

Avondale, AZ (February 27, 2011) – Ten days ago, Casey Mears was dealt one of the worst hands in his NASCAR Sprint Cup Series racing career when two motors broke in two days at Daytona, forcing him and the Germain Racing team to pack up the #13 GEICO Toyota Camry and head home. While sitting on his couch watching the Daytona 500, Mears pondered long and hard the prospect of arriving in Phoenix to seek redemption.

Mears, whose wife, Trisha, played college basketball, saw Phoenix as a chance to rebound, but his performance in the first and second practices on Friday appeared more akin to a fast-break.

He quickly found himself among the fastest go or go home cars in both sessions, giving the GEICO team much needed hope heading into Saturday afternoon qualifying.

Qualifying would see more of the same out of the #13 GEICO Camry, as Mears worked his way around the one-mile tri-oval, out-hustling even Jimmie Johnson, to put the #13 GEICO Camry 27th on the starting grid for Sunday's Subway Fresh Fit 500. While Mears' effort was the fastest among the go or go home cars, it more importantly exposed the resilience of both Mears and his Germain Racing team after experiencing heartbreak just a week ago in Daytona.

On Sunday, the green flag turned the field loose under sunny skies and cool temperatures. Starting 27th, Mears and the #13 GEICO Camry made quick work of Matt Kenseth and Juan Pablo Montoya and promptly moved into the Top 25 by Lap 17.

NASCAR informed the teams prior to the race that there would be a competition caution on Lap 40. The green flag would not last that long, as debris would bring out the yellow flag for the first time on Lap 19. Given that the teams were not allowed to refuel until the Lap 40 competition caution, crew chief Bootie Barker advised Mears not to visit pit road.

The result would be Mears and the #13 GEICO Camry restarting 7th on Lap 23.

Mears ran solidly in the 7th position for five laps before he fell victim to the fresh tires of cars behind him.

He slid as low as 18th before the second caution of the afternoon was displayed on Lap 33 for a Robby Gordon spin. Mears brought his #13 GEICO Camry down pit road to the attention of his Germain Racing pit crew for the first stop of the day. After being outfitted with four fresh Goodyear tires and a tank of Sunoco racing fuel, Mears would sustain light fender damage while exiting pit road when a member of the #43 team inadvertently struck Mears' car. Consequently, Mears was forced to surrender 18th position and take another trip down pit road to have the fender pulled off of the tire.

Mears was relegated to restarting 38th on Lap 39, losing 20 positions due to the pit road incident.

After narrowly avoiding two crashes earlier in the race, Mears soon found himself involved in one. Mears and the #13 GEICO Camry restarted 19th on Lap 67, but before the field could complete a full sweep of the racetrack, a Talladega-like crash ensued, collecting thirteen cars, including that of Mears. Mears radioed to Barker that the car was destroyed and that he was taking it to the garage, but Barker instructed him to limp the car down pit road so the pit crew could more properly assess the situation. Upon seeing the heavy left side damage and right rear damage, the GEICO Racing pit crew promptly went to work. Following a heavy investment of blood, sweat and Bear Bond tape, they returned Mears to the racing surface without causing him to lose a single lap.

After restarting 18th on Lap 73, Mears settled the #13 GEICO Camry in for one of the longest green flag runs of the day. He would dip in and out of the Top 20 through Lap 127 when David Ragan found himself crashing hard into the wall. The caution flag provided Mears the opportunity to bring the GEICO Camry down pit road and let the Germain Racing pit crew continue to make repairs to the crash damage.

Mears would travel down pit road for a scheduled green flag pit stop on Lap 255. The GEICO crew supplied him with four fresh tires and a tank of fuel in a timely fashion, returning him to the track in the 23rd position.

Unfortunately, he would find himself two laps down.

Mears appeared undaunted and continued picking off cars one by one until he cracked the Top 20 on Lap 282.

Mears had slipped to three laps down, but a caution flag provided a bit of relief on Lap 284. Many cars had just visited pit road, which allowed Mears to recover one of the three.

Barker quickly radioed to Mears: "Because you were out there haulin' butt, you actually made up a lap!"

Now the team was just a single lap down to the leaders and sitting in the 19th position as the race began to wind down.

After going green for the final time on Lap 291, Mears would hustle through the final laps of the race and manage to record an 18th place finish. Mears' determination was evident, as he managed to track down and pass Montoya with just three laps to go.

Despite sustaining heavy crash damage on Lap 67, Mears and the GEICO team displayed resilience and poise and delivered their first Top 20 finish of the season.

"This is one of those races where we can think about what kind of finish we could've had if we didn't get caught in that wreck, but these guys worked so hard today to keep this #13 GEICO Camry on the race track and it really paid off," Mears said with a smile after emerging from the badly damaged GEICO Camry. "This weekend says everything about this GEICO team. We had a tough week in Daytona and everyone from GEICO's corporate office down to the janitor at the race shop was heartbroken, but we came back this week and showed that Daytona was a fluke.

Today... this is who we are."

He continued, "I can't thank GEICO enough for their support over the last week and also for the Germain team for staying focused and giving us the opportunity to have a good weekend here in Phoenix."

Next weekend, Mears and the GEICO Racing team will travel to Las Vegas for the series' third stop on the 2011 NASCAR Sprint Cup Series schedule.

Mears and the #13 GEICO Toyota Camry will hit the 1.5-mile D-shaped oval of Las Vegas Motor Speedway for the opening practice session at 3:00 PM (EST) on Friday, March 4th. Qualifying will follow at 6:40 PM (EST).

The Kobalt Tools 400 NASCAR Sprint Cup Series race is on Sunday, March 6th, and it will be televised live on FOX beginning at 3:00 PM (EST). The Performance Racing Network (PRN) 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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