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## Speed Week

# Johnson Foundation shifts gears for education

By [Bill Center](#)  
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### LOCAL LAPS

The [RaceLegal.com](#) drag racing program has been granted nine Friday night dates between now and the end of the year on the four-lane, eighth-mile strip along the west access road at Qualcomm Stadium. The next show is tomorrow starting at 6:30 p.m.

*Jake Gagne:* Ramona rider, 15, finishes fourth and third in the season's final two Red Bull MotoGP races in the Czech Republic to finish sixth (as the top American) in the international motorcycle road racing series.

*Cole Whitt:* Moves into third in the USAC Sprint Car standings with a fourth-place finish in Salem, Ind. Also finishes second in the Midget half of the double-header but remains seventh in the standings.

*Mike Mendenhall:* Finishes fifth after starting 16 in the touring stock car race at Stockton.

*Eric Gunderson:* Finishes fourth in a California Pavement Ford Focus Midget race at Madera.

### CHECKERED FLAGS

*Chrysler:* CEO Mike Accavitti says the automaker will continue to participate in NASCAR, although some changes and cuts will be coming.



President Barack Obama honors 2008 NASCAR Sprint Cup Champion Jimmie Johnson on the South Lawn of the White House in Washington, Wednesday, Aug. 19, 2009. (AP Photo/Charles Dharapak) - AP

*Tony Stewart:* Points leader is the first driver to clinch a berth for the Chase for the Championship.

### *RED FLAGS*

*Kyle Busch:* With three races to go in the regular season, he is 15th in the Sprint Cup standings, although he is only 70 points away from the 12th and final spot in the Chase for the Championship.

*Jimmie Johnson:* Finished 33rd after fuel gamble gone bad Sunday at Michigan.

After funding the construction of four Habitat for Humanity homes in El Cajon, the Jimmie Johnson Foundation is turning its local focus toward education.

“This year, (wife) Chandra and I feel that education was the right place to focus our fundraising efforts,” said Johnson, the El Cajon native who has won NASCAR's past three Sprint Cup titles.

Working in conjunction with Lowe's Toolbox for Education Champions Grants, Johnson said schools, school programs and parent-based associations in three San Diego County districts — Grossmont Union, Cajon Valley Union and San Diego Unified — can apply for a Champions Grant.

The grants will range from \$25,000 to \$100,000. The application process ends Oct. 16 with grades K-12 eligible.

“Education is something that is very important to Chani and me,” said Johnson, who attended Crest Elementary, Greenfield Middle School and Granite Hills High in El Cajon.

“Even when I first started out, my parents made me keep my grades up or I wasn't allowed to race. I think it's important to make sure we give teachers and students the best tools possible. Hopefully, these grants will help.”

In the first two years of Johnson's foundation, with support from his sponsor Lowe's, the driver is responsible for raising more than \$1 million for projects in the East County area.

Most notable are the four single-family homes built by Habitat for Humanity with the support of the Jimmie Johnson Foundation.

In addition, two years ago Johnson donated tools and equipment to help the auto education program at Granite Hills. He also made other gifts to the school during a visit to the campus.

Johnson's major fundraiser in the area is his annual charity golf tournament, dinner and auction he launched in 2007. This year's event, which is closed to the public, will be Oct. 6-7 at the Grand Del Mar.

Each of the first two Johnson events raised more than \$500,000 for the foundation. More than 125 celebrities, friends and sponsors are expected for the golf tournament.

Johnson will also be honored Oct. 6 at the Junior Seau Teammates Luncheon at the Hyatt Regency Aventine in La Jolla. His foundation's auction and dinner is later the same night with the charity golf tournament the following morning.

During his two days in San Diego, Johnson will also be in El Cajon to celebrate the completion of the last two Habitat for Humanity homes.

Johnson's San Diego stop this year is five weeks later than the past two years because the corresponding NASCAR Sprint Cup race at Auto Club Speedway in Fontana has been moved from Labor Day Weekend to Oct. 11.

The Pepsi 500 is now part of NASCAR's Chase for the Championship rather than being the penultimate race of the regular season — which also boosts Johnson's hopes for a record fourth straight Sprint Cup title.

In 13 starts on the two-mile Fontana oval, Johnson has three wins, four runner-up finishes and a third. He also has two poles and four front-row starts at the track and has finished worse than third at Fontana only twice in his past seven starts.

## SCHEDULE

### Friday

**NASCAR Nationwide Series:** Food City 250, Bristol, Tenn. (250 laps, .533-mile oval; ESPN2, 5 p.m.) — A third-place finish at Michigan International Speedway last week ended Kyle Busch's series-record streak of 10 straight top-two finishes. Brad Keselowski is the defending champion of this race and the winner of last week's race at MIS, where he claimed his third win of the season. Busch leads the points race, with Carl Edwards second and Keselowski third.

**RaceLegal.Com Drags:** Qualcomm Stadium, west access road, 6 p.m.

**Barona 1/8-Mile Drag Strip:** Gambler Series, 6 p.m.

### Saturday

**NASCAR Sprint Cup:** Sharpie 500, Bristol, Tenn. (500 laps; ESPN, 4:30 p.m.) — Kyle Busch won the spring race at Bristol while Carl Edwards pushed Busch out of the way with 30 laps to go to win this race last August, Busch finishing second after leading 415 of the first 470 laps. Busch has led 793 of the last 1,000 laps at Bristol. From 1980-84, Darrell Waltrip won seven straight races at Bristol and holds the track record with 12 wins.

**Barona 1/8-Mile Drag Strip:** Independent Funny Cars, Gambler Series, 6 p.m.

### Sunday

**Formula One:** Grand Prix of Europe, Valencia Spain (57 laps, 3.367-mile road course; Speed Channel, 4:30 a.m.) — It will be test driver Luca Badoer, who will be making his first F-1 start in a decade, subbing for the injured Felipe Massa at Ferrari after seven-time World Champion Michael Schumacher decided not to try a comeback. Massa, the defending champion of this race, was seriously injured while practicing before the July 26 Hungarian Grand Prix won by reigning world champion Lewis Hamilton. France's Romain Grosjean, 23, has replaced Nelson Piquet Jr. as Fernando Alonso's teammate at Renault.

**IndyCar:** Indy Grand Prix of Sonoma, Infineon Raceway (75 laps, 2.303-mile road course; Versus, 2 p.m.) — France's Franck Montagny will make his IndyCar debut for Andretti Green Racing. Helio Castroneves led a 1-2 Penske sweep at Sonoma last year.

**NHRA Drag Racing:** Toyo Tires Nationals, Mohnton, Pa. (ESPN2, 7 p.m.) — Tony Pedregon defeated Carlsbad's Ron Capps in the finals at Brainerd, Minn., last week to keep the Funny Car points lead by 28 points over Capps. Tony Schumacher is the defending Top Fuel champ at Mohnton, although Antron Brown leads the points standings this year.

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