Lofton Picks Up Points, Equals Season Best Finish At Charlotte

CONCORD, N.C. -- After a night filled with carnage, Justin Lofton and the No. 77 Lofton Cattle team loaded their Toyota Tundra onto their hauler after the N.C. Education Lottery 200 in nearly pristine condition. Despite 10 caution flags on Friday night at the Charlotte Motor Speedway, Lofton was able to run a clean race, coming home with a 13th place finish.

"We had a good night and that is exactly what we needed. We've had some rough luck to the start of the season, but now we can build off of this and carry this momentum forward," Lofton said. "The guys on this team don't give up, and it feels good to put the bad luck behind us and get this finish."

The finish equaled Lofton's season best of 13th from Darlington. He also picked up three spots in the owner point standings to 23rd, as well as two positions in the driver point standings to 20th.

Lofton started the 200-mile race from the 28th position after qualifying in the heat of the day. As the sun set and temperatures dropped, Lofton's Toyota came to life. By lap 30, Lofton had gained 10 positions.

In addition to Lofton's skills behind the wheel, the Lofton Cattle pit crew did their part, laying down stellar stops all race long. The crew also put in overtime through the race, as crew chief Ryan "Rudy" Fugle opted to top Lofton's Tundra off on fuel prior to numerous restarts. Though the plan was to watch the fuel gauge as the race reached the distance, the strategy was thrown out of the window after 47 caution laps interrupted the 134-lap race.

Under a caution flag on lap 97 Lofton pulled his Toyota down pit road for four fresh tires and fuel as the team took on their final pit stop of the night. After logging a few laps with the fresher tires on his machine, Lofton radioed to Fugle that the truck was "very drivable" and only a little loose at the exit of turn 4. At that point, Lofton showed in the 15th position.

Only one more caution flag waved over the race in the closing laps, leaving Lofton time to pick up two more positions, as he crossed the finish line in the 13th spot.

After the race, the crew looked over Lofton's machine and discovered that there was a gaping hole on the right side of the windshield. After further inspection, they found that a brake rotor from another truck had caused the damage.

"I knew something hit, but I wasn't sure what it was at the time. It knocked the air hose off of my helmet. I wondered what it was, but kept on going," Lofton said. "There was a lot of debris around the track all night. You definitely had to stay on your toes out there, or you were going to get caught up in something."

The next race for Lofton and the No. 77 Lofton Cattle team is on June 4 at Kansas Speedway.

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