

Race/Date: Checker O'Reilly Auto Parts 500 presented by Pennzoil – November 15, 2009
Location: Phoenix International Raceway – Avondale, Ariz.
Start Position: 13th
Finish Position: Seventh
Points Position: 15th (Maintained position)

AVONDALE, Ariz. – Clint Bowyer and the Cheerios/Hamburger Helper Racing team posted their second consecutive seventh-place finish in Sunday's Checker O'Reilly Auto Parts 500 presented by Pennzoil at Phoenix International Raceway.

Bowyer's 16th top-10 finish of the season allows him to maintain the 15th position in the NASCAR Sprint Cup Series point standings heading into the final race of 2009.

Bowyer recorded the 18th-fastest time in Friday's opening practice session and, later that afternoon, recorded a lap of 27.132 seconds at an average speed of 132.685 mph to place him 13th on the starting grid for Sunday's race.

From the drop of the green flag, the Emporia, Kan., native displayed the strength of his Cheerios/Hamburger Helper Chevrolet. Despite struggling with a lack of grip, Bowyer showed 11th on the scoring pylon for the opening 70 laps, only relinquishing the position when he hit pit road for a green-flag stop. The Helping Hands pit crew performed lightning-fast service that advanced their driver to sixth when the field completed the cycle of stops.

Bowyer continued to make his presence known, recording lap times equal to, and sometimes faster than, the race leaders. Following a caution period for a multi-car incident, Bowyer followed the field to pit road for service at lap 164, taking on four tires, fuel and a wedge adjustment. The Helping Hands pit crew performed their service in 12.6 seconds, moving Bowyer to second on the lap-168 restart.

Changing weather conditions in the later stages of the 312-lap event resulted in handling issues for Bowyer. But, as the race continued under green-flag conditions, the two-time NASCAR Sprint Cup Series winner kept his Cheerios/Hamburger Helper Chevrolet in the fifth position. Despite his best efforts, Bowyer relinquished two positions over the closing laps, taking the checkered flag seventh.

Jimmie Johnson picked up his seventh win of the 2009 season, beating Bowyer's Richard Childress Racing teammate Jeff Burton to the checkered flag by 1.033 seconds. Denny Hamlin, Mark Martin and Martin Truex, Jr. rounded out the top-five finishers.

Bowyer's other RCR teammates Kevin Harvick and Casey Mears finished 24th and 27th, respectively.

Next weekend, the NASCAR Sprint Cup Series heads to South Florida for the final race of the 2009 season.

The Ford 400 from Homestead-Miami Speedway will take the green flag Sunday, Nov. 22 at 3:30 p.m. Eastern Standard Time. The race will be televised live on ABC beginning at 2:30 p.m. EST and broadcast worldwide on the Motor Racing Network and Sirius XM Satellite Radio. Qualifying for the final race of the 2009 season will be televised live on ESPN2 Friday, Nov. 20 at 3 p.m. EST. MRN and Sirius XM Satellite Radio will provide qualifying updates live.