

NTT IndyCar Series News Conference

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Press Conference

Sebastien Bourdais

Dale Coyne Racing with Vasser-Sullivan

Ed Jones

Ed Carpenter Racing



passes in practice because you've got guys who don't really want to lead, so they just back off and that creates a bit more havoc than it would if it was a race scenario.

So yeah, just quite difficult as soon as the track gets hot. Today was the hottest track temp we've seen all week, hottest ambient, as well, and the wind picked up, and yeah, it puts us in the corner pretty darned quick. Yeah, I think we're all hoping it's going to be fairly cool and kind of good condition 500 because otherwise we'll all be struggling somewhat.

Q. Sebastien, given that you have a year of setup data on this car, how differently are you approaching this year to last year for setup work and preparation for the race and everything?

SEBASTIEN BOURDAIS: Well, I think it's a bit less of a shock, obviously, how the cars interact and what the potential is. I mean, last year we went from cars that had crazy efficiency that felt really awesome in traffic, especially for me, so coming back with the new aero kits last year was a big shocker, how hard things were, and sensitive conditions and traffic and dirty air and everything.

Yeah, I mean, this year we know what kind of fight we've got in front of us, so you kind of put the expectations to realistic levels and go from there and look for small variations, smaller gains. But nevertheless, you keep trying to make improvements.

Q. Sebastien, number one, this weekend for the Indy 500, Dale Coyne has a third car. Is there in any way or another some help from your side for James Davison or corporation?

SEBASTIEN BOURDAIS: Can I help James? Is that what you're asking?

Q. Is there any help or corporation --

SEBASTIEN BOURDAIS: You know, it was good a couple of times where we obviously ended up on the track, the three of us trying to coordinate things a little bit. When there are not too many cars out there you can make your own kind of traffic, so that's always nice. James obviously has good experience here and he's always quick, and he's got valuable knowledge and he's good in traffic. So it's not the read on the car. We're all running the same stuff, and yeah, I mean, I think it's always -- one more read on things is always positive.

THE MODERATOR: We'll go ahead and get started with today's -- speaking with drivers a little bit earlier than we were hoping to today due to a shortened practice, but pleased to be joined by Sebastien Bourdais, driver of the No. 18 SealMaster Honda for Vasser Sullivan. Sebastien, fourth fastest today, a great performance. You were at the top of the charts for a while. Take us through your day and how preparations are going for qualifying this weekend.

SEBASTIEN BOURDAIS: Yeah, I mean, we've had a pretty decent week with the 18 Honda SealMaster. Yeah, just trying to execute like everybody else the program, trying to find some grip and make the race car better. I think we did find a few little things, but obviously, when the conditions get tricky, it seems like you always find a way to kind of find yourself a little boxed in and out of grip. So just a matter of this to happen as late as possible, and later than the other guys.

So I think the team has done a good job, and we've had a fairly incident-free week so far, so we're just hoping to keep that going forward.

THE MODERATOR: How have you and the team been splitting your time between focusing on preparation for the race vs. preparation for qualifying?

SEBASTIEN BOURDAIS: It's really only been race stuff. We're putting the car in race trim for this afternoon, but unfortunately, the weather moved in a little bit faster than we had hoped for, and we didn't quite get a quality trim run. So it is what it is.

THE MODERATOR: Have you been doing a lot of running in traffic, and if so, what have you noticed from the car in those sort of race simulations?

SEBASTIEN BOURDAIS: Pretty much what everybody else, I think, has seen. You see a lot of permutation first to second. That just seems to be fairly easy and standard for everybody, until conditions get really, really tricky, windy, hot and everything. But then third, fourth, fifth, yeah, it just gets hard. You need the perfect timing. You need someone to make a little mistake. You see a lot of obviously not completely legit

Q. And the second question, you mentioned the tricky weather conditions. How sensitive is the car? Is it forgiving or is it difficult to control?

SEBASTIEN BOURDAIS: No, today I think you could see the gesture of a lot of people debriefing with their engineers. I don't think there are a lot of people who thought that it was easy. I think you could see a lot of this and that, and like you kind of want to keep it straight going forward. So when you see hands moving a lot and guys going like they were counter-steering and not being very happy and comfortable in the car, I think you can definitely tell that. Today was quite a bit trickier than in years prior, but yeah, it looks like temperatures are rising anyway for this weekend, and it doesn't really look like it's going to be very cold for the 500, either. So we might as well get used to it because, yeah, it's significantly different between kind of a low 70 degree and overcast to a mid 80 with some sun, and then if the wind comes into play, then that's another factor.

