 8
9. Jason Keller  
3,866; previous: 9
10. Greg Biffle  
3,865; previous: 11



**Martin Truex Jr.** claimed the Busch championship after a seventh-place finish in the Ford 300.

**Ryan Newman and Greg Biffle** battled at the front of the pack through most of the Busch Series Ford 300 at Homestead-Miami Speedway. Newman took the lead with a daring pass three laps from the finish to claim victory. It was Newman's sixth victory in nine Busch races this season — all of them coming in his last seven races.

### CRAFTSMAN TRUCK

#### Final 2005 standings

1. **Ted Musgrave**  
3,535; previous: 1
2. Dennis Setzer  
3,480; previous: 2
3. Todd Bodine  
3,462; previous: 3
4. Ron Hornaday  
3,369; previous: 4
5. Mike Skinner  
3,273; previous: 5
6. Bobby Hamilton  
3,164; previous: 6
7. David Starr  
3,148; previous: 7
8. Jack Sprague  
3,137; previous: 8
9. Matt Crafton  
3,095; previous: 9
10. Johnny Benson  
3,076; previous: 13

**Johnny Benson** jumped three spots to finish 10th in the standings following a top-three finish in the Ford 200.



**Todd Bodine** finished the season with a flourish, winning three consecutive races, including Saturday's 200-mile truck race at Homestead. He led 74 laps, including the final 18, to take the victory over Jack Sprague, Johnny Benson, Mike Bliss and Bill Lester, whose fifth-place finish tied his career-best at Kansas earlier this year.

### FORD 400 REVIEW

# Can't catch Tony

## Nextel Cup title won via conservative run in finale

By RICK MINTER  
Cox News Service

Homestead, Fla. Tony Stewart took a big step toward putting his tempestuous past behind him by keeping his cool from Daytona to Homestead, dominating the circuit for most of the season and taking his second Nextel Cup championship with a conservative 15th-place run in the season finale.

His triumph in the second year of NASCAR's Chase for the Nextel Cup playoff format also has the NASCAR world looking to the future — to Stewart's place in history.

His championship makes him only the second active Cup driver with multiple titles — Jeff Gordon is the other — and 14th overall in NASCAR history. Stewart also carries an Indy Racing League crown, four USAC titles and two other major championships in kart racing.

Is the 24-time Cup winner really one of the sport's all-time greats? Mark Martin, who finished second to Greg Biffle by just inches in Sunday's Ford 400 at Homestead-Miami Speedway, answered with an emphatic "yes." And he said that's true whether Stewart has two champion's trophies or none.

"I don't believe the trophy makes the man," said Martin, who finished fourth in the Chase. "Tony Stewart, in my eyes, is the greatest race car driver I've watched drive in this era. A.J. Foyt might have been that when I was a little boy, but Tony Stewart is my driving hero."

Gordon, who finished ninth in the race and 11th in the points standings, agreed that Stewart is a cut above.

"Tony Stewart is a great driver," Gordon said. "He's capable of making a race team greater than it is. He brings a lot to the table and he's good at a lot of different types of race tracks, and [Stewart's team] provide good cars and equipment for him."

Gordon, who has four championships, also agreed that multiple titles are an indicator of true greatness.

"Once you win more than one it puts you in an elite group," Gordon said. "And [Stewart] is capable of winning more."

Gordon also acknowledged that Stewart is more mature and much better in his interactions with peers, the media and fans than he was in 2002, when his title run was dogged by controversy on and off the track.

"He finally started to get it," Gordon said. "He's a lot more relaxed, and I think that helps him mentally prepare for a race."

Stewart said he's happy with his accomplishments, much more proud of this title than the one he won in 2002, but he hasn't really thought about his place in history. He does know that he deeply appreciates the praise from his peers.

"That's a greater reward than any championship or trophy," Stewart said. "No matter what happens or how long I race or don't race, everything that happens from here is icing on the cake. I've done more in my life to this point than a



NASCAR

**Tony Stewart celebrates his second Nextel Cup title.** Since winning the Brickyard 400 on Aug. 7, Stewart held the top spot in the standings every week but one. He didn't win any of the 10 Chase races, but he didn't need to in order to claim the championship.

lot of people have. I've been very lucky to do the things we've done. I just haven't looked that far into the future."

He and his crew did appear to be looking ahead in their race strategy for Sunday's race. They took the conservative approach, riding in mid-pack, steering clear of other drivers and letting faster drivers pass unchallenged. His 15th-place finish safely secured the title by 35 points over Biffle and Carl Edwards. Biffle is the official runner-up because he led Edwards by two in the tie-breaking category of race wins.

"We had to play it safe," Stewart's crew chief Greg Zipadelli said.

Said Stewart: "Everybody was courteous around me, and I was courteous with everybody."

The results of Sunday's race and the Chase in general should silence any criticism of the Chase format, whose critics say the 10-race playoff doesn't reflect season-long performance.

This year, it did without question.

Stewart was atop the standings every week but one since winning the Brickyard 400 on Aug. 7. His

five race victories were second only to Biffle's six. Stewart led the circuit in top-five finishes with 17 and top-10 finishes with 25, as well as money won. Even before he collects the \$5.8 million that goes to the champion, he had banked \$6.8 million.

His closest challenger all season, Jimmie Johnson, entered the final race second in the standings and dodged disaster early in the race when Scott Wimmer spun right in front of him on Lap 15. But his luck ran out just before the halfway mark.

After moving into the top 10 from his 32nd starting spot, Johnson began to slow dramatically before settling in 28th and at the rear of the pack. Rather than stopping under green, he stayed on the track, hoping for a caution flag that would allow him to replace a questionable tire without losing laps.

