

Late-Race Skirmish Leaves Bowyer Ninth at Chicago

Race: LifeLock.com 400
Date: July 11, 2009
Location: Chicagoland Speedway
Start Position: Fifth
Finish Position: Ninth
Points Position: 15th (Advanced one position)

JOLIET, Illinois – Clint Bowyer's Cheerios Chevrolet was a mainstay in the top five in Saturday night's LifeLock.com 400 at Chicagoland Speedway, but an incident on a late-race restart with just a handful of laps remaining relegated the two-time NASCAR Sprint Cup Series winner to a ninth-place finish.

With seven races remaining before the 12-team Chase for the Sprint Cup playoff field is set, the 30-year-old driver is 15th in the NASCAR Sprint Cup Series point standings, 126 markers behind Matt Kenseth in 12th.

Bowyer recorded the 17th-fastest time in Thursday's opening practice session and, later that evening, ran a lap of 29.654 seconds at an average speed of 182.100 mph to place him fifth on the starting grid for Saturday night's race, tying the two-time NSCS pole winner's best qualifying effort of the 2009 season. Bowyer continued to show the strength of his Cheerios Chevrolet in Friday's two practice sessions, recording the eighth- and second-fastest times, respectively.

The Emporia, Kansas, native kept his Cheerios Impala SS running inside the top five from the onset of the race, and ran as high as second by the time the first caution flag of the day flew at lap 39. As the sun began to set over the 1.5-mile speedway, Bowyer's Chevrolet began to push in the center of the turns.

Crew chief Shane Wilson called for adjustments that kept the Cheerios Chevrolet in tune with the changing track conditions, and flawless work by the Helping Hands pit crew helped Bowyer keep his track position over the course of the 267-lap event.

As the race neared the conclusion, the No. 00 car made contact with the outside wall and brought out the caution flag at lap 246. Bowyer lined up sixth for the lap-250 restart, behind Jimmie Johnson's No. 48 entry. When the defending Sprint Cup Series champion failed to come up to speed, trapping Bowyer, resulting in several lost positions. Hard racing and another caution period, that would consume several of the closing laps, resulted in some damage to the right rear of Bowyer's Chevrolet. With little time to make up his lost ground, the 30-year-old driver was able to persevere to bring home a ninth-place finish.

Mark Martin captured his fourth victory of the season and was chased to the line by Jeff Gordon and Kasey Kahne. Tony Stewart and Denny Hamlin rounded out the top-five finishers.

Bowyer's RCR teammates Kevin Harvick, Casey Mears and Jeff Burton finished 19th, 28th and 37th, respectively. Burton was an innocent bystander in a lap-226 incident that eliminated him from the race prematurely.

The NASCAR Sprint Cup Series drivers and teams have their third off-week of the 2009 season next week before heading to Indianapolis Motor Speedway for the July 26 Allstate 400 at the Brickyard.

The 20th points-paying race on the 36-race 2009 NASCAR Sprint Cup Series schedule will be televised live on ESPN beginning Sunday, July 26 at 1 p.m. Eastern Daylight Time and broadcast from coast-to-coast on the Indianapolis Motor Speedway Radio Network and Sirius/XM Satellite Radio. Qualifying for the Allstate 400 will be televised live on ESPN2 Saturday, July 26 at 10 a.m. EDT.