DETERMINATION PAYS OFF FOR MEARS IN 600-MILE RACE; FINISHES 23RD

CONCORD, N.C. (May 29, 2011) – A normal NASCAR Sprint Cup Series race averages 400 to 500 miles, 300 laps, and three hours. However, there is one event every May that lasts a little longer – The Coca-Cola 600. The longest race of the season puts strain on the drivers, teams, and equipment as 600 miles, 400 laps, and over four and half hours require top performance and endurance.

All of this action completes a full two weeks of racing at Charlotte (N.C.) Motor Speedway, the home track for many teams including Casey Mears and the Mooresville, N.C. based GEICO Racing Toyota crew.

After three practices and a disappointing qualifying effort of 37th, Mears was hopeful to have a solid race and survive all 600 miles under the hot Sunday night temperature. Starting in the back of the pack, Mears knew he had ground to make up in the beginning stages of the race. By lap 25, the GEICO Toyota Camry had moved into the 31st position, however Mears quickly radioed to his team that he was not pleased with the amount of horsepower under the hood, as he would pass competitors only to have them chase him back down on the straightaway.

The first 170 laps saw Mears' Toyota get tighter as the green flag run continued but the California native clocked consistent lap times in spite of the engine woes. The third caution of the evening came on lap 172, as Crew Chief Bootie Barker instructed Mears to stay on the racetrack and regain a lap, placing the GEICO Toyota in the 30th position.

Unfortunately, the second gremlin found Mears on lap 188 as the No. 13 Camry received contact from Landon Cassill, cutting the left rear tire on the Germain Racing machine. The tire shredded the left rear quarter panel before Mears could make it pit road. The GEICO crew worked feverishly to repair the damage on numerous stops, and with hard work, Mears never lost a lap in the process. On lap 194, Mears restarted in 30th-place.

Over the course of the next run, Mears told his GEICO crew that his cooling hose that connects to his in-car air conditioning system had come undone, leaving the cockpit extremely hot. Immediately, the team began preparing ice bags, fresh water, and a new system to help relieve their driver. For the remainder of the event, the GEICO Racing team refueled Mears on each pit stop.

By lap 282, Mears had worked his way into the 26th position. The GEICO Toyota had become loose, hindering the ability to get in and get off the corners. A break finally came for Mears and the GEICO team as they received the Lucky Dog Award on lap 295 to regain their position on the lead lap.

The field took the green flag restart on lap 302, with less than a 100 laps remaining. Three quick cautions broke up the pace over the next 40 laps, but Barker brought his driver to pit road on lap 345 for four tires, fuel, and air pressure adjustments. Continuing to fight through the circumstances, Mears was scored in 24th-place with 50 laps to go.

Right away, Mears and Barker decided to start saving fuel, as they were four laps short and were going to try and stretch it to the end if no cautions ruin the plan. This strategy looked like it was going to work out perfect before Jimmie Johnson lost a motor on lap 397, setting the stage for a green-white-checkered finish. Mears returned to pit road under this caution for four tires and fuel, ensuring he could make it the remaining distance.

Going three laps past the scheduled distance, Mears brought home a 23rd-place finish for the GEICO Racing team. The effort put in by the entire team was unmatched and completely exhibited the reason to keep pushing through unwanted circumstances.

“It was a hot one out there tonight,” said Mears, after the race. “We didn’t have very much go our way, but we never gave up the entire race. The GEICO Racing team kept working on the damage and made it fairly decent for the amount of sheet metal that was tore up. To come home 23rd isn’t the result we wanted, but for the circumstances we were dealt, it was a good night. One of the keys to a 600-mile race is having a car that can survive it and Germain Racing gave me a car that took the checkered flag, so I appreciate their hard work. We will go on to Kansas.”

The NASCAR Sprint Cup Series heads to Kansas Speedway for the running of the STP 400 on Sunday, June 5th. All of the action can be seen live on FOX, as well as heard on MRN Radio and Sirius XM Radio.

To learn more about the GEICO Racing program, please visit: www.geicogarage.com <http://www.geicogarage.com/> You can also follow GEICO Racing on Twitter: www.twitter.com/geicoracing <http://www.twitter.com/geicoracing> Please visit the Casey Mears Facebook fan page: www.facebook.com/caseymearsracing <http://www.facebook.com/caseymearsracing>

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