

MEARS' FONTANA FINISH LOCKS GEICO IN THE TOP 35

Fontana, CA (March 27, 2011) – Casey Mears and the GEICO Racing team arrived in Southern California with Top 35 visions in their minds. For the first time in the three-year history of the GEICO NASCAR Sprint Cup Series program, both GEICO and Germain Racing have ventured into uncharted territory where they now find themselves sitting in the Top 35 in the Owner Point standings. Top 35 status guarantees the Germain Racing team a position in each race, providing they maintain their position.

They would need to record a decent finish in Fontana to maintain their current status and allow the GEICO team to be locked in at Martinsville next week.

Friday's opening practice session in Fontana proved unspectacular, as Mears and the #13 GEICO Toyota Camry sat 37th at the close of practice. Undaunted, Mears took to the two-mile oval for qualifying on Friday afternoon and turned heads when he paced the two-mile facility in just 39.592-seconds, at a rate of speed of 181.855 miles per hour.

Aside from securing the 25th starting position in Sunday's NASCAR Sprint Cup Series race, Mears was the fastest 'go or go home car' in the qualifying session.

Mears then tore into Fontana for final practice on Saturday and shot the #13 GEICO Camry to the top of the chart and sat 19th when the session concluded.

Rain threatened the Fontana area on Sunday morning and drizzle plagued the area until around 10:00 AM (PT) when it finally dissipated and allowed for track drying to begin. The racing gods would smile upon Southern California and allow for an on-time green flag at 12:16 PM (PT).

Mears started 25th, but quickly began to battle the racecar. By Lap 3, Mears had dropped to 27th and reported to crew chief Bootie Barker that his GEICO Camry was tight and would not turn. He fell as low as 35th before scheduled green flag pit stops got underway and forced the #13 GEICO Camry down pit road for service on Lap 34. The Germain Racing pit crew quickly outfitted Mears with four fresh tires, a full tank of fuel and adjustments before returning him to the racing surface in the 32nd position.

The adjustments would serve as little assistance to Mears, as just two laps later he once again radioed to Barker: "The front end just doesn't want to work."

Mears and Barker would win the occasional battle, but the war continued and Lap 163 found Mears still at odds with an ill-handling racecar while running in the 30th position. As the laps wound down, Barker ordered Mears to pit road for the final pit stop of the day on Lap 185 after a caution came out for a Bobby Labonte crash.

Barker instructed the GEICO pit crew to make the necessary adjustments to give Mears and the #13 GEICO Camry a shot at a better finish.

Barker's orders did not go unheeded and Mears restarted P32 with just nine laps remaining in the 200-lap race. Mears and the #13 GEICO Camry made quick work of the cars of David Gilliland and Trevor Bayne in the final laps en route to a 29th place finish under gray skies and cool temperatures.

Shortly after the checkered flag waved, Barker announced to the GEICO team that they were in the Top 35 in the 2011 Owner Standings, which means they will be locked into the race next week in Martinsville. Barker also noted that this is the first time in GEICO's three-year Sprint Cup Series involvement that the team would officially be 'locked in', a big stride for a team that three years ago did not even have a NASCAR Sprint Cup Series team.

"Today was frustrating, but we kept fighting and salvaged a decent finish," Mears said after climbing from his #13 GEICO Camry. "The nice thing is that we were able to give GEICO the

opportunity to be locked into the race next week because we have worked really hard this year and put ourselves in the Top 35. I am proud of all of these guys on this GEICO team because regardless of what happens we keep our heads and stay focused.”

The NASCAR Sprint Cup Series will go short-track racing for the second time in three weeks when they travel to Martinsville, VA, next weekend.

Mears and the #13 GEICO Toyota Camry will hit the half-mile paper-clipped shaped oval for the opening practice session at 12:30 PM (EDT) on Friday, April 1st. Qualifying will follow on Saturday, April 2nd, at 12:10 PM (EDT).

The Goody's Fast Relief 500 NASCAR Sprint Cup Series race is on Sunday, April 3rd, and it will be televised live on FOX beginning at 1:00 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/casemearsracing

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