

Hard Work, Perseverance Allow Bowyer's Streak to Continue

Race/Date: Aaron's 499, April 26, 2009
Location: Talladega Superspeedway
Start Position: Fifth
Finish Position: 39th
Points Position: Eighth (lost two positions)

TALLADEGA, Alabama – Clint Bowyer's BB&T team headed to Talladega Superspeedway with a brand-new Chevrolet Impala SS with high hopes of a strong finish. Bowyer demonstrated in Friday's two practice sessions that he had a car capable of contending not only for the pole on Saturday, but also for the win on Sunday. Unfortunately, it wasn't to be for the Richard Childress Racing team, as Bowyer was involved in an early accident that eliminated him from contention. However, Bowyer's team demonstrated a never-quit attitude that allowed the Emporia, Kan., native to continue his impressive streak of running at the finish of 82 consecutive NASCAR Sprint Cup Series races.

With Saturday's qualifying session scheduled to begin at 10:15 a.m., teams hoped for an early draw to take advantage of the cool air that tends to assist restrictor plate engines in getting up to speed. When NASCAR posted the qualifying order, it listed the two-time NASCAR Sprint Cup Series winner 35th, the exact opposite of where they'd hoped to make their run. Despite the bad draw, Bowyer recorded the fifth-best lap in time trials, touring the 2.66-mile superspeedway in 50.958 seconds at an average speed of 187.919 mph.

When the field took the green flag on Sunday afternoon, Bowyer planned to exercise patience and do what he could to stay at the front of the pack to avoid being caught up in the "big one," the multi-car accident that typically happens at Talladega and eliminates much of the field from competition. His plan seemed to be working fine in the opening six laps, but when the No. 17 of Matt Kenseth broke loose in the middle of a three-wide battle and collected several cars.

Bowyer was clipped by the No. 71 of David Gilliland, resulting in heavy contact with the outside retaining wall.

When the BB&T Chevrolet arrived in the garage area on a tow truck, it appeared that the damage sustained would be terminal. However, crew chief Shane Wilson immediately put together a game plan to make repairs that would allow Bowyer to return to the track for at least the final lap. After some three hours, the battered No. 33 Chevrolet was able to rejoin the field on lap 187 to complete the last lap of the race, allowing Bowyer to set the new modern-era record of 82 races without a DNF (did not finish).

Bowyer's RCR teammates Jeff Burton, Casey Mears and Kevin Harvick finished 10th, 16th and 38th, respectively.

Brad Keselowski picked up his first NSCS win in just his fifth start, marking the fourth consecutive week that a Chevy Impala SS has pulled into Victory Lane. Dale Earnhardt, Jr. Ryan Newman, Marcos Ambrose and Scott Speed rounded out the top five. The win extended Chevrolet's lead in the Manufacturers' Cup Standings by 15 points.

Next weekend, Bowyer looks to defend his win when the NASCAR Sprint Cup Series drivers and teams head to Richmond International Raceway for the May 2 Russ Friedman 400 presented by Crown Royal. The second night race of the 2009 season will be televised live on FOX Saturday, May 2 beginning at 7 p.m. Eastern Daylight Time. The Motor Racing Network and Sirius XM Satellite Radio will also provide live lap-by-lap coverage. Qualifying for the 10th of 36 points-paying races will be televised on SPEED Saturday, May 1 beginning at 5:30 p.m. EDT.