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**TENACITY SHINES THROUGH AS MEARS AND GEICO TEAM SCORE TOP-20 AT DARLINGTON**

DARLINGTON, SC (April 12, 2014) - Looking to rebound from their struggles at Texas Motor Speedway, Casey Mears and the GEICO Racing team came into the Bojangles Southern 500 weekend with a renewed drive and the determination to unite and tackle the track 'too tough to tame' as a team.

As Friday's practice sessions got underway, Mears hit the track in the No. 13 GEICO Chevrolet SS and despite fighting a loose-handling racecar, posted the 17th-fastest time in the first outing.

Following up that session with a 21st-place time in second practice, crew chief Bootie Barker and the GEICO team went to work on a qualifying set-up with hopes of gaining some traction for the late-afternoon qualifying run.

With qualifying ensuing at 4:10 PM (EDT), the track would offer different conditions than Mears experienced during the earlier practice sessions, but still not the cool conditions he would expect for race conditions on Saturday. Barker gave Mears the best combination package possible and despite a 31st-place qualifying effort, they remained confident that come race time,

the GEICO Chevy would respond.

The teams began their race day preparations under sunny skies in Darlington, SC, and without any threat of rain - a rarity thus far in the NASCAR Sprint Cup Series season. After an afternoon of pre-race inspections and last minute huddles in the GEICO race hauler, the team was set with their strategy for mastering what was sure to be an ever-changing race track.

When the green flag flew for the Bojangles' Southern 500, the sun was low in the sky, but still provided for slick conditions on the track with many monikers. 'The Lady in Black', as it is also known, is a 1.366-mile, egg-shaped oval that's famous for collecting the best of the best in 367 laps of racing.

Reporting the same loose condition he experienced in practice, Mears remained calm and competitive during the opening laps, as he carefully began picking up positions while wheeling the GEICO Chevy through the first green-flag run, despite sometimes exiting the turns sideways. Believing that the track would come to them as night fell, Barker assured his driver that a lot of others were challenged with the same loose condition and the team was ready to make necessary changes on the first trip to pit road.

With Mears now posted in the 27th-position, that chance came, as rookie Ryan Truex brought out the event's first caution flag at lap 41. Mears' report to the pit was that his car was "big-time loose," and he was given four fresh Goodyear tires, fuel and a spring and track bar adjustment.

Despite experiencing a clutch issue exiting pit road, Mears would line up 27th for the restart.

Back underway at lap 46, Mears again showed a steady progression forward and had reached the top-25 by lap 50. Reporting that the GEICO Chevy was now "tight in and loose off," Mears continued to offer feedback over the course of the next few rounds of pit stops and the GEICO team continued to provide chassis adjustments to make the car more competitive.

As the laps wound past the halfway point, Mears still found himself holding steady within the top-25 but following a long green-flag run, and a green-flag pit stop at lap 180, he found himself in the 23rd position and a lap down to the leaders. Another caution came at lap 200 and provided a chance for the GEICO team to work some strategy. Barker radioed, "Casey, we're going to pit now and then hope for a few quick cautions so we can take the wave-around and then get some track position."

Agreeing with that call, Mears brought the GEICO Chevy to pit road at lap 202, where he received tires, fuel and further adjustments. Restarting in the 24th-position, the team found themselves right where they wanted to be when the yellow flag flew at lap 207. As planned, Mears did not pit, took the wave-around and was able to restart on the lead lap.

Each opportunity to pit brought more adjustments and more confidence in the fact that the changes being made by the GEICO crew were changes for the better. Mears broke into the top-20 just past the lap-250 mark, but following another long green-flag run and, as the race

approached lap 300, Mears again fell a lap down to the leaders while remaining in the top 20.

The GEICO team continued their 'can-do' approach and when opportunity arose as the caution flew at lap-358, Mears again took the wave-around, putting him in the best position of the evening. Having avoided a 'Darlington stripe' all evening, Mears had what he felt was the best handling package of the race and settled in for what could be a wild few final laps. Restarting 19th, Mears eyed the cars in front of him, but was again slowed by caution at lap 365. This gave the GEICO team the opportunity to pit for four tires, fuel and adjustments befitting a green-white-checked finish.

The field would go green at lap 368, but failed to complete even a single lap before the 41 car of Kurt Busch went crashing into the outside retaining wall. Again, restarting 19th, Mears took the final green flag of the evening at lap 372, and was able to make a last-lap pass to finish in the 18th-position. The Germain Racing pit crew also played their part, and picked up positions on many of the evening's pit stops.

"I'm really happy with this run tonight guys," Mears said on the radio following the race. "Those were some great calls in the end and we made a lot of progress tonight. Now we just have to get the whole weekend to come together. Thanks for all your hard work, guys."

Crew chief, Barker, echoed Mears' comments. "10-4, Casey, you did a great job and way to stay with it, guys. We ran competitive all night and kept improving. Good job, everybody."

The NASCAR Sprint Cup Series will enjoy an off-weekend over Easter before the Germain Racing team returns to competition in Richmond, VA.

Casey Mears and his No. 13 GEICO Chevy will hit the track at Richmond International Raceway for the opening practice session on Friday, April 25th, at 10:00 AM (EDT). Final practice gets underway at 1:00 PM (EDT), followed by qualifying at 5:10 PM (EDT). All sessions will be televised live on FOX Sports 1.

The Toyota Owners 400 NASCAR Sprint Cup Series race is on Saturday, April 26th, and it will be televised live on FOX beginning at 7:00 PM (EDT). The Motor Racing Network (MRN) and SiriusXM NASCAR channel 90 will carry the live radio broadcast.

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