

Late-Race Incident Spoils Top-10 Run for Bowyer, Hamburger Helper Team

Race: Sharpie 500
Date: August 22, 2009
Location: Bristol Motor Speedway
Start Position: 6th
Finish Position: 21st
Points Position: 15th (Dropped one position)

BRISTOL, Tennessee – Clint Bowyer and the Hamburger Helper team raced inside the top 10 for most of Saturday night's Sharpie 500, but late-race contact with another competitor resulted in heavy damage to the No. 33 Chevrolet, leaving Bowyer with a 21st-place finish.

The finish dropped Bowyer one position, to 15th, in the NASCAR Sprint Cup Series point standings. With two races remaining before the 12-team Chase for the Sprint Cup playoff field is set, the 30-year-old driver is 112 in arrears to the final eligible position, held by Matt Kenseth.

Bowyer toured the .533-mile oval in 15.488 seconds in Friday evening's qualifying session to earn the sixth starting spot for Saturday night's 500-lap affair.

The 160,000 race fans in attendance came to their feet as the field took the green flag, and it took little time for the action to heat up as the beating and banging that Bristol Motor Speedway is so well known for began in the opening laps. Bowyer was able to capitalize, advancing to the fifth position at lap four. He reported in the early going that his Hamburger Helper Chevrolet was handling well, and it showed as he was a mainstay inside the top 10 for the first quarter of the event.

As the sun set and the track temperature cooled off, 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 134. The changes made to the Richard Childress Racing machine allowed Bowyer to continue racing between the 10th and 12th positions during the middle stages of the 266.5-mile contest.

The Emporia, Kansas, native appeared to be headed for a solid finish, but contact from behind at lap 438 sent the Hamburger Helper Chevrolet into the outside retaining wall, resulting in heavy damage that would require several trips to pit road for repairs. Fortunately for the Helping Hands crew, the caution period, as a result of the incident, took several laps to clean up, giving them the time they needed to make their repairs and return Bowyer to the track in the most competitive form possible.

Bowyer took the green flag 22nd when the field resumed racing at lap 450. With the obvious goal of gaining the most positions possible in the closing stages of the event, spotter Mike Dillon did his best to guide Bowyer through the typical rough racing of the closing laps of any short track race. Unfortunately, problems continued for the No. 33 team when the No. 55 car spun in front of Bowyer at lap 493. As he slowed to avoid making contact with the damaged car, the No. 20 of Joey Logano rear-ended Bowyer's Chevrolet. Despite the heavy rear-end damage, Bowyer was able to soldier on to finish 21st.

Kyle Busch completed the season sweep at Bristol, capturing his fourth win of the 2009 season, beating Mark Martin to the checkered flag by .098 seconds. Marcos Ambrose, Greg Biffle and Denny Hamlin rounded out the top-five finishers.

Bowyer's RCR teammates Casey Mears, Jeff Burton and Kevin Harvick finished 13th, 18th and 38th, respectively.

The NASCAR Sprint Cup Series drivers and teams have their fourth and final off-week of the 2009 season next week before heading to Atlanta Motor Speedway for the Pep Boys Auto 500.

Flag-to-flag coverage of the 500-mile event will take the green flag Sunday, September 6 beginning at 7 p.m. Eastern Daylight Time on ESPN. The race will also be broadcast on the Performance Racing

Network and Sirius XM Satellite Radio. Qualifying for the 25th points-paying race on the 2009 NASCAR Sprint Cup Series calendar will be televised live on SPEED Saturday, September 5 beginning at 4:30 p.m. EDT and will also broadcast live on PRN and Sirius XM Satellite Radio.