But on Lap 126, the right rear tire blew on his No. 48 Chevrolet, sending him spinning into the wall. As he was driving back to the garage, crew chief Chad Knaus radioed to his driver, "Great job. Good season. Let's go home."

## RACE STATISTICS

Time of race: 3 hours, 2 minutes, 50 seconds  
Margin of victory: 0.017 seconds  
Winner's average speed: 131.431 mph  
Caution flags: eight for 37 laps  
Lead changes: 21 among 12 drivers  
Lap leaders: Carl Edwards, 1; Ryan Newman, 2-16; Jimmy Spencer, 17-18; Newman, 19-30; Jeff Gordon, 31; Newman, 32-34; Gordon, 35-44; Denny Hamlin, 45; Edwards, 46-99; Gordon, 100-127; Edwards, 128-132; Newman, 133-135; Edwards, 136-169; Casey Mears, 170-227; Mark Martin, 228-229; Greg Biffle, 230; Kevin Harvick, 231; Sterling Marlin, 232-234; Joe Nemecek, 235-236; Mears, 237-253; Dave Blaney, 254-259; Biffle, 260-267.

## KEY MOMENTS IN THE RACE

**Lap 26:** Tony Stewart was forced to take evasive action when rookie Kyle Busch spun directly in front of his Chevrolet and the cars of Jamie McMurray and Mark Martin. Stewart, who was running 13th at the time, quickly slowed and steered his No. 20 near the Turn 4 apron to avoid Busch's crumpled racer. It was the sole anxious moment of the event for Stewart, who ran conservatively and teetered just outside of the top 10 much of the day.

"Obviously, with the 5 car spinning right off the bat, that was a little closer than I wanted," Stewart said. "It wasn't exactly what I wanted to see that early in the race. The good thing is he stayed up by the wall, and we were able to get by. The hard part was it was coming off the corner, and we were facing straight into the sun. When we got through that, you definitely felt like you had used up one of your nine lives right there."

**Lap 126:** Less than 12 laps after radioing to crew chief Chad Knaus that he felt the tire on his No. 48 going flat, Jimmie Johnson's championship hopes were dashed when his Chevrolet slammed the Turn 3 wall as he was about to be lapped by teammate Jeff Gordon. The culprit was a blown right-rear tire.

"I knew there was a problem," said Johnson, who started 32nd but climbed to ninth by Lap 91. "[The tire] blew out going down into Turn 3. It just exploded. When I took off on that restart, I started going backward. We were about three seconds off the pace and had just pitted new tires on."

**Lap 252:** Pit strategy played out when the caution waved for the final time for debris on the track. Stewart, who was running 15th and in danger of being lapped, chose to remain on the track to gain five bonus points for leading a lap. The plan was foiled when Dave Blaney also opted to stay out. Stewart, who never led, pitted on the following lap for four tires. Carl Edwards, who led the most laps, took four tires, while his Roush Racing teammate Greg Biffle chose two. When the race resumed seven laps later, Biffle lined up fourth, Edwards was 12th and Stewart was 15th.

Edwards stood by his team's late-race strategy. "If we would have taken two tires, we might have won the race," Edwards said. "But I believed we could make it back up there. If we could had gotten another yellow, we would have annihilated them."

**Lap 260:** Biffle makes the race-winning pass with a daring three-wide move between Dave Blaney and Mark Martin to take the lead with eight laps remaining.

"They were sort of holding me up a bit," Biffle said, "so I kind of breathed the throttle just a little bit, and Blaney slid up and gave me just enough room to get my car between them. I actually just drug the brake pedal and never lifted. It was a phenomenal pass. I just did what I had to do to get by them."

**Lap 267:** In the dramatic final-lap duel, Biffle narrowly edged Roush Racing teammate Mark Martin to win the Homestead season finale for the second consecutive season. The victory was bittersweet for Biffle, who finished tied for second in the Chase with teammate Edwards, 35 points behind Stewart.



EDWARDS



NASCAR

**Greg Biffle won the Ford 400 for his Nextel Cup-leading sixth victory of the season and a second-place finish in the Chase.**

### HOMESTEAD NOTEBOOK

## For second year in a row, Biffle's win fails to capture spotlight

By RICK MINTER  
Cox News Service,  
Homestead, Fla.

From a publicity standpoint, Greg Biffle sure picks the wrong races to win. For the second consecutive year he won the season-ending Ford 400 at Homestead-Miami Speedway, only to see his win overshadowed by the Chase for the Nextel Cup. At least this time he was in the running for the title, and he might have been on the big stage afterward if not for some loose lug nuts at Texas Motor Speedway that left him 20th after running near the front for most of that race.

He wound up second in the standings, tied with Roush Racing teammate Carl Edwards and just 35 points behind Stewart. (Biffle gets the runner-up spot because he leads

Edwards in race victories.) "I was hoping that we wouldn't lose by only 35, because then it would bring that Texas thing back in my head," Biffle said after beating Mark Martin to win by .017 seconds, a margin best measured in inches. "If it was 50 or more, it would've been a moot point, because it didn't matter. But I'm so thankful being second. That's pretty neat for us."

Once Jimmie Johnson dropped out of the race, Edwards was Stewart's closest challenger. He led the most laps (94) but finished fourth, capping off a remarkable first full season in which he won four races in Nextel Cup and five in Busch.

"We did almost everything," Edwards told reporters. "This was a fun season."

And he said he'll be back next year with the same positive attitude. "If we can maintain the same amount of luck, we'll be all right," he said. "We're going to have a good time next year. I can't wait."



BIFFLE

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