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**KIA MOVES INTO SECOND PLACE IN HUNT FOR CHAMPIONSHIP**

**Team Finishes Baja Mex 300 in Gutsy Performance**

IRVINE, Calif., August 26, 2003 – This past weekend in Ensenada, Mexico, Team Kia proved once again that the Sorento Trick Truck and the entire team have what it takes to compete with the big boys in the prestigious Trophy Truck class. Finishing a race in Baja is no small feat, as the terrain is some of the most unforgiving in the world, typically knocking many competitors out due to various kinds of mechanical failure. But finishing is exactly what Kia did, just as they've done for every race this season in the Best in the Desert series. That consistent performance now bumps Kia into second place in the hunt for a class championship.

“Before the race I figured I could give these guys a real run for their money,” said Kia racer Darren Skilton. “I’ve had loads of seat time in Baja and had pre-run the course over and over again, until it was burned into my mind.”

Skilton and Team Kia gave the big V8-powered competitors more than a brief scare, as he slowly moved up the field. Within the first few miles of the race Skilton had already overtaken one competitor, moving the team into fourth place. Not long after the team surged by Pit 2, the Sorento Trick Truck made another pass, remarkably moving into third place before the race was even half over.

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“We were running pretty conservative,” commented Skilton. “I figured we’d wait until the second half of the race to catch the rest of the field, but we secured third place well before that. Things were going better than planned.”

At Pit 3 the team fueled up and things were going smoothly. Team Kia’s Sorento was off and running again in under two minutes. After passing Pit 4, the team was a scant four minutes behind the leader, and before Pit 5, they had passed yet another truck, and were in great shape as they moved into second place.

“When we left Pit 4, I started stepping up the pace a lot,” said Skilton. “Then, after Pit 5, we went even harder.”

The team knew when they left Pit 5 that the leader was having brake problems. They seized the opportunity to gain ground on the leader. At mile 284 (out of 306) Skilton began encountering problems with the throttle sticking. This forced Skilton to be more conservative, but then the problem fixed itself, and he was driving like a bat out of hell again to catch the leader.

At Pit 6 the team was within one precious minute of the lead truck, with only 19 miles left in the race. Around mile 287, Skilton was within striking distance of taking the lead.

“I started catching the leader’s dust,” beamed Skilton. “That’s when we really started going all out.”

And then the unthinkable happened. The throttle problem resurfaced and within four miles of the finish a CV joint gave out. That was mile 302...the race finish line, 305.7.

Skilton was able to repair the vehicle, but that consumed an hour and a half and cost the team a race victory. Still, the team stayed focused and managed to temporarily put the disappointment out of their mind as Skilton tended to his vehicle. With a new CV joint in place, the Sorento charged across the finish line nabbing fourth place, but moving into a decisive second in the points standings for the series.

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“We were so close to a win, we could almost taste the champaign,” said a bittersweet Skilton. “I pushed very hard from Pit 6 on, and even with the throttle sticking was gaining ground every minute on the guy ahead. I knew that a victory would put us in a position to win the championship and show that a lighter, more agile, single-seat vehicle could put the ‘big boys’ away.”

Team Kia now prepares for the SCORE Baja 1000 in November. A new engine will be installed and the team plans to examine what exactly caused the CV failure to help prevent it in the future. The current score card reading? Four of four series race finishes, and second place in the hunt for the championship. Not too shabby at all.

Kia Motors America is the U.S. sales, marketing and service arm of Kia Motors Corp. in Seoul, South Korea.

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