Q. Are we looking at the possibility in the race of single-car incidents like we had last year where drivers such as yourself and Helio ended up into the wall just on their own?

SEBASTIEN BOURDAIS: Well, I think we've seen that already. I mean, I think this car is tricky. When you get in the wash, you try and dial in the end steer and you easily get caught out by being too aggressive and get out of the wake and get the front to hook and the rear to let go. Yeah, I mean, I think it's quite easy to do. I think it seems to be a possibility even for anybody to get caught out really. You just need to really kind of remind yourself, be aggressive but don't be too aggressive and just really try and be heads up with the car and not force it because, yeah, like today with the tailwind in Turn 2 and stuff, it gets hard quick.

Q. Talk a little bit about how difficult was it for you after you had that unfortunate accident a few years ago and really got hurt; how tough was it in your mind, or how much do you still think about it?

SEBASTIEN BOURDAIS: I don't. I mean, it's always going to be part of me, but what's hard is just the car. It's so much harder than it used to be. I mean, I had my best experience and my worst experience at the same time in the same year, in '17, but it was by far the best car I had ever driven around this place, and it's so much more fun when you can do whatever you want and you feel in control, and unfortunately we had a mishap in qualifying, which I bit it hard, but yeah, I mean, as far as how the car behaved back then to how it's been behaving last year and this year, it's a lot harder now. When you're not really super comfortable around this place, it's always tricky, and it's a bit of a mind game. You start questioning things and trying to make sure like you don't make the mistake because we're no big team, and if we roll one up, the backup car ain't going to be as fast. So we really try and keep things somewhat on the safe side and make sure you don't misjudge it.

Q. We're getting the NBC Gold all-day broadcast inside here in the media center, and a couple of the announcers were saying that the drivers are so busy now going into the turns that it sort of implied the way I understood it that they don't have time to use the tools in the cockpit like they usually would. Do you find anything different? Are you doing a lot of adjustments from one turn to the other on the track?

SEBASTIEN BOURDAIS: I'm not quite sure what they're referring to. I mean, obviously if you're busy going into the corner it's because you're making adjustments, so you're making the adjustments. I think the car is definitely very sensitive, and when it gets windy like this, you have a headwind going in one way and a tailwind going in the other, yeah, you feel like you want to make adjustments, but the car, that's where it gets tricky. The car is so much more disturbed by dirty air and the wake that the car in front creates that you kind of question a lot of things between -- okay, so this end wants to do this, that end wants to do that when you're on your own. Now you get in traffic, what is the split between the two, how much closer it brings both ends together, and how much adjustment you want to make. So there's just a lot of thinking going on in the corner trying to guesstimate the grip and the balance going into the corners. But yeah, I'd say it's busier now because you have less grip to play with, so the car is more exposed and you do have to make the right adjustment to make it through.

Q. And then tomorrow is Fast Friday, so you're going to have I guess more horsepower to work with. How does that change the car, and will you spend most of tomorrow working on your qualifying setup?

SEBASTIEN BOURDAIS: Oh, that's all you do. It's pointless trying to do any race stuff because you're going to be going around four or five miles an hour faster than you would on your own. So you're going to be trimmed out, and I think we have seven or eight sets of tires, pretty much eight runs for tomorrow to play with, and yeah, get ourselves in the right place for Saturday, see what we can do.

THE MODERATOR: Pleased to be joined by Ed Jones, driver of the No. 63 Ed Carpenter Racing Scuderia Corsa Chevrolet, fastest driver of today's practice session.

Ed, it seems like things are going, as per usual, very well at Ed Carpenter Racing here at Indianapolis Motor Speedway. What have you noticed from the way the team has had success in the past that's obviously translated to you today?

ED JONES: Yeah, absolutely. Since joining the team, the first thing you think about is, as a driver anyway, you want to be quicker in the Indianapolis 500, and I knew as soon as the deal was done, that was going to

be a reality. So far, it's been so good.

It's great to be part of Scuderia Corsa and Ed Carpenter Racing, and a lot of credit to Ed Carpenter, you know, running a third car. There's been a lot of -- with other teams maybe, a lot of times where the third cars aren't quite the same as the two main ones, and as we've seen so far this week and also last year with Danica, they've done a great job with that third car and giving us an opportunity to be fighting at the front. I'm grateful for that and looking forward to how the rest of the week progresses.

THE MODERATOR: And with that third car, obviously, Ed's feedback from an ownership standpoint always comes from the mind of a driver, but with his actual driver input here at Indianapolis Motor Speedway, how much has that added to the overall data collection?

ED JONES: For sure. As I said previously, it's the first time I've been on a team where the team owner is also a driver on the team. It's quite a different concept. And for sure it's beneficial because, as a driver, you see things differently to how a team owner would see them sometimes, and vice versa.

