

IndyCar Media Conference

Wednesday October 12, 2016

Sebastien Bourdais

Dale Coyne

Press Conference

THE MODERATOR: Welcome, everybody, to today's IndyCar media teleconference.

Earlier this morning Dale Coyne Racing announced that four-time IndyCar champion Sebastien Bourdais will return to the team to compete in the 2017 Verizon IndyCar Series season.

We're happy to be joined today by team owner Dale Coyne and his team's newest driver Sebastien Bourdais.

Dale, congratulations on today's announcement. You brought Sebastien back to IndyCar racing in 2011 for a limited campaign and now you have him back full-time. How did the deal with Sebastien come about?

DALE COYNE: Obviously, we've been a long-time fan of Sebastien from the CART days. When he went to Formula One, he proved himself pretty well over there against some tough odds.

We talked long and hard about bringing him back. He came back. He came back. He's been here for a few years now, run the full season. I think the talent that he has and brings, we've been talking for a while now, last year or so. It's just the timing is right.

We're putting together some great people with bringing back Craig Hampson, his engineer from Newman/Haas, and Olivier, his engineer from KVSH.

There's a lot to do in the next few months. It's good to announce this now to get everything ready and get out and going.

Sebastien is calling from an airport in Tampa. He's flying to St. Louis because we test there tomorrow. First time together this year.

THE MODERATOR: Sebastien, congratulations on the announcement today. Your thoughts on rejoining Dale Coyne Racing. What attracts you to Dale's team?

SEBASTIEN BOURDAIS: Yeah, I think it's really



exciting. As Dale mentioned, there are a lot of factors that come into the decision. There were a lot of discussions about how we could make this a great opportunity for everybody. I think, thanks to Dale's efforts, commitment to the series, to IndyCar, it's definitely a great window for us to achieve something really interesting.

Obviously the key was to be able to reinforce the engineering department which was already in place. They had some really good results this year with Conor as a rookie. That was one thing.

But for me to be able to continue with Olivier, my engineer from KVSH, and to bring a guy of the caliber of Craig in the system, was definitely the key. Super exciting factor to try and be confident that we could be really competitive and build a strong organization, engineering-driven.

Dale's commitment is a testament to what he wants to achieve. I couldn't be any happier, thanks to his efforts and all the personal investment and all that, that we could be able to do that. I'm really, really excited about it.

THE MODERATOR: You mentioned being reunited with Craig Hampson, continuing a relationship with Olivier Boisson. You'll be able to do a full off-season of testing with the team as well. I know there's a lot of team members that have worked together with you at Newman/Haas. Do you think it will be a quick transition to learning the Honda, a car you haven't driven in a while?

SEBASTIEN BOURDAIS: Yeah, there will be a transition there. I think there are pluses and minuses on both sides. I definitely think that Honda has a very strong engine package. I'm curious to discover the aero package aspect of it.

Unfortunately there's not as much testing as there was in years past, which will of course slow down a little bit the discovery of the whole package and the tuning that we can do.

In the meantime we have a lot of work to put procedures in place and to incorporate these two great engineers in the team. We'll kind of debug the system

here, which is kind of a free test for us, being able to join the tire test. It doesn't go against our four test days that we have to our disposal. Hopefully we can start to identify the pros and the cons to our system.

Olivier is not with us yet. That's another one. But definitely super excited, thanks to Dale's efforts to start the program that early, incorporate all these great people that early in the game. That's really the key to be able to move forward during the winter.

THE MODERATOR: Dale, I know it's October. It's kind of a joke in the series that sometimes you wait till the last minute to announce drivers. What about the full lineup for the team at Dale Coyne Racing? I don't want you to tip your hand at who you might be looking at. Is the plan going into the off-season testing program knowing you have Sebastien and his engineering group set and the second car and its engineering group set?

DALE COYNE: Yes. We announced last year earlier than ever in the 18 car. We're working very close to some programs with all the usual suspects to get something done here by the end of this month so we'll know both of our drivers going into November.

We have more tests planned. I should add that this is a two-year program with Sebastien. This is not just a one-year program. It's two years and possibly more. So we're excited about that. Especially next year with the equalizer coming in 2018 with an aero kit the same for everyone, I think that will really help us.

But not sure which car number Sebastien will be in yet. We're still working on lots of sponsorship programs. Depending on how that comes out, that will determine whether it's the 18 or the 19. We got a lot of things going and are very excited to be in this position this early.

THE MODERATOR: Let's open it up for questions for our guests.

Q. Dale, you've raced against these guys from an engineering standpoint for such a long time. How cool is it, the fact that you have these guys in your camp now?

DALE COYNE: Well, I think obviously we've talked to Craig for a lot of years, too. When Newman/Haas stopped racing, he was a target of ours right away. He took a sabbatical from track engineering for a while, did a home-based engineering program with Andretti. But I think he's anxious to get back in, especially with his old friend Sebastien.

I think it's just something that we've always admired and watched. We're very pleased to be in this position to be able to pull this off now.

Q. Sebastien, for so long you were known as the dominant guy on the dominant team. The last few years you've always been seen as the underdog. Do you feel you can elevate the level so that Dale Coyne Racing is no longer an underdog?

SEBASTIEN BOURDAIS: To be honest with you, I don't really look at it that way. I think there's obviously, between the Penskes, Ganassis, and Andrettis, the level is rising everywhere. The competition is getting really fierce. You need all the tools to be able to, as a driver, achieve what you want to do, which is running at the front and winning races.

