

RECORDS, FIRSTS AND PERSONAL BESTS

LOGANO TAKES 200 AND HARVICK TAKES 500 AT NASCAR IN PHOENIX
AT PHOENIX INTERNATIONAL RACEWAY • MARCH 13-14-15 2015

PHOTOS BY RANDALL BOHL

Phoenix International Raceway welcomed their season opener—the fourth race of the 2015 NASCAR Sprint Cup Series—flush from receiving three awards from NASCAR: one for their 50th anniversary marketing plan last year, one for track services and one for community outreach. It was a great way to start a busy race weekend.

FRIDAY MARCH 13

Friday night would bring the excitement of the Toyota 120 NASCAR México Series race (see separate feature in this issue). During the day, practice and qualifying for México dovetailed with practice for Saturday's NASCAR XFINITY Series 200 and Sunday's NASCAR Sprint Cup Series 500. Sprint Cup qualifying followed, rolling up to México's pre-race ceremonies.

Round 1 qualifying for Sunday's CampingWorld.com 500 would determine the 24 cars that would advance to Round 2, which would determine the 12 cars that would advance to Round 3. Kevin Harvick, driver of the #4 Jimmy John's Chevrolet, won the pole, overtaking Joey Logano at the end. Though Harvick has been the all-time leader in Cup wins at PIR, this was his first Cup pole at PIR.

"All these West Coast races are special," said Harvick, "but this one in particular, just for the fact that we used to bring our Southwest Tour cars here, and Winston West cars, and struggled a little bit for quite some time, and then it all clicked."

SATURDAY MARCH 14

Saturday started with Sprint Cup Series 500 practice, followed by XFINITY 200 qualifying and Sprint Cup 500 final practice. After pre-race ceremonies, the Axalta Faster Tougher Brighter 200 race started at 1:00 pm.

Daytona 500 winner Joey Logano put on a dominating display at Phoenix, the fourth race of the XFINITY season. The 24-year-old had won pole position earlier in the day and led 176 of the 200 laps in his #22 Ford, eventually scoring his second career win at PIR over Matt Kenseth. Harvick finished third, ahead of Austin Dillon, Erik Jones and Ty Dillon.

"I would get tight and (Kenseth) would start catching up to me, because his balance was a little bit freer," said Logano. "But I was better than him in lapped traffic, so I just kept hoping for lapped traffic."

The victory was the 12th here for owner Roger Penske, who has eight wins with Indy cars and four with NASCAR stock cars.

With Logano and the Sprint Cup Series regular drivers ineligible for XFINITY Series points, Ty Dillon left Arizona with the series points lead, followed by Chris Buescher, Ryan Reed, defending XFINITY Series champ Elliott and rookie Darrell Wallace Jr.

SUNDAY MARCH 15

Sunday brought the biggest race, the 500-lap, 312-mile NASCAR Sprint Cup Series CampingWorld.com 500. Gates opened early, allowing

the crowd plenty of time to settle in and enjoy all sorts of pre-race activities, until ceremonies and a 12:30 pm race start.

39-year-old Kevin Harvick did something Sunday that no driver had ever done in the 52-year history of PIR—scored a victory in his fourth consecutive race in the same professional series here in Phoenix, leading 224 of 312 laps to win the CampingWorld.com 500.

Harvick has been on a remarkable run with his Stewart-Haas Racing Chevrolet. His strong showing at the end of 2014—with victories in the final Eliminator round race at PIR and in the Championship race at Homestead Miami Speedway—had propelled him to his first Sprint Cup Series championship.

As of Phoenix, Harvick had finished first or second in seven consecutive NASCAR Sprint Cup Series races (the last three of 2014 and the first four this year), a feat last accomplished in 1975 by "The King" Richard Petty.

PIR has become Harvick's favorite hunting ground. He has now won seven Sprint Cup Series races here (no other driver has won more than four) and, counting his victories in the NASCAR XFINITY Series and the Camping World Trucks Series, has an amazing 12 pro victories at PIR. After securing his first Cup pole position at PIR on Friday, on Sunday Harvick became the fifth driver in PIR history to win a Sprint Cup Series race from the pole and the first since Carl Edwards did so in the 2010 Kobalt Tools 500. ■



NOVEMBER 12-15 NASCAR AT PIR

The fall race at PIR—a NASCAR fixture since 1988—will again be the final race in the Eliminator round and the semi-final race in the Chase for the NASCAR Sprint Cup. Friday Nov 13 is the NASCAR Camping World Truck Series Lucas Oil 150. Saturday Nov 14 is the NASCAR XFINITY Series race. Sunday Nov 15, PIR's 2015 season concludes with the NASCAR Sprint Cup Series Quicken Loans Race for Heroes 500.

PIR SEASON TICKETS

PIR season tickets bring great savings over individual tickets—discounts for parking, pre-race pit and Budweiser ROLL-BAR passes. Upgrade or change seats, and buy additional tickets at your discounted price. The new Zoom Pass credential grants all access. Visit PhoenixRaceway.com or call 866-408-RACE (7223). ■

(Main photo) The Perch hospitality area, above Turn 3 on the south side of the track, gives a great vantage point. • (At right, top to bottom) Pre-race prep with 500 winner Kevin Harvick's #4 car, #10 Danica Patrick and #19 Carl Edwards. • Saturday's 200 race winner #22 Joey Logano gives us a smoky burnout. • The Budweiser Clydesdales do a drive-by, and a vintage World War II B-25 Mitchell bomber does a fly-by. • Fun at the Filberto's booth on the fan midway. • Tonic was one of four major musical entertainers during the full race weekend.

