

Bowyer, BB&T Team Finish 18th at Richmond

Race: Crown Royal Presents the Russ Friedman 400

Date: May 2, 2009

Location: Richmond International Raceway

Start Position: 12th

Finish Position: 18th

Points Position: Eighth
(maintained position)

RICHMOND, Va. – In an action-packed race on Saturday night at Richmond International Raceway, defending race champion Clint Bowyer appeared to be a contender in the early goings of the 400-lap event. But, changing track conditions throughout the event, flu-like symptoms and an ill-handling BB&T Chevrolet Impala SS left Bowyer with an 18th-place finish when the checkered flag waved. Despite the less-than-desirable result, Bowyer was able to maintain the eighth-place position in the NASCAR Sprint Cup Series point standings.

Bowyer toured the three-quarter mile D-shaped oval in 21.444 seconds at an average speed of 125.909 mph in Friday evening's qualifying session, placing him 12th in the starting lineup for Saturday evening's race. With rain showers briefly delaying the start of the race, NASCAR elected to start the race under caution to allow the exhaust heat from the 43-car field to help with final track drying. With positive feedback from the drivers regarding the condition of the race track, the yellow flag was lifted and racing began at lap six.

The two-time NSCS winner struggled with a tight-handling Chevrolet in the opening laps of the event, but consistently recorded lap times faster than those of the race leaders and worked his way up to seventh by lap 65. The leaders began to come to pit road for green-flag pit stops some 25 laps later. Crew chief Shane Wilson called Bowyer to pit road on lap 95 to take on four tires and fuel, and quick work by the BB&T crew gained the Emporia, Kan., native one position when the cycle of stops were completed.

The No. 41 car of Jeremy Mayfield experienced a right-front tire failure on lap 114 to bring out the caution flag and, despite having just serviced their Impala SS, Bowyer and Wilson agreed to come to pit road to take on right-side tires and fuel. The move paid dividends for the BB&T team as their short stop allowed Bowyer to assume the race lead as he exited pit road, marking the first laps Bowyer has led since the third race of the season at Las Vegas Motor Speedway in March.

As the race continued, Bowyer developed a loose-handling condition that caused him to lose several positions. Although he came to pit road a number of times over the course of the event for adjustments, the Wilson-led crew could not find the exact adjustments needed to regain their lost ground. The laps that Bowyer needed to advance his positions quickly expired as the race came to a conclusion.

Bowyer's RCR teammates Jeff Burton, Casey Mears and Kevin Harvick finished third, ninth and 34th, respectively.

Kyle Busch picked up his third win of the 2009 season. Team Chevy drivers Tony Stewart, Burton, Ryan Newman and Mark Martin rounded out the top five.

Next weekend, NASCAR's senior circuit heads south to Darlington (S.C.) Raceway for the track's 60th anniversary of racing and the return of the Southern 500.

Live coverage of the Southern 500 presented by Godaddy.com from Darlington Raceway will take the green flag Saturday, May 9 beginning at 7 p.m. Eastern Daylight Time. The race will be televised live on FOX and broadcast worldwide on the Motor Racing Network and Sirius XM Satellite Radio. Qualifying for the 11th race of the 2009 NASCAR Sprint Cup Series schedule will be televised live on SPEED Friday, May 8 at 5 p.m. EDT. MRN and Sirius XM Satellite Radio will provide live qualifying updates.