

## **Bowyer Finishes 19th in California; Now 6th in Standings**

Race/Date: Auto Club 500 – Feb. 22  
Location: Auto Club Speedway  
Start Position: 21st  
Finish Position: 19th  
Points Position: Sixth

**Fontana, California** – Clint Bowyer and the Cheerios/Hamburger Helper team fought intermittent rain and lack of track position on Sunday at Auto Club Speedway en route to a 19th-place finish in the Auto Club 500.

Bowyer and the No. 33 team slipped only two spots to sixth in the NASCAR Sprint Cup Series standings, 119 markers behind top-ranked Matt Kenseth, and only two points behind Greg Biffle in fifth.

Bowyer posted a time of 39.749 seconds in Friday's qualifying session, placing him 21st on the starting grid. While the race took the green flag as scheduled, there were threatening rain clouds that would put the field under the caution flag for the first time at lap five. Bowyer reported in the early going that his Cheerios/Hamburger Helper Chevrolet didn't have much grip, and that he was struggling in the center of the turns. Crew chief Shane Wilson elected to bring Bowyer to pit road at lap seven to take on right-side tires, fuel and a wedge adjustment. The field finally resumed racing under green-flag conditions at lap 22, with the No. 33 showing in the 23rd position.

Bowyer continued to fight a tight condition in the center of the turns, and to complicate matters his car began to develop a loose condition off the corners. As the race continued, he did what he could to preserve his track position until the next round of pit stops. Unfortunately, a long green-flag run continued and race leader Jeff Gordon lapped Bowyer during lap 119.

Bowyer soldiered on, racing for the best position possible to save points. When rain began to fall once again at lap 141 of 250, he came down pit road to the attention of the Helping Hands pit crew to take on four tires, fuel and a track bar adjustment. Quick work allowed him to restart in the 19th-position, first among the lap-down drivers.

Bowyer engaged in a heavily contested battle with Travis Kvapil, Bobby Labonte and Sam Hornish Jr. for the free pass position should the caution flag wave. Bowyer battled valiantly, but his efforts were thwarted when he found himself out of the position when rain began to fall again at lap 169. Wilson called the No. 33 Chevy to pit road under the ensuing caution period to take on tires, fuel and a wedge adjustment.

The changes improved the handling, but Bowyer lacked the track position needed to contend with the race leaders. Despite consistently turning lap times comparable to those of the race leaders, the two-time Sprint Cup Series race winner was forced to settle for what could have been as he finished the race in the 19th-position, one lap down to Kenseth, who won the race.

Kenseth became the first driver to win the season's first two races since Jeff Gordon accomplished the feat in 1997.

This weekend the NASCAR Sprint Cup Series heads to the desert for the Shelby 427 at Las Vegas Motor Speedway. Sunday's race will be televised live on FOX beginning at 3:30 p.m. ET. The Motor Racing Network and Sirius/XM Satellite Radio will also provide live lap-by-lap coverage. Qualifying for round three of the 36-race Sprint Cup Series Championship will be televised live on SPEED Fri., Feb. 27 at 6:30 p.m. ET.