Mears' Top-20 Run Plagued by Tire and Transmission Issues at Martinsville

Date: April 3, 2011

Event: Goody's Fast Relief 500 (Round 6 of 36)

Series: NASCAR Sprint Cup Series

Location: Martinsville (Va.) Speedway (.526-mile oval)

Start/Finish: 30th/ 36th (Running, completed 457 of 500 laps)

Drivers love and love to hate short tracks. Early in his career, Casey Mears enjoyed racing on the intermediate circuits more than the short ones but as the years progressed, those less than a mile in length have provided numerous highlights for the veteran driver. Entering Sunday's Goody's Fast Relief 500 NASCAR Sprint Cup Series race at Martinsville (Va.) Speedway, Mears looked to insert another positive run in the history books.

For the first 296 laps, all went as planned for the GEICO Racing team as Mears successfully competed inside the top-25. Then, one short lap later, the bad luck struck the No. 13 Toyota Camry as Mears' right-front tire blew forcing the team to pit under green and lose four laps to the leader. Misfortune plagued Mears once again with less than 150 laps until the checkered flag, when the transmission blew. Once changed in the garage area, the Gecko returned to the track and brought home a 36th-place finish at the .526-mile paperclip-shaped oval.

"It was a frustrating day," said Mears. "Every time myself, (crew chief) Bootie (Barker), and the guys get the No. 13 GEICO Toyota Camry handling well and in position to have a solid finish, something happens. First, we had the bead melt on the tire and then fourth gear blew out of the transmission. Bad luck seems to be following us but we will just keep moving forward, try to fix the issues, and head to Texas."

Mears qualified his GEICO Racing Toyota Camry in the 30th position on Saturday afternoon, as the Germain Racing team was locked in the top-35 in owner point standings for the first time this season. As soon as the green flag waved on Sunday, Mears didn't waste any time before making moves through the field. In the first 50 laps of green flag competition, Mears picked up 12 positions to 18th-place.

Solid pit stops by the GEICO crew, paired with Mears' patience behind the wheel, set the stage for a top-20 finish as the race passed the halfway mark. On lap 297, Mears radioed to his team that his right-front tire had blew. The field stayed under green flag conditions while Mears brought his car to pit road, putting the team four laps down and running in 28th-place.

As Mears was clocking laps to complete the race and gain as many points as possible, the transmission blew on lap 359, causing the GEICO Toyota to come to the garage for repairs. In a short 37 laps, the team rapidly changed the transmission and had Mears back on the track for the final 100 circuits. Despite the Camry handling decent in final stretch, Mears crossed the finish line in the 36th position, completing 457 of 500 laps.

With the sixth of 36 races complete, Mears dropped two positions to 37th-place in the owner championship standings. He currently sits two points behind the locked-in top-35 marker.

Next Saturday, April 9, the Sprint Cup Series will head to Texas Motor Speedway for the Samsung Mobile 500 in Fort Worth. The race starts at 7:30 p.m. ET with live coverage on FOX.

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

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