

NTT IndyCar Series News Conference

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Press Conference

Sebastien Bourdais

Speaker1 Title



THE MODERATOR: We'll bring in four-time series champion Sebastien Bourdais of Dale Coyne Racing with Vasser Sullivan. Sebastien, it's been as good a track to you as just about any on the circuit, first, second, third, first, third the last five races, so all on the podium. What do you like about this racetrack and what do you think -- why do you think it's been so good to you?

SEBASTIEN BOURDAIS: I don't know. I mean, I think obviously a lot of the stats have to do with the fact that they're very old and from different times when I was at Newman/Haas and dominating the championship in the way that we kind of all know. Not really entirely sure it's so valid.

I think for whatever reason, last year we were really competitive on the road courses. We had found something that seemed to work very well for us as far as balance is concerned, and then this year we just lost ground. We just haven't been as good and fell off the cliff a little bit.

So it's good to kind of still be in the mix. I'm not entirely sure we were as strong as it shows right now, but we'll take it. That SealMaster No. 18, obviously, bettered that time from the primary Firestone tires on the reds, which it wasn't a massive jump, it was only a half second, so one could argue that it's not as big an improvement as usual.

But yeah, feel pretty happy just trying to maximize what we've got.

As far as me liking Portland, I think it's a great market. It's got a really good energy. I think people really want us and love us to be here, and it's great to be back. So really looking forward to another great weekend here, and hopefully we can put St. Louis behind us.

THE MODERATOR: We saw a little off-track exploration there. What happened?

SEBASTIEN BOURDAIS: Yeah, I'm not quite sure. I got a little bit of bottoming on the crossover from the left side, the different part of the track, conditioning the last corner coming back over, and it just locked up the right front and never really stopped, so I'm not entirely sure why or how. But yeah, managed to take the -- smashed the nose of the car.

But if we're going to compare, it's a lot better than last year, that's for sure.

Q. What are the ways that you've adjusted this year to make it much better than last year?

SEBASTIEN BOURDAIS: Well, I think we understand the aero kit better. We kind of know what to do or what not to do to repeat some mistakes we've made before or have made, but it's always obviously tire dependent, and this year it's a new tire again. It's the Mid-Ohio tire, and it's obviously very different. The grain of the track here is completely different, much more abrasive, so I'm not quite sure what the reasoning is behind it, but it definitely doesn't feel like the car is behaving as well as last year. You feel boxed in kind of like, a bit of understeer, a bit of oversteer, a bit of traction, a bit of that. It just never quite feels together right. You always feel like you're always compensating a little bit.

So we'll see. But overall I think it's always going to be super close here. There's only really ten corners. It's a sub-one-minute lap and the gaps are always ridiculously small, so you've got to hit the lap, you've got it put it down in qualifying, advance to the next stage and hope that you nail it again in Q3 and don't get hung out by yellows.

Q. Last year Dale Coyne ran three cars here. Do you find it's that's more of an advantage to just do two cars here or do you wish you had a third teammate?

SEBASTIEN BOURDAIS: I think for a small organization like us, it's always tricky, I think, to run more cars. The guys pulled it off, were very courageous and put in a lot of hours, but it's stretching our people very thin. Yeah, I don't particularly like it for them. I feel like as a team when it's run right, it definitely helps to have more reads and try more things. But yeah, I'm pretty content. I think Santino is obviously getting very comfortable with IndyCar now, and he brings his fair share to the edifice.

Q. Big picture, with two races to go, how much do you think about the season that's been or do you flush all that and just focus on one race?

SEBASTIEN BOURDAIS: Well, I think the season has gone bad enough at times that I'm in the position, I mean championship-wise, that it's not even worth looking at it. We're just kind of look forward and try and get the best we can from the last two races that are ahead of us.

I made a mess of a great weekend in St. Louis, which would have been first or second, and yeah, you want a redo but you can't get it. There's a lot of those around the season. Until last week I really have not made that many mistakes, which was a good point, but I guess I always manage to find one to ruin it all during the year.

You know, it's just my thing. I've got to mess it up at some point. Even when I was winning those championships, I'd take off half of the car in practice at Surfers or in qualifying or something. I always seem to find a way to just make it spectacular or something.

Q. I think you set your fastest lap the lap before you hit the wall --

SEBASTIEN BOURDAIS: Yeah, same as last year. Yeah, I guess you know they told me P1, and I'm like, okay, I'm going to call it a day.

Q. I wanted to ask you about the tires because since they brought the same compound as Mid-Ohio, yet I remember at Mid-Ohio Will Power said the track was so old, it's been so long since they paved it, it was like it was polished, so it doesn't wear out the tires. Here, he said the track is more abrasive, so I don't think it's going to be conducive to someone doing a two-stop race like Sato did last year.

SEBASTIEN BOURDAIS: Well, last year was very different, right. We had the long yellow. We ended up with a lot of guys out of sequence because of that wreck at the start of the race. For you, when you end up trapped at the back of the pack, you kind of -- you've got to try something, otherwise you're not going to make any progress. Last year was very insensitized by how long that yellow dragged and how many laps we had done, and from there it was a very realistic two-stopper. But yeah, I don't think a straight-up two-stop full-on green flag is the way to go with the kind of tire degradation we've seen. I think obviously it has a lot to do with if the sun is out or not. You can definitely tell in those last few laps when the sun came out, the grip went down rather rapidly, and yeah, you have to be very mindful of the conditions here.

Q. And last question about the start of the race, would you like to be on the outside lane or the inside lane?

SEBASTIEN BOURDAIS: I think you want to be on pole. That's about as good an answer as I can give you because it doesn't seem like it's safe anywhere, so if you can get your destiny in your own hands and just dictate the pace and get clear of whatever carnage is going to unfold, because honestly last year I think everybody got so excited that we were all going through 1, 2, where everybody had been like, man, this is going to be chaos going into Turn 1 as usual and this and that, and then we got to Turn 3 and that's where everybody wrecked.

Yeah, I think it's just the nature of the beast. Everybody knows how critical track position is here, and everybody is trying so hard and the gaps are small, and you just want it really bad.

Q. Do you think it kind of helps a young driver like a Colton Herta, the fact that a lot of the drivers in today's field just never really ran here until last year?

SEBASTIEN BOURDAIS: Honestly, I think it's not a very hard track. Like I said, it's fairly short, so you kind of get many laps and you get a lot of tries at every corner, so I think the most important is just to feel in tune with the car and to get the team to get you the car that you need to perform, and obviously Colton is getting that.

Andretti was really strong last year, and they had an opportunity to test when nobody else could, with all cars, and Colton wasn't there because he's not labeled obviously an "Andretti car," but he definitely benefits from all the development and work that's being done, and it's a five-car team really. Ryan was touching base on that yesterday in his press conference.

Obviously they've got their stuff figured out, and those drivers anyways, they're young, but they've got plenty of experience both around here. Colton ran here in Lights. Felix this morning had never been here, and he comes out in lap 3 in the mid-58s. I guess the simulation and the simulators work pretty well for those guys.