

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**MEARS AND GEICO TEAM NET TOP 5 IN DAYTONA QUALIFYING**

Daytona Beach, FL (February 19, 2012) – What a difference a year makes. In February 2011's Duel 150's, smoke billowed from the rear of Casey Mears' #13 GEICO car and with it blew up Germain Racing's Daytona 500 hopes.

That was then... this is now.

Casey Mears and his Germain Racing team rolled into Daytona International Speedway last week with a new engine package, new manufacturer, new paint scheme and a contract extension from their sponsor, GEICO. While other teams most likely put little thought into the #13 team and its prospects, the crew of the GEICO Ford Fusion possessed a quiet confidence that this year would be different; that it would be special.

They intently went about their work in the NASCAR Sprint Cup Series garage bookended by Hendrick Motorsports teams, and showed little concern after Mears ended up 31st in the opening practice session on Saturday.

Mears returned to the track for the series' second practice session and quickly shot to third on the board, before winding up 17th at its conclusion. A considerable improvement from the opening session, Mears indicated to people within earshot that the team left some speed on the table. He also wore his patented grin when considering the upcoming qualifying session with his crew chief, Bootie Barker.

Mears and the #13 GEICO Ford Fusion were slated as the fourth team to make a qualifying attempt on Sunday afternoon. Amid gusty winds, he quickly took to the high-banked racetrack with an unrelenting sense of urgency, pacing the 2.5-mile facility in just 46.429 seconds, at a rate of speed of 193.844 miles per hour. Mears' qualifying effort placed him fifth on the final speed chart; a far cry from the heartbreak he and his team experienced a year ago and it also affords him a premium starting position (second) in Thursday's Gatorade Duel 150's.

Ford would also go on to enjoy its own success, netting four of the top five positions in today's qualifying session.

"This is a great day for our Germain Racing team, our sponsor GEICO and also for Ford," Mears said. "But, honestly, we've worked really hard in the off-season and this team has made tremendous sacrifices, so it's not totally unexpected. It's a great way to start the season, especially in our first outing in a Ford and with Roush Yates power; can't thank those guys enough. It's also nice to be able to reward GEICO for their loyal support of our team.

Thursday will be exciting, so we'll see how it all shakes out."

Next up for the Germain Racing team is the Gatorade Duel 150's on Thursday, February 23rd. Mears and the #13 GEICO Ford Fusion will roll off the starting grid from the outside pole in Duel #2.

The Gatorade Duel 150's will be broadcast live on SPEED starting at 1 PM (ET), with the Motor Racing Network (MRN) carrying live radio coverage.

To learn more about GEICO, please visit: [www.geico.com](http://www.geico.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)

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