

NASCAR INSIDER

2005 NEXTEL CUP WINNERS

Feb. 20 — Daytona 500
Jeff Gordon
Feb. 27 — Auto Club 500
Greg Biffle
March 13 — UAW-Chrysler 400
Jimmie Johnson
March 20 — Golden Corral 500
Carl Edwards
April 3 — Food City 500
Kevin Harvick
April 10 — Advance Auto Parts 500
Jeff Gordon
April 17 — Samsung/RadioShack 500
Greg Biffle
April 23 — Subway Fresh 500
Kurt Busch
May 1 — Aaron's 499
Jeff Gordon
May 7 — Dodge Charger 500
Greg Biffle
May 14 — Chevy Revolution 400
Kasey Kahne
May 29 — Coca-Cola 600
Jimmie Johnson
June 5 — MBNA RacePoints 400
Greg Biffle
June 12 — Pocono 500
Carl Edwards
June 19 — Batman Begins 400
Greg Biffle
June 26 — Dodge/Save Mart 350
Tony Stewart
July 2 — Pepsi 400
Tony Stewart
July 10 — USG Sheetrock 400
Dale Earnhardt, Jr.
July 17 — New England 300
Tony Stewart
July 24 — Pennsylvania 500
Kurt Busch
Aug. 7 — Allstate 400
Tony Stewart
Aug. 14 — Sirius at The Glen
Tony Stewart
Aug. 21 — GFS Marketplace 400
Jeremy Mayfield
Aug. 27 — Sharpie 500
Matt Kenseth
Sept. 4 — Sony HD 500
Kyle Busch
Sept. 10 — Chevy Rock & Roll 400
Kurt Busch
Sept. 18 — Sylvania 300
Ryan Newman
Sept. 25 — MBNA 400
Jimmie Johnson
Oct. 2 — UAW-Ford 500
Dale Jarrett
Oct. 9 — Banquet 400
Mark Martin
Oct. 15 — UAW-GM Quality 500
Jimmie Johnson
Oct. 23 — Subway 500
Jeff Gordon
Oct. 30 — Bass Pro Shops
MBNA 500
Carl Edwards
Nov. 6 — Dickies 500
Carl Edwards
Nov. 13 — Checker Auto Parts 500
Kyle Busch
Nov. 20 — Ford 400
Greg Biffle

WIN LEADERS

Greg Biffle, 6
Tony Stewart, 5
Carl Edwards, 4
Jeff Gordon, 4
Jimmie Johnson, 4
Kurt Busch, 3
Kyle Busch, 2
Dale Earnhardt, Jr., 1
Kevin Harvick, 1
Dale Jarrett, 1
Kasey Kahne, 1
Matt Kenseth, 1
Mark Martin, 1
Jeremy Mayfield, 1
Ryan Newman, 1



BIFFLE

'05 Cup champion Stewart ready to take on Manhattan

Plenty has changed in NASCAR since Tony Stewart won his first Cup championship in 2002, but one thing remains the same: a whirlwind visit to New York to celebrate the title.

Stewart will have a busy schedule this week as he embarks on the media interviews and guest appearances associated with "Nextel Cup Champion's Week presented by Sprint."

Highlights of the week will include the traditional champion's photo shoot in Times Square and a "Series Victory Lap," in which the top-10 cars are paraded through the city.

Stewart and other Chase contenders will also appear at various Manhattan landmarks, such as the New York Stock Exchange, a training facility for the New York Fire Department, the Ronald McDonald House, area hospitals, various fan events, nightclubs, media luncheons and television shows broadcast from New York.

The week of activities will culmi-

A CHASE to REMEMBER

By RICK MINTER / Cox News Service

From Tony Stewart's ascent to the championship, Kurt Busch's brush with the law and subsequent suspension, the 2005 NASCAR Chase for the Championship was filled with excitement.

Here is a review of some of the highs and lows of this year's Chase.

THE HIGHS

The formula for the Chase wound up putting the circuit's hottest drivers in contention for the title. Even though Chase drivers comprised less than a quarter of the starting field each week, they won seven of the final 10 races.

Of the 50 possible top-five finishing positions in the final 10 races, 36 were taken by Chase drivers, while 58 of the 100 possible top-10 finishes went to drivers in the title hunt.

Tony Stewart, the driver who has been the most visible, most talked-about driver all season, wound up as champion.

His second title came in a year in which he not only remade his image — from bad boy to contented superstar — but also achieved his lifelong goals of winning at Indianapolis Motor Speedway, his home track, and Daytona International Speedway.

Mark Martin's late-career, late-season surge was equally popular in the garage and grandstands as both peers and fans celebrated his success.

His win at Kansas Speedway came a week after he was swept up in a crash at Talladega Superspeedway that essentially ruined his chance to win his first Nextel Cup championship. Then he came within a few feet of winning the season finale at Homestead.

By simply making the field for the Chase, the retiring Rusty Wallace and the soon-to-be retired Martin gave their legions of fans reason to follow the title run.

Both were competitive in the Chase, with Wallace as high as second in points after Dover, and Martin winning at Kansas and finishing second at Homestead.

Carl Edwards, a refreshing new face on the NASCAR scene, sped to back-to-back wins at Atlanta Motor Speedway and Texas Motor Speedway, earning a long-shot chance at the championship and pleasing fans with his dramatic runs on the track and his trademark back-flips afterward.

Carl Edwards (right) chats with his crew at Homestead. Edwards finished third in the Chase.



