

IndyCar Media Conference

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Sebastien Bourdais

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: Welcoming in Sebastien Bourdais, driving the No. 18 Gorilla Automotive Products Honda for Dale Coyne Racing with Vasser Sullivan, was fastest overall today with a time of 57.3975 seconds, again, under the current track record. But Sebastien also had some speed in yesterday's test session, but a considerable amount found overnight. What are some things that you and the team talked about that led to this today?

SEBASTIEN BOURDAIS: Yeah, I mean, I guess it's interesting because we didn't touch the car. I guess it just tells you how much the conditions affect lap time. This morning obviously there was a little bit of Push-to-Pass, which is about two and a half tenths. But yeah, I mean, cooler conditions and the wind kind of being a headwind all the way in the tight and cornery section like 4, 5, 6, 7, really helped to load the car on downforce and set the thing up a little bit. So yeah, I was pretty happy with the car this morning, and yeah, just carried the flag for Honda, so it's always nice.

But then, yeah, this afternoon, a very disjointed session with a lot of red flags, and we didn't really make any headways. Quite different, obviously, the track temp picked up something like 30 or 40 degrees, and it was a bit more dodgy and didn't quite get a lap on the red tires, either. A bit of the opposite of the morning, which seemed to be flowing pretty good, and the afternoon not so much.

THE MODERATOR: You had a pretty strong start to the season and then it's been quite up and down since then. What are your goals heading into these final two events of 2018?

SEBASTIEN BOURDAIS: Well, I mean, yeah, I was hoping obviously to carry the momentum from Mid-O and Pocono into St. Louis and we had tested there, and we were really happy with the car. We had a fast bullet there, so was really excited about it, and unfortunately it ended way too early. The target was to try and get well inside the top 10 for the end of the championship, but I don't know that we can do that anymore, but we'll just keep taking the races one at a time, and obviously a lot of what's going to happen on Sunday I think is going to be decided on how well we can qualify in tomorrow's session. Hopefully we can get that car up front and get a good starting spot because I think if you start mid-pack, anything can happen here. We'll have to try and protect ourselves

and set ourselves for a good race.

Q. You said yesterday this track almost feels like a different race course from when you were here in '07. Is it starting to come back to you?

SEBASTIEN BOURDAIS: No, it feels very different because the pavement is different, the line which was dictated by the concrete patches are not there anymore, so it's quite different in terms of feel. And 9 and Turn 7 has been reconfigured. The rest of the track is mostly the same, but all the curbing has been changed, and that changes things. We used to be able to take heaps of curbs in turn -- in the fast chicane, especially in the last corner, and that's not there anymore because now we have about a foot-wide curb that's followed by dirt. So if you get a bit greedy, then you get your tires all dirty, and it doesn't really work. It feels like the track is a bit less forgiving than it used to be. I think it's a lot of mistakes that are being made out there, and it also shows how much people are trying and how much the cars are affected by wind, I think, in general.

Q. Will this racetrack reward patience or aggressiveness?

SEBASTIEN BOURDAIS: I mean, you always need to be as aggressive as you can be without getting yourself in trouble. I guess that's the only answer I can give you on that.

But yeah, I mean, controlled aggression at the start is always key because I think this place has been compared to Cleveland many a times, and there's a reason for it.

Q. Given all the cars that have had their issues in Turn 11, how do you feel about that corner? Do you feel it's kind of sketchy, or do you have it down pat?

SEBASTIEN BOURDAIS: No, I mean, it's a tricky corner, like I said. It's very high commitment, very high cornering speeds, and not much room for error. You get a gust of wind or something, it's very easy to find yourself out of line, and as soon as you step out of line, it's game over. You're not necessarily going to hit, but you're on for the ride, so I think it could be an interesting race. In the meantime I don't think -- everybody is going to calm down for the race. You know if you make a mistake like that on Sunday, it's over. I think everybody is trying to gauge how much you can try, and we're all setting ourselves up for the qualifying, so it's all -- it's everything you've got.

Q. Sebastien, you've got Dixon and Will are 38 and 37 respectively, whereas Josef Newgarden and Alexander Rossi are 26, 27. How do you handicap this? Is it the old guys with the experience that have the edge, or is it the young guys that are going to throw caution to the wind?

SEBASTIEN BOURDAIS: I think it's for anybody's grab. I think it's wide open, at least between Alex and Scott. Obviously Scott has been a model of consistency, as he always is, and he's won a bunch of races nevertheless. Alex has just kind of been so flamboyant and just hitting it hard out of the gate that I think if it comes down to a dogfight at the end, he might have the edge. But we'll see. I think it's two great drivers right now, and Will is not out of the question, and Josef is a little bit further back. But with the double points at the end in Sonoma, anything can happen.

Q. Last time we were here, this was very much a race dictated by fuel strategy. I could hear you guys lifting even as you were going past the media center. If there are no yellows, and we've seen a lot of races without yellows this year, is it going to be a race that is dictated by fuel strategy?

SEBASTIEN BOURDAIS: I don't think so. I mean, remember in '07, I think the reason why I saved fuel was to try and go longer on the first stint because we were buried in traffic, and the out lap is always a bit costly here, so if you can do an extra lap -- at least in Champ Car it was always a bit different because we had really big fuel cells, so the out lap and on cold tires was extremely difficult. We were carrying 32 gallons of fuel, now we only have 18, so that's not as big a deal as it used to be. So I don't think the fuel situation was really a fuel situation as much as trying to replace yourself and kind of open the window and offset yourself. Yeah, I mean, that worked for us on that day, and obviously we had a lot of pace, and we'll see how this one goes. But I think -- yeah, I think it's very difficult to predict exactly what's going to happen. I just don't see it being a fuel race right now. It's like the windows are really big. I don't think you can do it on less pit stops than you think. It's just -- there's always like going the far end of the window and then you're going to take the chance to be hung out for about 15 laps every stint or you play the more cautious part and see how it goes.

Q. You just said the track is less forgiving. It sounds to me it's different from the Champ Car times when you raced here five times with two wins. Nevertheless, is there anything you can take away from your Champ Car races to IndyCar?

SEBASTIEN BOURDAIS: Yeah, not so much. It's obviously a distant memory. It's a different car. The track has been repaved and everything feels different. So I'm not sure you can really use so much of it. But the layout is mostly the same all but one corner. Yeah, I mean, hopefully we can keep the same track record. It's kind of all I can hope for.

Q. This weekend looks like you're now a three-car team and two rookies on the team, and I think they were within the top 10 in practice. Are you surprised by that? Is that affecting your program at all?

SEBASTIEN BOURDAIS: No, I mean, it's obviously another set of data to look at. Santino has really gone on to his own island as far as setup is concerned, and obviously on the red tires, he seemed to be extremely happy with the car. So we'll have to look at it. But it's always tough when you have a guy who obviously feels and needs something quite different, so we'll have to kind of take a look and see how things shook out and who's got what. I think our race car should be pretty decent, as it always is. I've always kind of struggled when the Firestone option tires are a bit on the soft side, and I think this afternoon with the high track temp, definitely it feels a bit that way. We'll just have to regroup and analyze and see where we're at, but obviously it's two talented guys, and we've had a full day of testing pretty much on Thursday, so we have plenty of data to look at. Always kind of feel a bit like the demonstrator for most of the time until they kind of come out and kick your butt.