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MEARS RUNS FROM BACK TO FRONT EN ROUTE TO 14TH IN PHOENIX

Germain Racing accounts for third best finishing Ford and now sits inside the Top 20 in points

Avondale, AZ (March 3, 2013) – When Casey Mears and his GEICO team arrived at Phoenix International Raceway this weekend, they were looking to recover from heartbreak dealt to them in Daytona, where contact with Tony Stewart ended their day prematurely. Rather than dwell on the past, Mears and his GEICO team chose to view Phoenix as the start of their 2013 NASCAR Sprint Cup Series season and move forward.

Unfortunately, the opening practice on Friday did little in the way of soothing the soul when Mears and his GEICO Fusion sat 40th of 43 cars on the speed chart. The subsequent qualifying session would then prove challenging when the #13 Germain Racing entry ended up qualifying 43rd, last on the starting grid.

After a night huddled up in a hotel lobby, crew chief Bootie Barker and his engineering staff found some speed and Saturday's practice session saw Mears jump to 26th on the charts.

Overcast skies and reasonable temperatures welcomed NASCAR fans to the racetrack on Sunday for the Subway Fresh Fit 500. Having qualified last, Mears and his #13 GEICO Fusion had their work cutout for them when the green flag set the field underway for 312-laps of racing.

Seemingly oblivious to his situation, the
Bakersfield, CA

, native jumped all the way up to the 29th position by lap three.

A caution flag on lap 21 allowed Mears the opportunity to bring his GEICO Fusion to the attention of the Germain Racing pit crew, who promptly returned him the racing surface four spots better (27th) than when he entered pit road.

He would continue to maintain his position and sit solidly in the top 25 for most of the afternoon.

With 70 laps to go, things got faster in the world of Mears and his #13 GEICO Ford Fusion would go on a tear that saw him strategically maneuver his way to the front of the field. It all started on the lap 242 restart when the #13 GEICO machine took off from the 26th position.

He re-entered the top 25 on lap 246 and just seven laps later he was holding court in 22nd place.

While the majority of drivers turned their best laps early in the event, Mears was getting quicker as the race wore on, recording his fastest lap of the day on lap 255.

He chased down Jamie McMurray to take over 21st with 36 laps to go and then set his sights on Ricky Stenhouse, Jr.

It would take Mears just ten laps to track down the Roush Fenway driver and capture 20th after a two lap door-to-door battle.

The final caution would be displayed with just three laps left in the advertised distance of the race, resulting in a green-white-checker finish. Mears would not need to pit under caution, as Barker had topped off fuel during his previous visit to pit road under yellow on lap 236.

While the bulk of the field sat in their cars concerned about fuel levels, Mears and his GEICO Fusion sat waiting to attack on the final two laps.

Mears restarted from the 19th position when the green flag turned the field loose for the final time on Sunday afternoon. The #13 GEICO Ford Fusion made its way speedily through the field on the intense closing laps and when the checkered flag began to wave, Mears recorded a 14th place finish in race number two of the 2013 NASCAR Sprint Cup Series season.

After qualifying 43rd, Mears and his GEICO team picked up 29 positions en route to their Top 15 finish.

"It was a fun day because the #13 GEICO Ford Fusion was fast and it felt great being able to go chase people down and pass them," a smiling Mears said after climbing from his GEICO Fusion. "We made changes to the car and they started to work and you could gradually see our progress over the course of the race. I'm so proud of the guys on this GEICO team because everyone could've hung their heads and mentally checked out after Friday, but they didn't; they kept working hard and today we showed our character as a team."

He joked, "I like to pass cars and I got to do a lot of that today!"

Aside from recording the team's first Top 15 finish of the young season, Mears was the third best finishing Ford, behind only race winner Carl Edwards, and Brad Keselowski, who finished 4th. Mears' 14th place Phoenix effort bumps Germain Racing to 20th in the Owner Point standings and moves him to 19th in Driver Points.

The GEICO Racing team will next travel to Las Vegas, Nevada, where they will try their luck in the Entertainment Capital of the World.

Before getting the race weekend underway, Germain Racing will take part in the NASCAR Sprint Cup Series test on Thursday, March 7th, at the 1.5-mile paved oval.

Mears and the #13 GEICO Ford Fusion will hit the track at Las Vegas Motor Speedway for the opening practice session on Friday, March 8th, at 3:00 PM (EST). Qualifying will follow at 6:40 PM (EST).

The Kobalt Tools 400 NASCAR Sprint Cup Series race is on Sunday, March 10th, and it will be televised live on FOX beginning at 3:00 PM (EST). The Performance Racing Network (PRN) 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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