MEARS AND THE GECKO NET FRUITFUL WEEKEND IN THE WINDY CITY

Joliet, IL (September 19, 2011) – Coming off of a strong week at Richmond, Mears and the GEICO Racing team looked forward to seeing the Gecko in Chicago when they arrived for the GEICO 400 at Chicagoland Speedway. Mears arrived early on Thursday and spent the vast majority of his time doing media interviews along with appearances where he greeted fans and further promoted the GEICO brand.

When Mears took to the racetrack for NASCAR Sprint Cup Series practice on Friday, he did not find the speed for which he was looking. At the conclusion of both practices, the GEICO team was left with more questions than answers, as Mears sat 35th and 40th in the respective sessions. A previous polesitter and winner at Chicagoland Speedway, Mears knows full well how to navigate the 1.5-mile tri-oval, but his expertise did not provide relief during qualifying. Mears was forced to use his Top 35 status to secure his position in the race, as his qualifying laps would relegate him to 41st on the starting grid.

Mears and the GEICO team arrived early Sunday morning preparing to take to the grid for the GEICO 400, but instead found themselves sidelined as Mother Nature had her way with the speedway. For the third time in the last six races, the NASCAR Sprint Cup Series saw their race postponed due to rain.
With overcast skies looming and a grandstand full of dedicated fans, Mears and the #13 GEICO Camry finally took the green flag at noon (ET) on Monday afternoon. Starting the race in 41st, Mears quickly began to make up ground and took over the 38th position by the close of the opening lap. When the scheduled competition caution was displayed on Lap 30, Mears took the opportunity to visit pit road where the Germain Racing team supplied him with four fresh tires, a tank of fuel and a wedge adjustment.

Mears' progress was later thwarted just after visiting pit road for a scheduled green flag pit stop on Lap 68. No sooner than Mears departed pit road, the caution flag waved, instantly sending the #13 GEICO Camry two laps down to the leaders and forcing Mears to spend the balance of his afternoon trying to regain his position on the lead lap.
After taking the wave-around under caution, Mears was left just one lap down, but that nearly changed on Lap 78. Robby Gordon cut down a tire and quickly moved to the bottom of the racetrack just in front of the GEICO Camry. Mears narrowly avoided peril and continued on his way.
Mears was running in the 34th position when a debris caution on Lap 144 offered the GEICO team the opportunity to gain track position. Crew chief, Bootie Barker, ordered Mears to remain on the racetrack and take the wave-around rather than come down pit road for service. The gamble would be that Mears would have just enough fuel to complete another ten laps after the race went green, so he would need a caution to come out or otherwise visit pit road under green

flag conditions. If the caution flag were to wave, the #13 GEICO Camry would return to the lead lap.
Mears restarted in the 33rd position on Lap 151, but unfortunately, the caution did not come out and the GEICO Camry would be forced to travel down pit road under green on Lap 161 for a much-needed service. For a second time, Mears would experience heartbreak at the hands of the caution flag. Just two laps after he returned to the racing surface following his pit stop, the caution was displayed when Jamie McMurray's engine gave way, sending the field under caution and Mears two laps down.

With 50 laps remaining in the race, Barker warned Mears that the #13 GEICO Camry was two laps short on fuel. Mears was not alone in this scenario, as much of the field was presented with the same dilemma. Mears took the necessary precautions and was able to save enough fuel to take the checkered flag. After starting 41st, Mears and the GEICO team persevered through a challenging afternoon and collected 12 positions en route to a 29th place finish in the GEICO 400.
"It was really fun to come to the track this weekend and see GEICO plastered everywhere, even on the outside wall of the racetrack. I entered turn four at one point and thought I saw a huge blow up gecko," Mears joked. "The weather was unpleasant on Sunday, but I was glad I was able to spend some time with our guests from GEICO's corporate office and thank them for their tremendous support as we continue building our race program."

Mears' 29th place finish at Chicagoland Speedway allowed Germain Racing to maintain their 32nd position in the NASCAR Sprint Cup Series Owner Point Standings.
To learn more about the GEICO Racing program, please visit: www.geicogarage.com

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