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Rain cancelled qualifying for tomorrow night's NASCAR Sprint Cup Series Irwin Tools Night Race at Bristol Motor Speedway, meaning the starting field will be set in accordance with the rule book. As a result, Casey Mears, driver of the No. 13 Geico Ford Fusion, will start from the pole after posting the fastest single lap time in today's first practice session. Greg Biffle, driver of the No. 16 3M Ford Fusion, will start third. Both drivers answered questions following the postponement.

Ford Qualifying Results (Qualifying postponed by rain)

- 1st – Casey Mears
- 3rd – Greg Biffle
- 5th – Aric Almirola
- 9th – Marcos Ambrose
- 17th – Matt Kenseth
- 18th – David Gilliland
- 24th – David Ragan
- 27th – Carl Edwards
- 30th – Michael McDowell
- 32nd – Josh Wise
- 42nd – Ken Schrader

CASEY MEARS – No. 13 Geico Ford Fusion – HOW DOES IT FEEL TO START FIRST TOMORROW NIGHT? “It's exciting. I think for our team, Germain Racing, it's been a long couple of years. It's been good, but the team has really grown in strides and we've made a lot of big improvements this year. We still have a lot to learn and still have a lot to grow, but it's a big shot in the arm for our team for sure. Geico has made a big commitment to our program. Bob Germain has done a lot of really good things this year toward making everything better. We've been able to get cars from Roush – cars, parts and pieces. We still don't get the information, but Bootie and the guys have done a really good job at doing their homework at Bristol. We were pretty embarrassed at how we showed up here last time. The first part of the year we didn't get our first car until late January from Roush, so we were playing catch-up the first part of this year and to be able to put a little time into it and work at it, Bootie and these guys did a really good job. We unloaded way better than we were here last time. Race trim felt pretty good as well and when they switched over to qualifying trim we were 15th to 12th and they made a substantial adjustment in the right direction and we were able to shoot to the top of

the board. It's exciting for us. I think it's gonna be good. Obviously, starting up front at Bristol period is always a good thing. Like I said, I think it's exciting for our team to be able to have this opportunity to have the first pit selection starting up towards the front. It gives us a big head start from where we've been in the past."

WHAT IS YOUR IMPRESSION OF HOW THE TRACK AND RACE MIGHT BE DIFFERENT WITH THE TOP GROOVE? "Really, it's hard to say yet because where they actually worked on the track we haven't actually been all the way up there yet. I've seen some guys flirting with the edge of it, so it's really gonna be hard to say. The race tonight will give you a better idea of maybe what we can expect more of tomorrow night. As of right now, there's really not a good comment to make because nobody has really run up there where they really changed the surface yet. If it keeps guys from running up against the wall, I think it could make it a little bit more competitive just because when guys are running right up against the fence and it's really hard to pass guys down underneath, you're hesitant to get in the back of them and kind of move them out of the way a little because you know it's gonna put them in the wall right away running that close to the fence, so if it can keep guys within a car width or car width-and-a-half away from the wall, it's gonna allow for at least some of that old-style racing back a little bit."

YOU ARE RUNNING THE FULL DISTANCE RIGHT? "Yes. That's a valid question. We have a partial season and Geico has really stepped up this year and actually done more than they said they were gonna do initially, which has been huge. Bob Germain has made a very substantial personal investment into this program. His heart is in it, so we've grown at least six or eight races more than we were gonna run this year already. Bristol is one that we're definitely gonna run. We run next weekend in Atlanta, so a good run here would definitely set us off right for a good week next week as well."

CASEY MEARS CONTINUED -- HOW IS YOUR RACE SETUP AND EXPECTATIONS FOR THE RACE. "It's an obvious question. Your qualifying setup was great, how is your race setup? I felt pretty good about it. It wasn't outstanding. I wasn't jumping up and down in race trim, but we were definitely right in the mix, so it wasn't one of those deals where we were 35th in race trim and then we jumped up to first for qualifying. So we're fortunate with that. Like I said, the guys have done their homework. The car is pretty good for the race tomorrow. We tried some real big things in second practice, just trying to get a direction knowing what we did in the first practice was working pretty well, so I'm excited about it. I think we've got a good starting spot. We've got a good race car and we'll be looking for a solid night tomorrow."

