MEARS FINISHES 12TH IN SHOWDOWN; GAINS GROUND FOR COCA-COLA 600

CONCORD, N.C. (May 21, 2011) – Each weekend as the NASCAR Sprint Cup Series enters a different racetrack, the pressure follows. However, with no points on the line, the Sprint All Star Race at Charlotte (N.C.) Motor Speedway is one for drivers and teams to try new setups and get a starting point for next week's Coca-Cola 600, the longest race of the 2011 season.

Casey Mears and the GEICO Racing team were prepared to race their way into the Sprint All Star main event, via the Sprint Showdown. The Showdown consisted of two 20-lap segments with a competition caution thrown by NASCAR in the middle of the segments. Only the top two finishers from the Showdown would transfer into the main All Star race.

The No. 13 GEICO Toyota Camry started the Showdown from the 11th position, as Mears laid down a solid lap of 28.278 seconds in qualifying on Friday afternoon. The first caution slowed the pace on lap three with Mears scored in the eighth position. The Bakersfield, California native radioed to Crew Chief Bootie Barker that the Gecko was "pretty darn good." On lap nine, Mears restarted from the outside of row four before being shuffled out of position. As the first 20-lap segment came to a close, Mears held the 13th position and reported to the GEICO team that the Camry was tight to the center of the corner.

As the majority of the leaders decided to come to pit road for fresh tires during the segment break, Mears stayed on the racetrack to gain track position. The second and final 20-laps started on lap 21 with Mears in fifth-place. On the restart, the competitors with new tires behind Mears took off and the caution came on lap 28 with the GEICO Camry in the 11th position. Barker brought Mears to pit road for four tires, fuel, and an air pressure adjustment as the front end was sliding the nose.

With caution laps not counting during the second segment, Mears restarted on lap 28 from the

13th position. The final 11 laps went caution free, but with two laps remaining, Mears passed Martin Truex Jr. for 12th-place. The GEICO Toyota Camry went on to cross the finish line in that position.

“Overall we learned a decent amount for next weekend, which is the one that really counts,” said Mears after the Showdown. “Our pit stop tonight was really good and we were able to gain some information about the handling that will give us a better place to start in practice for the 600. The GEICO Camry was just too tight in the center, but we will get it fixed up and be ready to go.”

Mears and the GEICO Racing team will return to Charlotte Motor Speedway next week for the running of the Coca-Cola 600. Practice and qualifying are scheduled for Thursday, May 26th, while the race will take place on Sunday, May 29th.

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