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LADY IN BLACK NOT TOO TOUGH FOR MEARS AND GEICO TEAM

The GEICO Racing Team Records Eighth Top-25 Finish of the 2012 Season

DARLINGTON, S.C. (May 12, 2012) – There is a reason Darlington Raceway is known as ‘The Lady in Black.’ In one moment, a driver can be conquering the lady and in the next, she has reared her ugly head. This is why many drivers love going to the prestigious South Carolina track. GEICO Racing driver Casey Mears is no different and lists Darlington as his favorite racetrack on the Sprint Cup Series circuit.

Coming off a strong run at Talladega, which saw the No. 13 GEICO Ford Fusion lead laps and run at the front of the field, Mears and the Germain Racing team looked forward to the battle in Saturday night's Southern 500. While their 31st place qualifying effort fell short of expectations, Mears had been 16th in the weekend's final practice session earlier the same day, giving hope to the GEICO team.

As the 368-lap event began, Mears quickly knew that the handling of the GEICO machine was off. A long green flag run forced the crew to compete through three pit cycles before the first caution flag was displayed on lap 173. The California native reported to Crew Chief Bootie Barker that the Ford was loose in turns one and two and tight in turns three and four. Barker instructed Mears to take the wave around under the first yellow period to regain a lap.

The field restarted on lap 180 with Mears scored in the 25th position. The report from the driver's seat over the next 100 laps was that the GEICO Ford Fusion was too tight to turn well off the center of the corner. Despite this handling condition, Mears continued to push through and climb up to the 23rd position by lap 300.

Over the final 68 laps, four cautions slowed the pace as the action heated up on the track. Mears and the GEICO team relished every opportunity to make adjustments on their Ford Fusion, which resulted in a 22nd-place finish, nine positions ahead of where they started. This was the team's eighth top-25 effort of the 2012 season.

“We didn’t have the handling right on our GEICO Ford Fusion for most of the night, but I’m proud of these guys for not giving up,” said Mears. “Bootie kept making adjustments every chance we could and it was definitely better towards the end. Darlington is one of my favorite tracks to race at but you have to hit the set-up just right to run with the leaders. Overall, another top-25 finish for our team is nice and we will focus on Charlotte for the next couple weeks.”

Germain Racing remains 28th in the Owner Point standings, just 29 points outside the top-25.

Mears and the GEICO Racing team will now spend the next two weeks at Charlotte Motor Speedway for the Sprint All-Star Race and the Coca-Cola 600. Watch all coverage of the Sprint Showdown and All-Star Race live on SPEED Channel on Saturday, May 19.

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