

Solid Finish at Michigan Puts Bowyer and the No. 33 Team Back in the Top 12

Race/Date: CARFAX 400 – August 15, 2010
Location: Michigan International Speedway – Brooklyn, Mich.
Starting Position: Third
Finishing Position: 13th
Points Position: 12th (gained one position, 35 points ahead of 13th place)

BROOKLYN, Mich. – Clint Bowyer and the No. 33 Cheerios/Hamburger Helper Chevrolet team scored a 13th-place finish in Sunday's CARFAX 400 at Michigan International Speedway. With three races remaining until the Chase for the Sprint Cup field is set, the solid top-15 finish allowed Bowyer to move back into 12th in the NASCAR Sprint Cup Series point standings and 35 markers ahead of Mark Martin in 13th.

The Shane Wilson led-team began the weekend by posting the 13th-fastest speed in Friday's opening practice sessions. The No. 33 bunch went back to the drawing board prior to time trials and hoped the adjustments made would allow Bowyer to lay down a solid lap. Later that afternoon, the Emporia, Kan., native did just that as he secured the third-place starting spot for Sunday's 200 lap event. The Cheerios Racing team worked on long green-flag runs, which are commonplace at Michigan, during Saturday's dual practice sessions, and although they were scored 14th and 17th, respectively, their average lap times were competitive.

The green flag waved at the two-mile Irish Hills oval just past 1 p.m. local time. It became apparent in the opening laps that Bowyer's Chevrolet was better on the longer runs as he faded to fifth before a lap-33 caution. After making a pit stop for tires, fuel and an air pressure adjustment on lap 35, Bowyer restarted sixth three laps later.

Once again, the 31-year old driver lost spots early in the run, as he dropped to seventh prior to a lap-61 yellow flag for light rain. Bowyer hit pit road under the ensuing caution period for four fresh Goodyear Eagles, fuel, and a slight chassis adjustment. He would remain seventh for the lap-66 restart.

A long, 83-lap green flag run ensued which saw changing track conditions as the sun began peaking in and out of the clouds. During this run, Bowyer raced between the eighth and third positions and made two green-flag pit stops, on laps 103 and 140, where the Helping Hands over-the-wall crew added tires, fuel and several adjustments to get their No. 33 Impala dialed in. An accident on lap 149 slowed the field and allowed for Bowyer, who was running sixth, to pit for right-side tires and fuel. Fast pit work allowed the Cheerios Racing driver to remain sixth for the restart.

Three laps after the lap-152 restart, a two-car accident slowed the field for the fourth time of the afternoon. Bowyer followed the rest of the leaders onto pit road during the ensuing caution period and took fuel only, with a minor chassis adjustment to assist his loose-handling condition to start the run. Four competitors stayed out, dropping Bowyer to 11th for the lap-159 restart.

Bowyer lost three spots in the first four laps of the run, but as the handling improved, the two-time NSCS race winner managed to pick off two positions and was scored 12th when the event's fifth and final caution of the day occurred on lap 169.

A tough decision had to be made on whether to pit or stay out. Wilson felt four tires would be the best option at securing a solid finish, so, Bowyer hit pit road for tires and fuel and one last adjustment. He returned to the track 16th for the lap-172 restart.

Bowyer lost five spots in one lap but, once again, his Chevrolet's handling improved as the run progressed. Over the final 17 laps, Bowyer raced his way by eight competitors and took the checkered flag in 13th place.

RCR's Kevin Harvick scored his third victory of the 2010 season, beating Denny Hamlin to the start/finish line by 1.731 seconds. Carl Edwards, Greg Biffle and Matt Kenseth rounded out the rest of the top-five finishers. Bowyer's other RCR stablemate, Jeff Burton, was involved in a lap-155 incident which resulted in a less-than-desired 24th-place finish.

Next weekend, NASCAR's senior tour heads to the high-banked short track in Bristol, Tenn.

ABC's live coverage of the Irwin Tools Race Night from Bristol Motor Speedway will begin Saturday, August 21, at 7:00 p.m. Eastern Daylight Time. The race will also be broadcast on the Performance Racing Network and SIRIUS XM Satellite Radio. Qualifying for the 24th points paying race of the season will air live on SPEED on Friday, August 20, at 5:30 p.m. EDT.