Photos by DAMON HIGGINS / Cox News Service

NASCAR fans pass a sign promoting the Chase while entering Homestead-Miami Speedway on Nov. 20.

THE LOWS

Kurt Busch's run-in with Arizona sheriff's deputies and his resulting suspension from the final two races was a distraction from the points race and an embarrassment for NASCAR.

After all, he was the defending series champion, a contender in this year's Chase and was expected to participate in the ceremony crowning his successor.

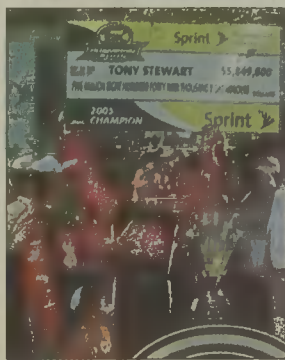
The grinding of the track at Lowe's Motor Speedway was intended to facilitate more passing. Instead, it caused a rash of blown tires and crashes, so many that, at one point, NASCAR officials considered ending the race early. Once again, the focus was taken off the Chase.

Jimmie Johnson won at Dover in the second Chase race, but his win was tainted because his car was equipped with trick shocks that effectively circumvented NASCAR's height rules. Although Johnson wasn't penalized, series officials changed the shock rules and the incident took attention from the championship hunt.

There's little doubt that the Chase lost some of its luster because the sport's two biggest stars, Jeff Gordon and Dale Earnhardt Jr., weren't a part of it. But both drivers supported the formula, saying they didn't deserve a shot at the title this year.

The inevitable Big Wreck at Talladega in the third race of the Chase wiped out Martin's Ford, effectively ending his title run.

Other incidents left contenders Johnson, Wallace and Greg Biffle with finishes outside the top 20 and others questioning the wisdom of having a restrictor-plate race in the final 10 Chase events.



Tony Stewart celebrates his championship winnings.



Mark Martin's crew rolls out the No. 6 Ford from the



Dale Earnhardt Jr. (8) started 40th, but worked his way to a 19th-place finish in the season-ending Ford 400.



Carl Edwards (right) chats with his crew at Homestead. Edwards finished third in the Chase.

POINTS LEADERS

Tony Stewart, 6,533
Greg Biffle, 6,498
Carl Edwards, 6,498
Mark Martin, 6,428
Jimmie Johnson, 6,406
Ryan Newman, 6,359
Matt Kenseth, 6,352
Rusty Wallace, 6,140
Jeremy Mayfield, 6,073
Kurt Busch, 5,974
Jeff Gordon, 4,174
Jamie McMurray, 4,130
Elliott Sadler, 4,084
Kevin Harvick, 4,072
Dale Jarrett, 3,960
Joe Nemechek, 3,953
Brian Vickers, 3,847
Jeff Burton, 3,803
Dale Earnhardt Jr., 3,780
Kyle Busch, 3,753

MONEY LEADERS

Tony Stewart, \$6,987,530
Jeff Gordon, \$6,855,440
Jimmie Johnson, \$6,796,660
Kurt Busch, \$6,516,320
Mark Martin, \$5,994,350
Matt Kenseth, \$5,790,770
Dale Earnhardt Jr., \$5,761,830
Greg Biffle, \$5,729,930
Ryan Newman, \$5,578,110
Elliott Sadler, \$5,024,120
Kevin Harvick, \$4,970,050
Carl Edwards, \$4,889,990
Kasey Kahne, \$4,874,840
Rusty Wallace, \$4,868,980
Dale Jarrett, \$4,705,440
Bobby Labonte, \$4,627,400
Jeremy Mayfield, \$4,566,910
Michael Waltrip, \$4,375,090
Ricky Rudd, \$4,300,410
Jeff Burton, \$4,265,670

LAPS LED

Tony Stewart, 1,845
Greg Biffle, 1,322
Matt Kenseth, 998
Kurt Busch, 958
Jimmie Johnson, 547
Jeff Gordon, 581
Carl Edwards, 434
Kasey Kahne, 430
Ryan Newman, 391
Elliott Sadler, 383

POLE WINNERS

Ryan Newman, 8
Elliott Sadler, 4
Tony Stewart, 4
Carl Edwards, 2
Jeff Gordon, 2
Kevin Harvick, 2
Kasey Kahne, 2
Matt Kenseth, 2
Kyle Busch, 1
Denny Hamlin, 1
Dale Jarrett, 1
Jimmie Johnson, 1
Jamie McMurray, 1
Joe Nemechek, 1
Scott Riggs, 1
Michael Waltrip, 1
Brian Vickers, 1

MANUFACTURER STANDINGS

Wins in parentheses
Chevrolet, 259 (17)
Ford, 246 (16)
Dodge, 179 (3)

ROOKIE

Kyle Busch, 349
Travis Kvapil, 268

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Nextel Cup Series Awards Ceremony

Where: The Waldorf-Astoria Hotel, New York
When: Friday, 7-10:30 p.m. ET
Television: TNT, 9 p.m. ET
Radio: MRN/XM satellite
Special guest: Comedian Jay Mohr
Musical guests: Toni Braxton, Gavin DeGraw, jazz pianist Eric Lewis

nate with the annual NASCAR Nextel Cup Series Awards Ceremony Friday night at the Waldorf-Astoria's Grand Ballroom.

The televised event, featuring special guest Jay Mohr, will honor champion Stewart, the other nine drivers in the Chase and the 11th-place driver, Jeff Gordon.

— Source: NASCAR

