

IndyCar Media Conference

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Sebastien Bourdais

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: We'll welcome in Sebastien Bourdais, driver of the No. 18 Team SealMaster Honda for Dale Coyne Racing with Vasser-Sullivan, a two-stop strategy for Sebastien Bourdais today. Sebastien, when that call was made finally and you understood that's the direction the team was going in, what were your thoughts?

SEBASTIEN BOURDAIS: I knew all along that was the game plan. But by lap 15, 16, I was like, guys, I am not so sure I can hang on to that car for another 10 laps. We thought we were a bit better than -- we'd be a lot better than we were, and I mean, it's all relative, obviously, if nobody really stuck to it or just maybe Will or -- I have no idea really who stayed with it or maybe two or three others, but yeah, it was really tricky, and for us to start with the Firestone red used tires already might have been a little bit over-optimistic. But it worked out. It worked out.

Hats off to the boys and the SealMaster Honda crew. They obviously had maybe more faith than I had myself to be able to wheel that thing all the way through lap 26 or whatever it was. The plan was to hit 29, so when I saw that, I was like, man, that's going to be a long end of the race and divide that race in one more stop. I wasn't worried about fuel. Fuel was not a concern today. It was very easily achievable, but the problem was to be able to hang on to the tires.

The sun came out, and that was the last thing I needed to go as long as we did and as deep as we did on the stint. As soon as the sun came out every time, it was not consistent, but every time the sun would come out, the temp would go up instantly, and you would lose a half a second a lap. So it was like, oh, boy. If that sun could go back behind a cloud, that would make us a big, big favor.

Yeah, it kind of worked, but it was a lot of hard work, that's for sure.

THE MODERATOR: Towards the end of the race you really did seem to be catching Scott Dixon in second place ahead of you. Did you feel like maybe a couple more laps and you might have gotten him or no?

SEBASTIEN BOURDAIS: No, I mean, I had saved on the front end everything and more I needed to be able to be on the move and not have to save and also use all the Push-to-Pass I had. So I gave it a burst nine

laps to go. I caught him in like a lap and a half pretty much, and as soon as I got in his rear wing, there was just nowhere to pass. He was staying low and pretty much using the same lines as I was. Had he been using something different, maybe I would have had a chance to -- if I staggered and got some clean air, but you know Scott, he's just too good. Like he just knows exactly where to put his car and where to block, and without doing anything wrong, but just completely kill your momentum and not give you any opportunity. He played that to perfection, and I tried again on the last lap thinking, I've got all that Push-to-Pass I'm not going to carry to the next race, I might as well use it, but same thing, I run him down and got to the rear wing and almost crashed a couple of times, there was just at that point the tires were just starting to give up, and it was barely okay on my own, but in traffic it wasn't.

Just a tough race all around, but really happy with the results and looking forward to Long Beach.

Q. Seb, Scott said that was a geriatric podium and we were just talking about all the rookies for the last two weeks coming off of COTA. You're 40, Sato is 42, Scott is I think 38. This is a very physically --

SEBASTIEN BOURDAIS: I'm 38 for a few more weeks.

Q. This is such a physical place, but it does say something about don't ever count anybody out just because they're close to 40?

SEBASTIEN BOURDAIS: Well, I guess we would have gotten our butts fired if we didn't earn that spot, so I don't think it's relevant. It's funny, we were talking about it I think in that series, obviously the physical constraints are high because there's no power steering, but it's also -- if you're in good shape and you do the job, it's also very physical at 40 years old to be able to drive it and not leave anything on the table.

And I think the experience and races like this where you've been there before, you've had to manage those tires and you know the fuel game and you know the place and you know the feel, when it starts to give you the little indication that the left rear is kind of starting to give up, you know what to do and you've been there before and you take counteractive measures and you just wheel it out. That's certainly a place I've been familiar with before and I knew I could survive to a certain point. I didn't really know I was going to survive it all the way, but yeah, I mean, definitely experience in that series is very important, and it's just the beginning.

We're going to go to places that are just as tricky as this one, and then you get to Iowa and Pocono and places like that, and then hang on to your pants if you have never been there.

Q. Would you say the safety car period kind of killed your chances of taking the win today?

SEBASTIEN BOURDAIS: I think Sato had us pretty much covered just by the fact that he managed to get himself a very big lead early on and distance himself from the rest of the pack. He did that by kind of playing his strengths early and going like brand new reds and then new blacks, new blacks. In hindsight, I just -- maybe that would have been the right thing to do for us. We had the tires, we just really thought that the option tire was going to be better. I really kind of would want to see the outcome of the race without the yellow because I do feel like having been able to keep Scott behind as we had done, and we probably would have pitted the same lap because at that point with 31 laps left, everyone would have to obtain because there's really just no reason to stay out and get hung out like in COTA for those guys. So yeah, I wish I would have seen the outcome of the race without the yellow, but I don't know that I would have had anything for Sato because he was just too far up the road for us, and it would turn into, again, track position.