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Darlington Adds an Experience-Building Stripe to the MAKE Motorsports Race Resume

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Starting the NASCAR Camping World Truck Series' (NCWTS) Darlington "Too Tough to Tame" 200 on Saturday night, driver TJ Bell knew almost immediately that the #50 Liberty Tire Recycling Chevy Silverado was ready to push itself to its limits. "The crew primed this truck perfectly during our two practices, and final practice I knew we had a very competitive truck," he said. "During qualifying, I remember saying on the radio - 'no vibrations, no lifting, let's race!'"

Beginning on the grid in 18th position, Bell was able to navigate through five cautions in 73 laps and move up the field to as high as 6th position mid-race. "Everything was on point for the first 70 laps," said MAKE Motorsports co-owner Mark Beaver. "Being the first time in Darlington for the NCWTS in six years, plus TJ's first outing here, we knew we'd have to race clean & conservative. But TJ made some impressive saves and showed his maturity level & experience handling on the track."

A particularly tricky save came when the GunBroker.com Dodge, driven by Jason White, went loose in turn one with heavy tire smoking as he went sideways, leaving TJ a narrow path to move high out of the turn with driver Matt Crafton within inches to his low side. Even SPEED commentators Rick Allen & Michael Waltrip mentioned the impressive driving to recover here.

"I really felt we had a top-10 truck," said TJ. "I wasn't pushing the truck too hard, and we were advancing the whole time. We had great communication in the pits and from the spotter's stand, and all systems were firing just right. I knew when I felt like I drove over a bump, something was definitely wrong."

The #50 Liberty Tire Recycling Chevrolet would suffer a brake rotor loss, which led to a tire cut, leaving Bell no place to go but to add the notorious 'Darlington Stripe' to his right side panels. "I just tried my best to save it from the wall," said the driver. The truck was off the track as of lap 73, and driver in the infield care center for a precautionary checkup - with the prognosis of the striped side body, cut tires & brakes.

The 26th place finish wasn't a disappointment to the young MAKE Motorsports team - it was actually very encouraging to the owners. "We were so excited to host the Liberty Tire Recycling employees & management in the infield suites in turn 1, and to show them not only a great team, but also a great race at an awesome track," said co-owner Tracy Lowe. "TJ did an amazing job the whole night, battling track debris and cautions like a true trooper. The folks who joined us from Liberty Tire, Jetpool & Dedmon Trucking; plus the folks at All Sport - all were happy with the day and the experience."

"For my first time at Darlington, I learned a lot and also am positive about my performance," Bell said, shrugging off any attempt at defeat. "We're focused on close, competitive and sometimes aggressive driving in the Truck series. It's not a birthday party. So to make it as far as we did, it was encouraging. Definite congratulations to friend & fellow racer Todd Bodine, who took the checker. Now we've got to take that Liberty Tire Recycling Chevrolet to the next track - this journey has just begun."

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All NCWTS events this season will be broadcast on SPEED, with radio coverage on MRN. The next outing for the NCWTS is this Wednesday at Bristol Motor Speedway. For more information about team MAKE Motorsports, visit www.MAKEMotorsports.com. For Series information, check out www.NASCAR.com.



PHOTO LINK: credit Getty Images

http://galleries.nascar.com/gallery/Too_Tough_to_Tame_200_at_Darlington#image=0d013hR0gt1wL&view=filmstrip