

Tough Start, Strong Finish for Bowyer in Richmond

Race: Chevy Rock & Roll 400
Date: September 12, 2009
Location: Richmond International Raceway
Start Position: 18th
Finish Position: Sixth
Points Position: 15th (Gained one position)

RICHMOND, Va. – Clint Bowyer and his Shane Wilson-led Cheerios/Hamburger Helper team were able to lean on their Richard Childress Racing teammates to overcome handling woes in the opening half of the Chevy Rock & Roll 400, giving them what they needed to rally to a sixth-place finish Saturday night at Richmond International Raceway.

The finish advanced Bowyer one position, to 15th, in the NASCAR Sprint Cup Series point standings.

Bowyer recorded the fourth- and 28th-fastest times, respectively, in Friday's twin practice sessions, and followed that up by touring the .75-mile oval in 21.517 seconds, at an average speed of 125.482 mph, in qualifying to earn the 18th-starting spot for the 400-lap event. Later that evening, Bowyer went on to record an 11th-place finish in the 250-lap NASCAR Nationwide Series race.

From the drop of the green flag, Bowyer struggled with a tight-handling Cheerios/Hamburger Helper Chevrolet. Reporting that the rear end of his Impala SS was overpowering the nose, Bowyer caught a break when the Nos. 14 and 43 cars spun at lap 44 to bring out the second of 10 caution flags of the night. Wilson made the call for slight chassis and air pressure adjustments to the No. 33 machine when Bowyer hit pit road with the rest of the leaders but, when green flag racing resumed, it was evident that the adjustments were too much, as the former Richmond winner reported that he was extremely loose.

As the laps clicked off and RCR teammate Kevin Harvick consistently recorded some of the fastest lap times of the race as he battled at the front of the field, Wilson consulted with Harvick's crew chief, Gil Martin, on the air pressures of the No. 29 machine. When the caution was displayed at lap 171 for debris, the decision was made to match the air pressures of Harvick's machine to correct the handling issues of Bowyer's Chevrolet. The decision proved to be the right one as the Cheerios/Hamburger Helper Impala SS came to life in the second half of the event.

Lightning-fast pit stops by the Helping Hands pit crew, coupled with one of the fastest cars on the track, allowed Bowyer to crack the top five at lap 287. The Emporia, Kan., native would continue to wage battle with the front-runners in the closing stages of the race, but slight contact with the No. 24 of Jeff Gordon on a restart resulted in nose damage to Bowyer's Chevrolet that would hinder him in the final laps. Despite the damage, Bowyer was able to hold on to the sixth position when the checkered flag flew.

Virginia-native Denny Hamlin was able to hold off Kurt Busch to earn his second win of the 2009 season. Jeff Gordon, Mark Martin and Kyle Busch rounded out the top-five finishers.

Bowyer's RCR teammates Harvick, Jeff Burton and Casey Mears finished ninth, 18th and 30th, respectively.

The NASCAR Sprint Cup Series heads to Loudon, N.H., next week for the second and final time in 2009.

Flag-to-flag coverage of the Sylvania 300 at New Hampshire Motor Speedway will take the green flag Sunday, Sept. 20 beginning at 1 p.m. Eastern Daylight Time on ABC. The race will also be broadcast on the Performance Racing Network and Sirius Satellite Radio. Qualifying for the 27th points-paying race on the 2009 Cup Series calendar will be televised live on ESPN2 Friday, Sept. 18 beginning at 3 p.m. EDT and will also broadcast live on PRN and Sirius Satellite Radio.