



# TONY STEWART

## Ready to Go Clubbin' in SoCal

KANNAPOLIS, N.C., (Feb. 16, 2010) – After nearly two weeks spent at Daytona (Fla.) International Speedway, the NASCAR Sprint Cup Series settles into its traditional groove of three-day race weekends when it heads to Auto Club Speedway in Fontana, Calif., for Sunday's Auto Club 500.

The 2-mile oval situated an hour east of Los Angeles is home to round two on the 36-race Sprint Cup schedule, and it's where teams will face their first true measurement.

Restrictor-plate prowess and drafting partners are of no help at California. California is about what a team and its driver does to go faster than 42 other team/driver combinations. What other teams do or don't do have no bearing on how a particular team will perform in front of NASCAR's No. 1 media market.

Horsepower and putting that power to the pavement through the track's 14-degree banked corners are of paramount importance – not just at California, but for the rest of the season. Intermediate tracks like California make up the majority of the 22 venues featured on the Sprint Cup schedule. How one performs at California is indicative of how one will perform at similarly styled tracks – beginning with Las Vegas Motor Speedway the very next weekend.

Tony Stewart comes into California 23<sup>rd</sup> in the championship standings, but the driver of the No. 14 Old Spice/Office Depot Chevrolet Impala for Stewart-Haas Racing can take solace in the fact that he's ahead of four-time and reigning Sprint Cup champion Jimmie Johnson (35<sup>th</sup>) and is joined by seven other drivers who made the Chase for the Championship last year but are currently outside the top-15.

The Sprint Cup schedule is a marathon and not a sprint, and Stewart, already a two-time champion (2002 and 2005), knows this as well as anyone. So with the Auto Club 500 next up for Stewart, he views it as a stepping-stone to a club he expects to join 25 races from now – the club of 12 Chase drivers competing for the Sprint Cup championship.

***TONY STEWART, Driver of the No. 14 Old Spice/Office Depot Chevrolet Impala for Stewart-Haas Racing:***

**After spending so much time in Daytona for Speedweeks, how much of a relief is it to get back to a normal three-day race weekend?**

“I think everybody's pretty worn out after being in Daytona for so long. California means a normal routine and a chance for the crew guys to get back to their families for a couple of days before heading to another racetrack.”

**Is too much emphasis placed on Daytona in terms of how teams are going to perform for the rest of the season?**

“I think so. Daytona is a restrictor-plate race and, unlike Daytona, four guys can’t get in a line at California and go to the front. Daytona and Talladega (Ala.) have always just been two different forms of racing. With the draft being so important at those two tracks, it’s more of a team deal than an individual deal. What happens at California and the races after that has to be done on your own. You can’t help each other at California. You just have to go race.”

**A lot of importance is placed on the California race, and it seems an equal amount of importance is placed on the next race at Las Vegas. Why?**

“These early races teach you very quickly where your program is, compared to the competition. If your cars are good, you’ll run well at California, Vegas, Atlanta, Texas and so on. Everybody wants to know where they stack up and shake out right now. If you can get off to a good start, it shows that your program is really where it needs to be. This is a huge week.”

**When you came to California last February, it was only your second race working with Darian Grubb after 10 years with Greg Zipadelli at Joe Gibbs Racing. Are you as comfortable with Grubb, now, as you were, then, with Zipadelli?**

“Honestly, when we started this thing last year, there were times when I was sitting in the car and I told him what my balance was, and he told me what we were going to change, and I was like, ‘Wow, is that the right way to go?’ I told him that, too. It’s just learning each other. It’s learning a new package. It was a big learning curve for me to learn a new chassis. Darian obviously knows what these cars like and what this chassis package likes. It’s just a matter of tailoring it to what I like, feel-wise, in the car. There were times the first couple of races where I didn’t necessarily understand why we were doing something, but when you go out there and it responds positively to those changes, you gain that confidence right away. I have the same confidence in Darian that I had in Zippy for 10 years. It doesn’t take long, and the great thing is I’ve been really blessed and lucky over the last 12 years to have two really good crew chiefs who I can talk to about anything and that I’ve connected with.”

