

// February 28th, 2011

Phoenix International Raceway is one of Justin Lofton's favorite race tracks. He entered the event weekend with high hopes at the one-mile facility, but an issue with his No. 77 Lofton Cattle Toyota Tundra early into the Lucas Oil 150 on Friday night left him with a 30th place finish.

"It's disappointing because I had some family come from California and I always look forward to racing here. I knew something wasn't right pretty early, but it is something that gradually gets worse and you can't tell right off what it is," Lofton said. "Once we figured it out, the truck ran pretty good. We'll shake it off this week and be back at it in Darlington."

At the start of the race, Lofton dropped his No. 77 Toyota to the rear of the field after the crew made adjustments to the truck following qualifying. Initially, Lofton grabbed the 24th starting spot. With just under 20 laps on the board however, the 25-year-old radioed to crew chief Ryan Fugle that the truck seemed sluggish on the front stretch.

Shortly after the race hit the lap 40 mark, the first yellow flag of the night waved, allowing Lofton to make a trip down pit road. The crew raised the hood, investigating the problem. The field returned to green flag conditions, but the Lofton Cattle machine remained on pit road. While looking their machine over, the crew found that the throttle stop backed out, fixed the problem, and sent Lofton back on track.

Despite rejoining the race with a 10 lap deficit, Lofton did his job, running a clean race and clicking off lap times that equaled other trucks within the top-10.

On lap 104 Fugle and Lofton agreed to drop to the rear of the field following a restart, since "cautions breed cautions." And they were right. Five more caution flags waved during the course of the final 40 laps. Spotter Mark Green called Lofton through the action, allowing the California native to drive his Toyota home to a 30th place finish.

After a week off the No. 77 Lofton Cattle crew will next head to Darlington Raceway on March 12th.

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