Talladega, AL (October 31, 2010) – Talladega is known to have one of the wildest races (and infields) on the NASCAR circuit. When Halloween and NASCAR clash at the historic racetrack it only lends credence on both counts. Casey Mears and the GEICO team were hoping not to fall victim to ‘The Big One’ when they arrived on-site this weekend.

Friday afternoon saw the NASCAR Sprint Cup Series hitting the track for two practice sessions.

Although Mears appeared to be fast enough to make Sunday’s field of 43, his times were unspectacular.

A seasoned veteran, Mears showed little concern as he left the garage area after the final practice on Friday.

When qualifying got underway, Mears appeared relaxed as he buckled into the #13 GEICO Camry. He calmly left pit road, but soon after he stormed around the 2.66-mile tri-oval in just 52.151 seconds, netting GEICO their best ever NASCAR Sprint Cup qualifying effort.
Mears would start Sunday’s Amp Energy Juice 500 from the inside of Row 5, in the 9th position.

Bright sunny skies and temperatures in the mid-70’s welcomed the Sprint Cup Series to the track on race day. Mears took the green flag in the 9th position, but by Lap 5 he was running 5th. As Talladega would have it, the #13 GEICO Camry would fall in and out of the draft and vacillated anywhere between 5th and 24th positions through the opening forty laps of the race.

Crew chief Bootie Barker ordered the #13 GEICO Camry down pit road on Lap 40 for a scheduled green flag pit stop. The Germain Racing pit crew outfitted Mears with two right side tires and fuel before returning him to the racing surface in the 24th position.

Just two laps later, Mears reported to Barker: “It won’t run by itself, I need someone around me.” On Lap 47, he found that someone and he quickly jumped the GEICO Camry to 19th. La p 50 saw Mears in the middle of a four-car draft that included Jeff Gordon, Jimmie Johnson and Kyle Busch.

The 4-car draft quickly rejoined the main pack of cars and Mears returned to business as usual, picking up positions until he reached 8th on Lap 60.

A single lap later, on Lap 61, Mears was running third and pulled out and became the leader of the race, until Jeff Burton left him hung out to dry with no one to push him.

The event’s first caution flag of the day was displayed on Lap 70, allowing Mears to bring the #13 GEICO Camry to the attention of the Germain Racing pit crew. They provided Mears with four fresh Goodyear tires, a tank of Sunoco racing fuel and much needed rear adjustments.

After restarting 20th on Lap 74, Mears and the #13 GEICO Camry continued their solid Top 20 run.

With 62 laps to go, Casey asked Barker how many laps were left, obviously starting to mentally decide when to make a move.

Mears and the #13 GEICO Camry were running solidly in the Top 10 when Marcos Ambrose got turned, initiating a multi-car spin. Mears somehow managed to narrowly avoid peril and keep the GEICO Camry clean despite cars spinning around him. B arker told Mears to come down pit road for a quick fuel stop under the caution.

Mears arrived in the GEICO Racing pit box and the Germain Racing pit crew quickly filled his car with fuel and returned him to the racetrack two spots to the good.

As the laps began to wind down, the GEICO Camry was sitting in the 9th position with just 43 laps remaining in the race. With 20 to go, Mears’ voice sounded more like he was sitting on his couch at home, rather than in a racecar traveling at 200 miles per hour.

He was calm, cool and collected when he said to Barker, “I’m waiting to see who is going to make a move.”

In Hollywood drama type fashion, the caution flag was displayed for debris with just seven laps remaining in the race. Mears took the opportunity to come down pit road and take a quick splash of fuel before the dash for cash began.

Restarting 26th with five laps to go, Mears moved the #13 GEICO into the 21st position on the subsequent lap. He dropped to 32nd on Lap 187, but the final lap found him charging hard to the front, reaching as high as 24th before the event’s final caution flag of the day waved just after the white flag was shown to the field. Consequently, the field was frozen, prohibiting Mears from continuing his assault on the field.

Rather than the Top 10 he was sure to have, Mears and the GEICO Racing team were instead stuck with a 24th place finish, just ahead of Kyle Busch and Kasey Kahne, who also fell victim to the last lap caution.

While a Top 25 is generally considered a success in NASCAR Sprint Cup Series racing, today it was only frustrating. Mears spent his entire afternoon running in or around the Top 15 and the #13 GEICO Camry was poised for a Top 10 finish, if not for the last lap crash that saw A.J. Allmendinger upside down in Turn 1.

When spotter Jason Jarrett informed Mears of the last lap caution flag, Mears yelled what everyone was else was thinking: “You’ve got to be kidding me!”

“It’s a frustrating outcome because we ran so well all day; the #13 GEICO Camry was great in the draft and we were definitely headed for a Top 10,” said a frustrated Mears. “We were solid today and it was great to be able to put the GEICO Camry up front and even lead the race at one point. This is Talladega, what else can you say.

We’ll get back after it in Texas next week.”

Next week, Casey Mears and the GEICO team head to the Lone Star State.

Mears and the #13 GEICO Toyota Camry will hit the 1.5-mile quad-oval at Texas Motor Speedway for the opening practice session at 1:00 PM (EDT) on Friday, November 5th. Qualifying will follow at 4:40 PM (EDT).

The AAA Texas 500 NASCAR Sprint Cup Series race is on Sunday, November 7th and it will be televised live on ESPN beginning at 3:00 PM (EDT). 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/caseymearsracing

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