**Even though you had a very good season last year, especially for a start-up team, when you look at what Jimmie Johnson, crew chief Chad Knaus and the No. 48 team have accomplished with four straight Sprint Cup championships, does that provide extra motivation for you and everyone at Stewart-Haas Racing?**

“They’re the benchmark. They’re the team everybody is looking at. We want to do as good of a job as those guys are doing. That is our benchmark. That’s what we’re looking at and where we want to be as soon as we can get there. When you’ve had a team that’s done it right for that many consecutive years, you know they’ve got it figured out and that it’s where you need to be. Now, it’s just a matter of figuring out what they’re doing.

“They’re the team that’s outperforming everybody. There is absolutely nothing wrong with that. That’s what this sport is all about. It’s about performance and who does the best job. They’ve done the best job for the last four years. They should be the champions. Is it bad for our sport? Absolutely not. Every year, somebody’s going to outperform somebody else. It doesn’t have to be a different guy every year. If they do it a fifth time this year, it’s kind of cool, at least from my perspective. I’ve been able to watch Penske dominate in Indy cars and Junior Johnson and Bill Elliott dominate here in NASCAR. Everybody has had his period. Every form of racing has had

somebody who's had a dynasty and had that period where they've been the guy to beat. We're in that period with Jimmie Johnson. And it's not a period that frustrates you. It just makes you want to work that much harder. You want to be that next team that does what he's doing right now."

**Danica Patrick will make her second career NASCAR Nationwide Series start this weekend at California. What should we expect?**

"Everybody should expect to let her learn. There is a lot of focus on her, and pressure. She's done a great job of dealing with that. Everybody's got to remember she's a rookie. Anything that she does is not like she didn't meet a goal or she exceeded a goal. This week is another learning experience. If everybody treats it that way, then everything will be fine."

**You are one of the few drivers who have been successful in Indy car and stock cars. What are some of the challenges Patrick faces in transitioning from Indy cars to stock cars?**

"She's got a heavier racecar now that will move around a lot more. That's the biggest thing. It's just learning a different racecar and the feel that comes with it. The good thing is that she is focused and determined and is logging a lot of miles right now, and that's what you have to do. With all the laps she ran at Daytona in ARCA and the Nationwide Series, she left there with a lot of knowledge about these cars. Obviously, what we had at Daytona isn't what we'll have at California or Vegas, but it's still seat time, and that's what's important."

**TONY STEWART'S FONTANA PERFORMANCE PROFILE**

Year	Event	Start	Finish	Status/Laps	Laps Led	Earnings
2009	Auto Club 500	11	8	Running, 250/250	3	\$139,748
	Pepsi 500	20	5	Running, 250/250	6	\$143,248
2008	†Auto Club 500	6	7	Running, 250/250	0	\$158,061
	Pepsi 500	14	22	Running, 250/250	0	\$137,936
2007	Auto Club 500	11	8	Running, 250/250	28	\$148,161
	Cal 500	22	13	Running, 250/250	12	\$143,286
2006	×Auto Club 500	12	43	Engine, 214/251	28	\$131,453
	California 500	22	9	Running, 250/250	0	\$149,611
2005	Auto Club 500	29	17	Running, 250/250	0	\$133,111
	×California 500	14	5	Running, 254/254	56	\$178,036
2004	Auto Club 500	11	16	Running, 249/250	0	\$120,603
	Pop Secret 500	33	18	Running, 250/250	0	\$127,978
2003	Auto Club 500	3	41	Engine, 128/250	100	\$117,708
2002	NAPA Auto Parts 500	8	29	Running, 247/250	0	\$102,003
2001	NAPA Auto Parts 500	4	4	Running, 250/250	0	\$107,072
2000	NAPA Auto Parts 500	32	10	Running, 250/250	0	\$75,950
1999	†NAPA Auto Parts 500	7	4	Running, 250/250	1	\$68,175

† Qualifying canceled due to weather, starting position set via car owner points.  
 × Race length extended due to green-white-checker finish.