

Tough Night for Bowyer, BB&T Team in Atlanta

Race: Pep Boys Auto 500
Date: September 6, 2009
Location: Atlanta Motor Speedway
Start Position: 20th
Finish Position: 29th
Points Position: 16th
(Dropped one position)

HAMPTON, Georgia - Clint Bowyer fought an ill-handling BB&T Chevrolet and terrible luck in Saturday night's Pep Boys Auto 500, resulting in a 29th-place finish for the No. 33 team.

The finish dropped Bowyer one position, to 16th, in the NASCAR Sprint Cup Series point standings. With one race remaining before the 12-team Chase for the Sprint Cup playoff field is set, the less-than-desired result has mathematically ended the 30-year-old driver's Chase hopes.

Bowyer recorded the 15th- and third-fastest times, respectively, in Saturday's twin practice sessions, and followed that up by touring the 1.54-mile oval in 30.571 seconds at an average speed of 181.348 mph later that evening in qualifying to earn the 20th starting spot for the 500-mile event.

Having completed both practice sessions in the heat of the day, crew chiefs were left to do some guesswork for a setup that would provide the right balance for the inaugural night race at Atlanta Motor Speedway. This challenge, compounded with that of a new tire, left many teams struggling when the green flag dropped Sunday evening. Bowyer reported in the early going that his Chevrolet was extremely loose, and that the car lacked rear grip.

As the track temperature continued to drop, crew chief Shane Wilson called for minor chassis adjustments along with four tires and fuel when Bowyer followed the rest of the field to pit road under caution at lap 38. The changes improved the handling of their Chevrolet, but not enough for Bowyer's liking. As a result, the team lost a lap and spent much of the opening third of the event one lap down to the race leaders.

The BB&T crew continued to make adjustments as Bowyer hit pit road for scheduled service, but a lack of track position and untimely caution periods prevented the Emporia, Kansas, native from getting back on the lead lap. With just a handful of laps remaining, Bowyer spun coming off Turn 4 and slid through the frontstretch grass, resulting in minor damage to the BB&T Impala SS. Following a trip to pit road for minor repairs and four new tires, Bowyer was able to gain a handful of positions in the remaining 12 laps to finish 29th.

Kasey Kahne was able to hold off Bowyer's RCR teammate Kevin Harvick in the dash to the checkers, capturing his second win of the season. Juan Pablo Montoya, David Reutimann and Mark Martin rounded out the top-five finishers.

Bowyer's other RCR stablemates, Casey Mears and Jeff Burton, finished 25th and 34th, respectively.

Night racing continues as NASCAR's premier division heads to the Dominion State next weekend for the second and final stop of the 2009 season.

Flag-to-flag coverage of the Chevy Rock & Roll 400 from Richmond International Raceway will take the green flag Saturday, September 12 beginning at 7 p.m. Eastern Daylight Time on ABC. The race will also be broadcast on the Motor Racing Network and Sirius XM Satellite Radio. Qualifying for the 26th points-paying race on the 2009 NASCAR Sprint Cup Series calendar will be televised live on SPEED Friday, September 11 beginning at 5:30 p.m. EDT and will also broadcast live on MRN and Sirius XM Satellite Radio.