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AFTER LEADING AT TALLADEGA, MEARS FALLS VICTIM TO LAST LAP CRASH

Talladega, **AL** (10-20-2013) – When the NASCAR Sprint Cup Series takes on Talladega Superspeedway, much of the spectacle of the event is the escalating anxiety over the possibilities of what could happen next. With racecars roaring around the track in tight quarters at top speeds, any slight bobble can result in mayhem. Sunday's mayhem was relatively minute, but, it hit squarely at home for No. 13 GEICO Ford driver Casey Mears and the Germain Racing team.

"That was an interesting race. The GEICO Ford ran real good all day and we were hoping for a good finish and, obviously, we didn't quite get it," said Mears of the 500-mile event that slowed for only three, short caution periods taking up just 10 of the 188 laps.

Mears took the green flag for Sunday's Camping World RV Sales 500 in tenth position. The 43-car field was lined up based on first practice times from Friday since a persistent mist washed away the qualifying window on Saturday morning. Just as the cars had hit full stride, the racing action ground to a slow crawl for caution number one at lap 4.

Back under the green flag by lap 8, the field roared back to life and right into the first pit stop sequence. Many teams had hoped to pit as early as lap 35, but waited, hoping for another caution period. Crew Chief Bootie Barker called Mears and his No. 13 GEICO Ford Fusion to pit road for four tires and fuel on lap 42. Unfortunately, the stop wasn't business as usual for the Germain Racing crew. Maybe it was a residual effect from Friday's full moon, but a problem with an air hose cost the crew a couple valuable seconds and put Mears back on track near the tail end of the lead lap.

"Casey, you're making great lap times and staying even with the leaders. Just stay in line with your group. We'll get caught back up," assured Barker from atop the pit box as Mears spent the next 40 laps in a small pack of cars racing about half a lap behind the leaders.

Just in time for the next round of pit stops, the second caution of the race flew. It was a welcome opportunity for the GEICO team to sort out some static issues with Mears' in-car radio. The team came to the pits at lap 80 before pit road was open, knowing they needed to address the radio issue.

After pitting twice under caution, taking two tires, fuel and getting radio repairs, the GEICO Ford was shown in 25th place, but had to fall to the tail end due to pitting too soon. This proved to be a very temporary setback. Mears was 18 the just five laps after the green flag waved at lap 85, and spent the next fuel run knocking on the door to the top-ten as he worked his way through traffic.

"I don't feel like have any speed, like I'm pulling a parachute," Mears told Barker just before he burst into the top-five and held the lead at lap 123. Mears brought the car to pit road for service from second place, and as the field got settled in after the pit sequence at lap 124, the GEICO Ford held the 4th spot before getting caught in the inside lane.

As the laps drew to a close at Talladega, Mears kept asking spotter Ron Lewis to get him back into the outside line. He'd knife his way through the field, reaching the top five and top ten, then get shuffled down low and have to start the process over again.

The final laps saw the lead pack fall into a single file line that held through the waving of the checkered flag – except for a very few cars. Mears was holding position 12 on the white flag lap as he exited turn two. Just ahead, the 14 car of rookie Austin Dillon was chucked out of line and sent for a spin. Lewis saw the 14 car clearing the track to the inside and told Mears to hold his line. Unfortunately, the car unexpectedly turned back across the nose of the GEICO Ford. Mears hit hard and day's labors came to a screeching halt on the backstretch, a half a lap shy of a rewarding finish.

Mears spoke with pit road reporter Jamie Little after leaving the infield care center at Talladega, "I'm OK, but that was strange being in the infield care center with only myself usually

there's about ten of us in there together."
The GEICO Ford was credited with a 27 th place finish after overcoming an early pit road hang up, radio problems, and a long day's worth of a high-speed traffic jam. Next up for Mears and the Germain Racing crew is a trip to the slowest, but one of the most exciting tracks on the Sprint Cup Series schedule – Martinsville Speedway. The lap times aren't blistering, but the action is!
Watch the racing from Martinsville, VA, on Sunday, October 27 th , on ESPN at 1:00 PM Eastern, or tune into MRN/SiriusXM Radio Channel 90.
Qualifying is Friday, October 25 th at 3:40 PM on Fox Sports 1 or listen live at 3:30 PM online at motorracingnetwork.com . Happy Hour airs Saturday, October 26 th at noon on Fox Sports 1.
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
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