So Ed sees it, and he knows what it takes to have a good team around here, what it takes to produce those results. I've been learning from him. Again, I've been fortunate with the teammates I've had the past three years, with Sebastien, who was just up here, Scott last year, and now Ed as well. I think, if you're going to pick three guys to learn from as teammates around the speedway, I think those are probably near the top of the list.

No, I've been happy with that, and again just trying to learn as much as I can.

THE MODERATOR: Absolutely. Questions for Ed?

Q. Ed, you just mentioned Scuderia Corsa. What's the involvement of Scuderia Corsa in the team? Is there an engineering cooperation or staff working at your IndyCar?

ED JONES: Not at the moment. Scuderia Corsa has just partnered with Ed Carpenter for this year. So it's more Ed Carpenter engineers the car, and all the mechanics are from that side, yeah.

Q. Ed, I know you've been working with Peter all year, and now you've got Justin as your engineer. Does that take -- how hard is that to adjust to, or how hard is that to get used to having a different engineer?

ED JONES: Yeah, sometimes it can take quite a bit of time, but from the test we had about two weeks ago now, from the get-go, everything worked so well. It's been really easy working with Justin. I think we've already got a really good relationship although it's only been three days this week. I think we have a very

good understanding of what we mean and how to communicate to make the car go better.

No, I'm just looking forward to seeing how things go later on, but it's been a pleasure working with him, and hopefully, we can get some good results.

Q. Are you seeing any similarities to two years ago when you came here, had a pretty good success right off the bat, whether it's a certain feeling, whether it's kind of the underdog chip on the shoulder or even just the way that the team is making progress during practice? Do you feel some similarities between now and two years ago?

ED JONES: Yeah, for sure. The first year I came to Dale Coyne, I think I didn't realize quite how good I had it. The car, as soon as we rolled out, was great. It was super fast. Being a rookie, I thought this is just the same for everyone, but clearly, the car was really strong, and I was fortunate with that.

Last year it was a different case. It was a new car for everyone, and I think with Ganassi last year, pretty much the whole season we were developing. I think, if you see, even for them, they've improved a lot.

Going with Carpenter this year, we've been strong again from the time we rolled out. That makes just the whole process a lot easier because, from the get-go, you're looking for small changes. The increments and things you're doing, it's just smaller. You're not looking for something huge, and therefore you can really see what works and what doesn't and just go at it in a more calculated way.

Q. Just with you being with a couple of teams prior to this year coming in, what have you seen different with Ed Carpenter Racing and Scuderia Corsa as far as preparation goes coming into the month of May?

ED JONES: Yeah, I think as a team Ed Carpenter Racing is probably the most focused on the ovals, and that's quite clear. As Ed Carpenter being a driver as well, this being the biggest race, it makes a lot of sense to have a lot of effort and time going into producing the cars for this track. It's paid dividends the last few years as well.

I think the work ethic is quite similar. It's a smaller team, quite similar to how Dale Coyne was, quite different from how Ganassi worked. I'm enjoying it. So far, it's working out well. We have some really good engineers, and the team atmosphere is good. I think all three drivers are quick at the moment, and that makes it a lot better to see what changes work on each car and try to implement them on each other.

THE MODERATOR: Ed, we've been focusing and talking a lot about the on track performance of the team, but off the track, the Indy 500 is kind of a different monster in terms of things that you're doing

with the team and with fans. Talk about what that means to you and that experience.

ED JONES: Yeah, it's very different to all the other races. It would be nice if we had a few others that came close to this, but just the whole month, it's a completely different experience. You really enjoy it. Sometimes at pit road, when you're trying to get stuff done, it can get a bit over the top, but you can't complain when you have too many fans or things like that coming up to you at times.

Again, it's just how special this race is. 2017, going back to that, again, I just didn't realize to what extent the race was and how good my car was and how good the result was at the time. I think it's very easy to take that for granted, especially coming up, but after last year and now coming into this year, I've learned a lot more about it, and it means a lot more to me.

Q. Ed, with the involvement of Scuderia Corsa, is there a possibility we'll see you one day in a GT or sports car race with a Scuderia Corsa car?

ED JONES: Yeah, that's definitely a possibility. At the moment, this year has been full on with IndyCar season, so there hasn't really been much time, but I'm sure at some point I'll jump in one of the GT cars and see how it goes then and potentially do some races.

THE MODERATOR: We look forward to cheering you on if that happens. Ed, thanks so much for joining us here, and good luck with the rest of practice.

ED JONES: Thank you.