As far as I'm concerned, I didn't really see any kind of better opportunity than being reunited with Dale. Like I said, it might have been a little bit different the way I would have looked at it had we not been able to gather the kind of engineering strength that, thanks to Dale, we've been able to. Not taking anything away from where the team is at right now. But that was definitely one of the key elements for me to believe in what we were trying to build there.

I really believe that Dale's bringing a lot to the table, and the consistency at least for sure at KVSH that we lacked during the two winters I've been part of the organization. I can only trust Dale that we'll have everything we need to move forward.

Does it mean we're a top team? Of course not. We'll still be building the team and trying to evaluate where the strengths and weaknesses of the team are. I don't really want to put any definite statement out there.

I trust all the people that are involved to give their very best, and I will do the same. I'm very confident we can do something really interesting. Hopefully by the time we come to drawing conclusions, then we'll be feeling pretty proud of what we've achieved.

DALE COYNE: The underdog thing can be a stigma that stays with you for a long time. When the management decides to spend the money and get the right people to do the right resources, an underdog team can become something much greater.

Years and years ago somebody gave me a T-shirt that said we were the Chicago Cubs of racing. I hope we're the Chicago Cubs of racing next year. They've changed from an underdog to a championship team.

SEBASTIEN BOURDAIS: I like that (laughter).

Q. Sebastien, I was wondering how excited are you to be driving with Honda, having driven with Chevrolet over the last couple of seasons? What

kind of differences are you expecting within the power output of the car?

SEBASTIEN BOURDAIS: That's a tough question. The grass always looks greener on the other side, as they say. I believe obviously you can win with a Chevy or a Honda. Thanks to Honda's efforts we've been able to assemble a great group of guys. Dale was the driving force of this. I sure hope that we'll be as good as we hope to be, and bringing something to the Honda stable.

I don't want to get ahead of myself in making estimations or whatever because it doesn't matter. It's all about what you do, it's not about what you think.

I think, obviously, like I said, there's a lot of very positive things coming from the Honda camp that definitely have stepped up their game. The aero kit was definitely much more competitive in the 2016 season. The powerplant is quite a bit more reliable than it had been in years past. We felt on the Chevy side that they had done really well in terms of power and usability of the engine.

Yeah, I'm pretty excited to get in the car and experience it myself.

Q. Dale, do you know if you're going to still have Michael Cannon onboard? What is the plan for off-season testing? Off track, on track, wind tunnel?

SEBASTIEN BOURDAIS: Yes, Michael Cannon is definitely staying onboard. He actually worked with Craig at Andretti a couple years ago before he came here. They've been together now for three or four weeks. I've kind of sat in their office from time to time to listen to how well they get along. I think it's a great addition. They complement each other, him and Craig. He will be lead engineer on the second car.

Off-season testing, we're doing this test now. We're waiting to see. There's still a few rules things that could happen over the winter that may move our testing more into the March time zone. There's not as much testing, as Sebastien said, as there was before. We want to be very planned and deliberate to accomplish as much as we can when we do go out.

Our second car, we'll get that done, then we'll get our testing. We'll run a full contingent. Whatever the rules allow, we'll do that. Looking forward to all the things we have to do. Shaker rig tests coming up. Not sure about wind tunnel work yet. Honda does a lot of that for us. But a pretty aggressive winter as far as an engineering standpoint goes.

Q. Dale, having named Sebastien today, do you have an approximate timeframe of when you'll have

the second car confirmed?

DALE COYNE: We hope to have it done by the end of this month. Love to have it done by the end of this month. Not sure that will happen yet, but that's kind of a goal I'm setting. We have some favorite sons we'd like to try to do something with. Hopefully that happens. We'll see what happens here in the next couple weeks.

Q. Sebastien, now that you've had a season of running completely alone, with the exception of the Indy 500 and GP Indy, what are your feelings as far as having a teammate? Do you find it helpful to have that extra feedback or do you like the whole team's attention being on yourself?

SEBASTIEN BOURDAIS: To be honest with you, it all depends on how the team functions. It's always a little harder if you have a rookie as a teammate because obviously he has to figure his stuff out on his own and try and understand where he's at. Most of the weekend he tends to go up to speed, then kind of lays it down in qualifying. You don't necessarily benefit a lot from a rookie.

Of course, if it's a proven driver, it's a different case. But it still needs to be a very specific combination where both drivers have similar enough driving styles that they can feed off of each other.

It worked very well for us at Newman/Haas with Bruno. I could definitely find benefits in that situation. It really hasn't happened since. It requires, as well, an engineering team that works very well together and tends to start with a common platform to be able to compare things. If they're both on completely opposite ends of the spectrum, it's almost more disturbing than anything else.

If you have one car that works better than the other, you can pinpoint what does what. Really I haven't been able to capitalize on any kind of teammate's work since the Newman/Haas days. But certainly I think Dale has in mind a couple of options that could work. I trust the engineering group to be able to agree on the baseline that should allow us to make the best use of that.

Q. Sebastien, how refreshing is this for you, having something done so early in the off-season, especially knowing you have not just one year but multiple years in the bank?

SEBASTIEN BOURDAIS: It's crucial. To be honest with you, it's not as much the time of the commitment because I can't really argue the fact that the decisions were made very early. We knew we were going back to it when I was at KV. Even when I switched from Dragon to KV, the decisions had not been made very

late. The stabilizer of the whole situation, obviously Dale supported the program in a way that obviously during the winter we can still do things. Like I said, that's the key element.

So to know that there is not going to be a bad surprise in the coming months, that we're just going to march forward, we may not be running, but we'll march forward with no steps back, that's the most important thing to me.

THE MODERATOR: Seeing as we have no further questions for Dale Coyne or Sebastien Bourdais, we thank them for their time this morning and conclude today's media teleconference.