

For Second Consecutive Week, Bowyer Records Career-Best Finish and Continues to Gain on Chase Field

Race/Date: CARFAX 400 – August 16, 2009
Location: Michigan International Speedway
Start Position: 23rd
Finish Position: 8th
Points Position: 14th (Gained one position)

BROOKLYN, Michigan – Clint Bowyer and the Cheerios/Hamburger Helper team did just what they needed to do on Sunday at Michigan International Speedway, picking up an eighth-place finish in the CARFAX 400.

Bowyer's career-best finish at the two-mile speedway advanced him one position, to 14th, in the NASCAR Sprint Cup Series point standings. With three races remaining before the 12-team Chase for the Sprint Cup playoff field is set, the 30-year-old driver shaved 41 points off his deficit to 12th-place point-man Mark Martin, leaving Michigan just 58 points shy of Chase eligibility.

Bowyer's weekend started off strong as he posted the eighth-fastest time in Friday's opening practice session. The two-time NASCAR Sprint Cup Series winner followed that up by touring the two-mile oval in 39.006 seconds, at an average speed of 184.587 mph, later that afternoon in qualifying, placing him 23rd in the starting lineup for Sunday afternoon's race.

Bowyer recovered from his less-than-desired qualifying effort on Friday to record the ninth- and 10th-fastest times in Saturday's twin practice sessions.

The Emporia, Kan., native held his position for the opening six laps but, when light rain showers began to fall, NASCAR was forced to red-flag the event while track-drying efforts began. When the field returned to the racing surface 18 minutes later under the caution flag, crew chief Shane Wilson called Bowyer to pit road to take on four tires and fuel. The decision proved to be a good one when green-flag racing resumed and the No. 33 climbed from 30th to 11th in just 18 laps.

As the leaders began to come to pit road for green-flag pit stops at lap 40, Bowyer was able to stay on the track and gain five points when he was scored the race leader at lap 44. Once the two-time NSCS winner relinquished his position and the cycle of stops completed, he was scored 10th in the running order.

As the laps clicked off, Bowyer continued to hold his own, racing inside the top 10 until various strategies were employed on pit road when rain showers once again placed the field under caution at lap 145. Electing to take on four tires and fuel while others took just two, Bowyer lined up 19th for the lap-152 restart. As the rest of the field relinquished their positions for final service five laps later, Bowyer advanced to 10th position.

In the closing stages of the race, the driver of the Cheerios/Hamburger Helper Chevrolet did what he could to improve his position, working his way around Richard Childress Racing teammate Kevin Harvick for ninth and Mark Martin for eighth in the final laps of the event.

Brian Vickers captured his first win of the 2009 season, beating Jeff Gordon to the checkered flag by 1.409 seconds. Dale Earnhardt, Jr., Carl Edwards and Sam Hornish, Jr. rounded out the top-five finishers.

Bowyer's RCR teammates Casey Mears, Harvick and Jeff Burton finished sixth, 12th and 18th, respectively.

Short-track action kicks in to high gear next weekend for the annual Sprint Cup Series showdown at the "World's Fastest Half Mile."

Flag-to-flag coverage of the Sharpie 500 from Bristol Motor Speedway will take the green flag Saturday, August 22 beginning at 6:30 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 24th points-paying races on the 2009 NASCAR Sprint Cup Series calendar will be televised live on ESPN2 Friday, August 21 beginning at 5:30 p.m. EDT and will also broadcast live on PRN and Sirius XM Satellite Radio.