

Bowyer Overcomes Late-Race Damage to Finish Third in Weather-Delayed Pennsylvania 500

Race: Sunoco American Red Cross Pennsylvania 500
Date: August 2, 2009
Location: Pocono Raceway
Start Position: 16th
Finish Position: Third
Points Position: 15th (Gained one position)

LONG POND, Pa. – Clint Bowyer and crew chief Shane Wilson used pit strategy to overcome damage sustained in a late-race incident to finish third in the rain-delayed Sunoco American Red Cross Pennsylvania 500 at Pocono Raceway on Monday.

With five races remaining before the 12-team Chase for the Sprint Cup playoff field is set, the 30-year-old driver is 15th in the NASCAR Sprint Cup Series point standings, 115 markers behind Greg Biffle in 12th.

Weather wreaked havoc with the weekend's schedule, including putting an end to Friday's first practice shortly before the halfway point of the session. As heavy showers continued to fall throughout the afternoon, NASCAR was forced to cancel qualifying for the fifth time in 2009, setting the starting lineup according to the rule book and placing The Hartford Chevrolet 16th on the starting grid.

The Shane Wilson-led crew made tremendous gains in Saturday's twin practice sessions, recording the second- and seventh-fastest times. Persistent rain showers on Sunday forced NASCAR to delay the start of the 200-lap event to Monday afternoon.

The Emporia, Kan., native made immediate gains once the race got underway, advancing to 12th on lap four. Bowyer continued to race inside the top 15 for the opening quarter of the event, but when the fuel window opened for the leaders to hit pit road at lap 52, he followed Dale Earnhardt, Jr., and Richard Childress Racing teammate Kevin Harvick to the attention of their respective crews. As The Hartford crew completed their routine service of four tires and fuel, the No. 98 of Paul Menard spun on the race track to bring out the caution flag. The untimely incident caught the trio one lap down to the race leaders but, thanks to the wave-around rule, they were allowed to rejoin the lead lap once the rest of the field headed to pit road for their service. The unfortunate incident relegated Bowyer to 33rd for the lap-57 restart.

Bowyer used the middle stages of the event to regain his lost positions, and was able to do so thanks to Wilson's creative pit strategy. As the laps clicked off, Bowyer advanced to the 15th position at lap 154. While racing with the No. 39 of Ryan Newman, Bowyer's Chevrolet was forced into the outside retaining wall when Newman made contact with the driver's side door of The Hartford Impala SS. A caution period three laps later allowed Bowyer to bring his battered machine to pit road to take on four tires, fuel and repairs. The time on pit road resulted in the No. 33 being scored 34th for the lap-160 restart.

When debris on the racing surface forced NASCAR to throw the caution flag five laps later, Wilson and Bowyer agreed to take a chance and stay out while the rest of the field pitted. The gamble resulted in Bowyer inheriting the race lead, which he would hold for the following 23 circuits. In the final laps, Juan Pablo Montoya and eventual race-winner Denny Hamlin were able to work their way past Bowyer's damaged Hartford Chevrolet, placing the two-time NSCS winner third in the final rundown.

Hamlin captured his third Pocono trophy and first win of the 2009 season, beating Montoya to the checkered flag by .869 seconds. Bowyer, Sam Hornish, Jr., and Kasey Kahne rounded out the top-five finishers.

Bowyer's RCR teammates Kevin Harvick, Jeff Burton and Casey Mears finished 12th, 21st and 25th, respectively.

Next weekend, the NASCAR Sprint Cup Series heads to upstate New York for the division's second and final road course event of the 2009 season. Live coverage of the Heluva Good! Sour Cream Dips at The Glen will be televised on ESPN Sunday, August 9 beginning at 1 p.m. Eastern Daylight Time. The race will also be covered live on the Motor Racing Network and Sirius/XM Satellite Radio. Qualifying for the 22nd stop on the 36-race schedule will be televised live on ESPN2 Friday, August 7 beginning at 3:00 p.m. EDT.