

Hampton, GA (September 5, 2010) – It is not a secret that the GEICO Racing program has undergone changes over the last couple of weeks. With Casey Mears taking over the #13 GEICO Sprint Cup Series car and Max Papis moving full-time to the Truck Series in 2011 in the #9 GEICO Toyota Tundra, Atlanta provided everyone the opportunity to move forward.

Mears wasted little time making himself at home in the #13 GEICO Toyota Camry, quickly establishing his presence at Atlanta Motor Speedway. In both practice sessions on Saturday, Mears and the Gecko were fastest among the 'go or go home' cars. Unfortunately, during his qualifying run later that afternoon, he experienced a severe vibration, but managed to place the GEICO Camry in Sunday's NASCAR Sprint Cup Series field despite the unforeseen condition.

Sunday found Mears and the GEICO Racing team surrounded by special guests, including Warren Buffett of Berkshire Hathaway. Rock star Rachel Bolan of Skid Row and Layne Stenzel, who pilots the GEICO car in the Pikes Peak Hill Climb, also joined Mears and the GEICO crew on pit road prior to the race.

Atlanta's NASCAR weekend was accompanied by perfect weather conditions and Sunday night's race would not disappoint. With temperatures in the 70's, the NASCAR Sprint Cup Series took the green flag as the sun began to set over the 1.54-mile quad-oval.

After a vibration squalled his qualifying efforts, Mears was relegated to starting 43rd. Though temperatures were cooling, Mears and the #13 GEICO Camry were heating up. Mears picked up seven positions by the close of the first lap, while half a lap later he was sitting in the 34th position; netting 9 spots in the event's opening two laps.

Mears and the Gecko continued on a tear and found themselves in the Top 20 when they arrived in 19th position on lap 47.

While Atlanta Motor Speedway is known as one of the toughest, fastest tracks on the Sprint Cup Series circuit, Mears remained on the lead lap and dipped into the Top 10 when he moved into the 8th position before scheduled green flag pit stops sent the #13 GEICO Camry down pit road for service on lap 49. The Germain Racing pit crew replenished Mears' GEICO Camry with four fresh Goodyear tires and a full tank of Sunoco racing fuel before returning him to the racing surface in the 34th position. While the stop was necessary, it also put Mears a lap down to the field.

Mears quickly began to make progress and moved back into the Top 30 on lap 83. Germain Racing crew chief Bootie Barker radioed to Mears, "You're doing a great job, Casey. You're faster than the guys in front of you."

That would be an understatement by Barker, as the #13 GEICO Camry was, at times, one full second faster than the cars he was chasing.

He was able to reach 29th place before scheduled green flag pit stops once again got underway.

On lap 94, Mears brought the GEICO Camry down pit road where the Germain Racing pit crew provided him with four new tires, fuel and adjustments. He returned to the racetrack in the 35th position, but had the #13 GEICO Camry back in the Top 30 by lap 106. With only 19 cars on the lead lap, Mears remained just one lap down to the leaders.

Throughout the race, Mears spoke on the radio with a veteran's calm. He sounded more like he was at home on his couch rather than in one of the most intense races of the year. His relaxed demeanor betrayed his on-track aggression, but seemed to have a calming affect on the GEICO pit area.

Although Mears seemed calm on the radio, what happened on lap 151 was sure to get his attention. Greg Biffle and Elliott Sadler began spinning, and Mears avoided peril by the narrowest of margins while running in the 26th position. Mears was forced down hard onto the apron, but the GEICO Camry did not appear to have sustained any damage. After the caution, Mears restarted the race running 25th, but cars began to check-up, causing him to drop several spots to 29th. Despite the setback, Mears had the GEICO Camry back in the Top 25 inside of ten laps.

The race was beginning to wind down, but the excitement was not over for Mears and the #13 GEICO Camry. On lap 265, the engine of Scott Speed's #82 Red Bull car blew up in front of Mears and the Gecko. Mears quickly radioed to Barker, "I got in that oil and almost wrecked."

Just over 50 laps remained in the Emory Healthcare 500 when Barker informed the team that they would be nine laps short on fuel and would need to pit before event's end. Barker must have favor with the racing gods because almost on queue, the caution flag was displayed on lap 295 for a Brad Keselowski spin, allowing Mears to get the fuel he needed to finish the race.

Just prior to the restart on lap 300, Mears predicted there would be another caution.

After restarting 27th on Lap 300, Mears' statement proved to be prophetic as the caution flag waved once again just one lap later for debris. Mears and the #13 GEICO Camry were the first car a lap down when they restarted 26th with 18 laps to go in the race. Another caution would put the GEICO Camry back on the lead lap.

The caution would not come out again before the checkered flag was in the air.

Mears managed a 26th place finish in his debut in the #13 GEICO Camry and gave great hope to the Germain Racing team and the Gecko.

"I had a lot of fun tonight in the #13 GEICO Camry. We had a great car and should've definitely finished on the lead lap," Mears said after emerging from his GEICO machine.

"This is our first time out, so we're only going to get better.

We know what we need to do and we'll make it happen.

I'm happy with the team and equipment and I'm looking forward to getting to Richmond and building upon what we accomplished here in Atlanta this weekend."

Next weekend will prove extra special, as Mears and the Germain Racing team travel to Richmond, VA, for the NASCAR Sprint Cup Series race. GEICO's corporate office is just 100 miles removed from Richmond International Raceway, making it almost a 'home game' of sorts for the GEICO team.

Mears and the #13 GEICO Toyota Camry will hit the 3/4-mile D-shaped oval of Richmond International Raceway for the opening practice session at 12:00 PM (EDT) on Friday, September 10th. Qualifying will begin at 5:40 PM (EDT).

The Air Guard 400 NASCAR Sprint Cup Series race is on Saturday, September 11th, and it will be televised live on ABC beginning at 7:30 PM (EDT), while the Motor Racing Network (MRN) will carry the live radio broadcast.

To learn more about the GEICO Racing program, please visit: www.geicogarage.com

You can also follow GEICO Racing on Twitter: www.twitter.com/geicoracing

Please visit the Casey Mears Facebook fan page: www.facebook.com/casemearsracing

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Contact: Doug Barnette, Player Management International

Email: dbarnette@pmifirm.com