

Daytona Beach, FL (July 2, 2011) – Springtime in Daytona did not favor Casey Mears, but he was hoping as he arrived this week for the July 2nd race that summer would prove to be more auspicious. After Daytona's legendary speedway betrayed the Bakersfield, CA, native in February, the security of being in the Top 35 for the Coke Zero 400 eased the nerves of the Germain Racing team when they unloaded their #13 GEICO Toyota Camry on Thursday.

Prior to the start of practice, Mears and the GEICO team would first be forced to wait out the aggression of Mother Nature, who blanketed the speedway with rain for the majority of Thursday afternoon. After the cancellation of the opening practice, the NASCAR Sprint Cup Series would offer the field a compacted 45-minute session later in the evening.

Mears and the #13 GEICO Toyota Camry would end up 32nd on the speed chart, just behind Brian Vickers and Kasey Kahne, when the red flag closed the series' only practice session.

Qualifying got underway late Friday afternoon, and Mears would be the 14th driver to take to the newly paved tri-oval. He navigated the #13 GEICO Camry around the high-banks of Daytona International Speedway in just 50.107-seconds, at a rate of speed of 179.616-miles per hour, placing him 32nd on the starting grid, ahead of Martin Truex, Jr., and Denny Hamlin.

Before Mears would take the green flag on Saturday night, he would first make an appearance at the GEICO display area in the GEICO campgrounds. After signing hundreds of autographs and taking photos with admiring fans, Mears then set his sights on the 160 laps of racing that would ensue a few hours later.

Clear skies and a packed grandstand overlooked the racetrack when the green flag turned the field loose for 400-miles of racing on Saturday evening. Starting 32nd, Mears and the #13 GEICO Camry immediately hooked up with their drafting partner Bobby Labonte and began to move forward until a Trevor Bayne crash brought out the event's first caution flag on Lap 4.

Labonte received collateral damage and after moving up to the 24th position, Mears and the Gecko were now on the lookout for a new dance partner.

When the race went back to green on Lap 9, Mears restarted 17th and hooked up with Landon Cassill, forming what would end up being one of the most formidable duos of the evening. However, Cassill would not be Mears' only ally during the race.

When the event's second caution flag was displayed on Lap 23 after Carl Edwards met the wall in Turn 4, the Germain Racing pit crew churned out a fast stop and returned Mears to the racing surface in an expedient fashion.

While the #13 GEICO Camry entered pit road in the 16th position, Mears would restart ninth on Lap 27, netting seven spots during his visit.

Mears and Cassill began to effortlessly navigate to the front and cracked the Top 10 on Lap 39, when the #13 GEICO Camry took over the ninth position. Just a few laps later, on Lap 43, Mears captured fifth, and soon after moved into third on his quest to command the field.

As the race began to wear on, Mears settled comfortably into the Top 10 and would make the occasional visit to the Top 5. Lap 75 found the Daytona crowd exposed to their favorite reptile as Mears and the #13 GEICO Camry shot to the lead and would hold the spot for the next two laps.

After the Gecko led his first Daytona laps in the NASCAR Sprint Cup Series, Mears settled into the third position as the race approached the halfway point.

With just 80 laps left on the docket, the tension on the racetrack became palpable and a focused Mears would wheel around the racetrack speaking very little on the team's radio frequency.

A persistent Mears handled the race with a veteran's calm and Lap 94 saw the hard-charging GEICO driver once again chase down the leader and take over the race's top spot, marking the second time the #13 GEICO Camry led the field.

As he approached Lap 100, Mears brought the #13 GEICO Camry down pit road for a scheduled green flag stop, taking on only left-side tires and a tank of Sunoco racing fuel. He rejoined the event in the 19th position, but quickly made up lost ground.

Mears reached the Top 15 by Lap 104, while one lap later the #13 GEICO Camry would tread in

familiar territory when it landed back in the Top 5.

With just two laps left in the event, race fans leaped from their seats when a big group of cars began to make contact, sending Jeff Gordon spinning in front of an oncoming Mears. Mears would miss Gordon's car by only the narrowest of margins, drawing a collective sigh from the GEICO Racing pit area.

The incident would set the race up for a green-white-checker finish.

Riding in 12th under caution on Lap 160, Mears was handed his marching orders by crew chief, Bootie Barker. "Casey, you have enough fuel to do what you need to do here at the end. You and Landon should be nose to tail.

Good luck."

When the race went back under green with two laps remaining, the field began crashing in Turn 2 and Mears was left with nowhere to go, falling victim to the 'big one' and causing significant damage to the #13 GEICO Camry. Mears was able to carefully limp the GEICO machine back to pit road where the Germain Racing pit crew skillfully repaired the car during the caution period.

Mears would ultimately restart the race in the 33rd position, and hustle to a 32nd place finish. The late-race crash would not overshadow the team's best overall performance of the season.

"We had a really good night tonight and it was great being able to take the lead on two different occasions and put GEICO at the front of the field at one of the biggest races of the year," Mears said. "Getting caught up in a crash with two to go is unfortunate, but wrecks happen in racing and we got wrecked while in position to make a run for the win; that's something we can live with. What's important is that we got to show the progress we're making and how good we can be. I'm proud of this entire Germain Racing team. I had a lot of fun tonight and I'm really looking forward to getting to Kentucky next week."

Next week, the NASCAR Sprint Cup Series will make its first-ever visit to Kentucky Speedway when all three of NASCAR's top series' compete at the Sparta facility.

Mears and the #13 GEICO Toyota Camry will hit the 1.5-mile D-shaped oval for an open day of testing on Thursday, July 7th, prior to beginning practice on Friday, July 8th, at 11:30 AM (EDT).

Qualifying will follow on Friday evening at 5:10 PM (EDT).

The Quaker State 400 NASCAR Sprint Cup Series race is on Saturday, July 9th and it will be televised live on TNT beginning at 7:30 PM (EDT). The Performance Racing Network (PRN) will carry the live radio broadcast.

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/casemearsracing](http://www.facebook.com/casemearsracing)

- PMI -

Contact: Doug Barnette, Player Management International

Email: [dbarnette@pmifirm.com](mailto:dbarnette@pmifirm.com)