

Bowyer Caught Up in “Big One,” Finishes 29th at Daytona

Race: Coke Zero 400 powered by Coca-Cola
Date: July 4, 2009
Location: Daytona International Speedway
Start Position: 15th
Finish Position: 29th
Points Position: 16th (Dropped one position)

DAYTONA BEACH, Florida – Clint Bowyer had a strong Cheerios/Hamburger Helper Chevrolet on Saturday night at Daytona International Speedway, one that he felt was capable of contending for the win. Unfortunately, it wasn't meant to be for the No. 33 team as Bowyer could not avoid the inevitable “big one” that eliminated him from contention prematurely, resulting in a 29th-place finish.

With eight races remaining before the 12-team Chase for the Sprint Cup playoff field is set, the 30-year-old driver is 16th in the NASCAR Sprint Cup Series point standings, 135 markers behind Kasey Kahne in 12th.

Bowyer's Shane Wilson-led crew decided to play it safe in Thursday's dual practice sessions, limiting the amount of laps spent on track drafting. Knowing the “big one,” the multi-car accident that typically happens at Daytona that eliminates much of the field from competition, can strike at any time – even in practice – Bowyer's runs were limited to just 17 laps in the first session and 15 in the second. His fastest laps ranked him 13th and 16th, respectively.

For the second week in a row and fourth time in 2009, poor weather forced NASCAR to cancel qualifying and set the field according to the rule book, placing Bowyer's Cheerios/Hamburger Helper Chevrolet 15th on the starting grid for Saturday night's Coke Zero 400. Fortunately, the weather left the area just as quick as it came, allowing the NASCAR Nationwide Series race to run on Friday evening as scheduled. Bowyer secured the pole in Friday afternoon's qualifying session and went on to win the race in dominating fashion, leading 48 of the event's 102 laps.

From the drop of the green flag on Saturday evening, the Emporia, Kan., native raced between 14th and 28th, his position changing every lap as a result of the multi-car draft that keeps the field bunched closely together. As the laps clicked off and it appeared that weather may have an impact on the 160-lap event, Wilson ordered Bowyer to make his charge towards the front. The two-time NSCS winner wasted little time, advancing from 18th to eighth in just 10 laps.

Just prior to the race's halfway point, the cars of David Stremme and Kasey Kahne made contact that triggered the “big one” at lap 78, collecting 13 cars on the backstretch. Unfortunately, Bowyer could not avoid the incident as he was rear-ended when he slowed to avoid the carnage in front of him. The Helping Hands pit crew assessed that the damage was mainly cosmetic but, as Bowyer worked his way to pit road, he discovered he had no brakes. The crew quickly devised a plan to keep their driver on the lead lap, but as brake fluid continued to leak, extensive repairs were needed on pit lane that would leave Bowyer three laps down and out of contention for the victory.

Tony Stewart captured his second victory of the season and was chased to the line by Jimmie Johnson and Denny Hamlin. Carl Edwards and Kurt Busch rounded out the top-five finishers.

Bowyer's RCR teammates Jeff Burton, Kevin Harvick and Casey Mears were involved in separate incidents throughout the restrictor-plate showdown and finished 16th, 26th and 34th, respectively.

Next weekend, the NASCAR Sprint Cup Series blows into the Windy City for the division's annual stop at Chicagoland Speedway.

The LifeLock.com 400 from Chicagoland Speedway will take the green flag Saturday, July 11 at 8 p.m. Eastern Daylight Time. Race coverage will be televised live on TNT beginning at 6:30 p.m. EDT and

broadcast worldwide on MRN and Sirius/XM Satellite Radio. Qualifying for the 19th race on the 2009 NSCS schedule will be televised live on SPEED Thursday, July 9 at 8:30 p.m. EDT.