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MEARS LEADS LAPS AT TALLADEGA; CUT TIRE DOESN'T DETER TOP 20 FINISH

Talladega, AL (May 6, 2012) – Talladega has a reputation for being one of the most exciting race venues on the NASCAR schedule. After recording their best finish of the 2012 season in Richmond a week ago, Casey Mears and the GEICO team looked to provide excitement of their own when they unloaded at Talladega Superspeedway.

Less than five minutes had elapsed in Friday's opening practice session before Mears and his #13 GEICO Ford Fusion notched the top spot on the practice charts. Mears ultimately rested in the 7th position when practice concluded.

On Saturday, he took to the high-banks of the legendary speedway for qualifying and after pacing the 2.66-mile facility in just 50.539 seconds, at a rate of speed of 189.477 miles per hour, he landed the #13 GEICO Fusion 25th on Sunday's starting grid.

188 laps of racing awaited Mears and his NASCAR Sprint Cup Series counterparts on Sunday.

After the rain cleared, and the heat and humidity descended upon the Talladega area, the green flag set the field underway for an exciting afternoon of restrictor-plate action.

Mears paced himself throughout the first half of the Aaron's 499 while organizing a strategy for the final 94 laps.

Mears' spotter Jason Jarrett stayed busy and was too often forced to rattle off the words 'Three-wide, you're in the middle'; a phrase that makes any racer nervous.

As the race intensified, that phrase would sometimes be substituted with 'Four wide', bringing the tension to a palpable level in the pit area.

Mears and the #13 GEICO Fusion worked their way to the front of the field, landing in the eighth position by lap 122. With 46 laps to go, Mears narrowly escaped peril when cars began crashing just above him in turn three. Jarrett calmly guided his driver through the chaos, as they continued their march to the front.

Mears visited pit road under the caution and, after taking on four fresh tires and a tank of racing fuel, he restarted in the sixth position with 38 laps to go in the race.

It wasn't long before Mears took command of the Aaron's 499 and became the leader with just 26 laps remaining in the advertised distance. He led the race in solid fashion, even pulling away from the field, before surrendering to a hard charging Denny Hamlin.

Mears then settled into the top ten and seemed poised to challenge for the win before a cut tire changed his fate. As the #13 GEICO Fusion entered turn two, its left rear tire went down, and Mears found himself careening toward the outside wall with just 13 laps to go in the race.

He did a masterful job of saving his racecar from any significant damage and was able to deliver his GEICO Fusion to the attention of his pit crew.

The Germain Racing team quickly provided Mears with four fresh Goodyear racing tires and pulled out the fenders to prevent any potential tire rubs before returning him to the racing surface in the 22nd position.

More remarkable, is that the pit crew's quick work during Mears' visit also allowed him and his #13 GEICO Fusion to remain on the lead lap.

When the race came to a close with the ever famous Green-White-Checker finish, Mears managed to hold on to a damaged racecar and record an 18th place, lead lap finish. It was the team's best result of the young 2012 season, and marks the second consecutive week that they have posted their top effort of the year.

Mears also posted the race's fastest lap on three different occasions.

Clearly, Mears and his GEICO team have their ship headed in the proper direction.

“We obviously had a great day and it was fun to get the #13 GEICO Ford Fusion up front and lead some laps,” Mears said in the garage after the race. “Unfortunately, the tire caused us some problems, but the Germain pit crew did a great job of getting the car repaired and getting me back in the race without losing a lap.

I think you can see everything coming together week in and week out now.

We’re getting there and people are taking notice.

On the flight home, everyone was talking about how great we ran.”

He continued, “Darlington has always been one of my favorite tracks, so I’m excited about getting there next week and continuing our run.”

Germain Racing remains 28th in the Owner Point standings, but now sits just 28 points removed from the Top 25. They also pad their lead over Richard Childress in 36th, where Germain now enjoys a solid 82-point cushion in the always important Top 35.

Mears and his #13 GEICO team will next dance with the Lady in Black when they visit Darlington, SC, for race number 11 of the 2012 NASCAR Sprint Cup Series season.

Mears and his #13 GEICO Ford Fusion will hit the track at Darlington Raceway for the opening practice session on Friday, May 11th, at 11:30 AM (EDT). Qualifying will follow at 5:10 PM (EDT).

The Bojangles' Southern 500 NASCAR Sprint Cup Series race is on Saturday, May 12th, and it will be televised live on FOX beginning at 6:30 PM (EDT). The Motor Racing Network (MRN) will carry the live radio broadcast.

To learn more about the GEICO racing program, please visit: www.caseymearsracing.com

You can also follow GEICO Racing on Twitter: www.twitter.com/geicoracing

Please visit the Casey Mears Facebook fan page: www.facebook.com/caseymearsracing

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Contact: Doug Barnette, Player Management International

Email: dbarnette@pmifirm.com