CAN YOU TELL US YOU KNEW IT WAS GOING TO RAIN AND THAT'S WHY YOU RAN SUCH A FAST LAP? "Honestly, the way it's structured right now we all try to run as fast as we

can the first practice because we know how good a late draw is here at Bristol. There are other tracks, obviously, where it wouldn't be as important but having a late draw here always helps. You never want to get a pole like this but we'll definitely take it, I can tell you that. And the other thing is you know everybody was trying to run as fast as they could in that first practice. Is there a little bit more left? I think there always is when you go to qualify, but, believe me, everybody wanted to go out last in qualifying today. We're pretty proud of the fact that we were fastest in that first practice just because of that. You know that everybody has that same mindset and I think it shows we have a pretty competitive car, so I'm excited about it."

GREG BIFFLE SAID EARLIER THE LINE FROM WINNING TO 12TH PLACE IS SO FINE. FOR A TEAM LIKE YOURS HOW DO YOU DEFINE VICTORY? WHAT IS A GOOD WEEKEND? "I think that today was a small one for sure for our program. Then obviously if we could end up inside the top 15 tomorrow that would be a real good day for us. Don't get me wrong, I've been in this sport for a long time. My expectations are high. Bootie's are high. Believe me, Bob's and Geico's are high as well. We all want to go win races, but the reality of it is we've been a team that's done a very good job getting from 30th in the last year-and-a-half to running consistently inside the top 20. We've been slowly chipping away at possibly getting inside the top 15 and I think that although we've had a great day today, I think our goals are still the same. If we could have a good top 15, it would be a huge day for us. If we got inside the top 10, it would almost be like a win. And if we can start and run well like I think we can tomorrow, we could really, really exceed what would be a great day for us. It's a tough balance when you're in a competition-based sport, obviously. For being in this sport as long as I have, I have very, very high goals, but at the same time you've got to be realistic with what you are working with, what you're working towards and where you're at at that current time. For us, if we were to get a top 15, it would be a good day for us."

WHAT ARE YOU LOOKING FOR AT THIS POINT IN YOUR CAREER AND HOW DOES BEING WITH THIS ORGANIZATION HELP YOU WITH THAT? "That's a pretty wide-open question, really. I look to win races. When I look at the reality of that, with where we're at right now, we're still a little ways from that. It's not to say that we can't do it, but there's just so many details at the end of the day that you really have to cover to actually win one of these races. We have an opportunity tomorrow night, but, at the same time, what I've really enjoyed is I think this is my 10th year at this level and having the experience I've had over the years it's been fun to be part of a program where they lean and rely on me a lot to get to where we're going. I'm a huge part in everything that we do – in the meetings, where we decide to go.

CASEY MEARS CONTINUED – "Ford has been a big help to us this year, which has been outstanding. Obviously, having the relationship with Roush has been good, but behind the scenes, how we do things – Bootie, myself, Larry Rogers, Bob Germain – we sit down and kind of discuss what we're gonna do next and this program just continues to grow and it's really

rewarding to see how we've grown over the last couple of years. I tell you what, when you talk about getting inside the top 20 or the top 15 when you start looking at the three and four-car teams that should be inside the top 20 on a weekly basis, when you finish 18th or 16th as a one-car organization scrapping and clawing for everything you do, you've just beat six or eight teams that you really shouldn't have beat. So I'm proud of what we've done this year. We've definitely made a lot of strides and we see a big future. I think at the end of the day, we don't look at those top 20s and go, 'This is as far as we're gonna go.' We see us improving and going in the right direction and I'm just excited about it. The path is going the right way. Today proves that to a certain extent. We definitely improved from the last time we were here. The first time I came here with Germain Racing – this is the two-year anniversary for me. The first time I came here was at Bristol. We came here with intentions of making the show and we weren't gonna race. This was not a race that we were gonna race. We qualified 43rd and I think in the first 10 laps we passed 10 cars and pulled in. That was the worst thing I ever did in my life. Today, at the end of practice two years later we were the quick time, so I think that says a lot for how far this team has come.”

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