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SRT Motorsports - Paul Wolfe and Travis Geisler Q&A - Pocono

June 7, 2012, Long Pond, Pa. - Paul Wolfe (Crew Chief, No. 2 Miller Lite Dodge Charger R/T)

HOW DIFFERENT IS THIS TRACK NOW WITH THE NEW PAVEMENT? "It's a good bit different. Any time there is a repave, Goodyear has to do a tire test and obviously bring a different tire, something that can stand up to the speeds, the grip change and all that. The tire is a lot different than what we've had, so as much as the surface is different you've got a different tire in the equation. We've seen a tire change our setups a lot. The track is real smooth. It was quite bumpy in the past, so some of the setup things that you used to do to try to work through the bumps and what not are different. It's a good bit different. There are a lot higher speeds as well."

ARE YOU STILL SHIFTING HERE? "Shifting is still going to be part of the equation. It's definitely more lap time speed with the shift, so from that standpoint we've had to come back with the same style of gear and transmission package to allow us to do that. I expect that to be a big part of how the race plays out on Sunday."

DOES SHIFTING HERE WITH THE HIGHER SPEEDS PUT MORE RESPONSIBILITY ON THE DRIVER TO TAKE CARE OF HIS EQUIPMENT? "Yeah, maybe a little bit. I think initially, before we got here, it was definitely a concern for Brad (Keselowski) of having to downshift at the higher speeds. I think once he got out there, he didn't talk about it a whole lot. But whether you're doing 200 or 210, I think there are still risks there with over-revving the engine and what not. I don't feel like that's a huge deal but it could be a little bit."

WHAT KIND OF STRATEGY COULD WE SEE IN THE RACE ON SUNDAY? CAN YOU GAIN TRACK POSITION BY NOT CHANGING TIRES OR JUST GOING WITH A TWO-TIRE STOP? "I think you're going to see all of the above on Sunday. It's going to depend on where you're running. The tire has a lot of speed on a second cycle on the tires. There's still speed there, if not a little bit more speed. I expect you'll see guys do no tires and maybe fuel only or something like that. It's going to be interesting to see if there is any type of a second groove in the race. Typically you don't see that with repaves, so if that's the case I think the race will definitely be won or lost on pit road for sure, as well as most races this year (smiles). We've seen tires make a difference and I just don't think you're going to see that this weekend."

HOW CHALLENGING ARE THESE NEXT FEW WEEKS GOING TO BE FOR THE TEAMS WITH THE TIRE TESTS AT POCONO AND MICHIGAN PLUS A WEST COAST RACE? "This month is definitely a tough one on teams with these test days and having to be more prepared with less time in the shop as well as outfitting these cars for the test days. We're allowed to have data systems (on the car during tests), so that's another part of it. Some guys on the test days are running the cars they're going to race. For us, we're going to race a different car than we tested. It's definitely going to be one of the tougher months for us but at the same time, we don't get a lot of opportunities to test, so from that standpoint I think it's good to be able to have the data on our cars and collect some information. The tracks are a lot different with the repave but I think some of the things we learn can always carry on to other types of tracks. So, all in all, I think there's a lot of good to come out of it as well."

WOULD YOU LIKE TO SEE MORE TEST SESSIONS WHERE YOU COME TO A TRACK ONE OR TWO DAYS BEFORE A RACE WEEKEND VERSUS A STAND ALONE TEST LIKE DAYTONA IN JANUARY? "Yeah, I mean, if we're going to do a test, coming a day early I think suits our schedule well. But at the end of the day, it's all the same. There's rumor of more testing next year. Obviously, we're going to have a new body and what not next year. For me, I could do either way on that. I feel like we do a good job with whatever the rules are and at the end of the day, that's what it comes down to. If we open up testing, then everybody gets to test. For us, like I said, I could go either way."

Travis Geisler (Director of Competition, Penske Racing)

HOW WAS THE TEST HERE AT POCONO? "It was pretty good. I would say we're really happy with the speed A.J. had. Those guys spent most of the time in the top five on the speed charts. We're happy enough with the car that we've actually changed our game plan a little bit. We had planned on setting the test car aside and unloading the primary race car. After the test everybody kind of decided the best plan would be to continue running the same car. They were real happy with it. So, we swapped the motors out of 'em and changed some other parts and pieces to get some low mileage stuff in there. We're ready to go with it this morning (in practice). It's a testament to the level of preparation of the guys at the shop and the guys on this 22 team to be able to do something like that. Yeah, it's a little different flow to the whole weekend."

WHAT HAS REALLY STOOD OUT TO YOU ABOUT THE NEW PAVEMENT? "I think the biggest thing is going to be tire strategy and tire speed. The weirdest thing is you get these really hard tires with the fresh repave, they kind of have to do that, but they have some weird tendencies. When you bolt stickers on, you actually go slower than you go with the old tires. So to slow down a half-second when you bolt new tires on is just a mind-bender for everyone in this business. We're used to getting a second back when you bolt on new stuff but it's kind of different here. Everybody is going to have to be real creative on their strategy. I think tire wear is pretty minimal. I think you're going to be able to play your race to do two, to do none. When you do your four, you want to plan it to be the least impact possible. That last stop of the race you're going to have to really work to try to have the best strategy whether that's no tires or two or whatever it is. To me, that's going to be one of the bigger pieces of the puzzle here come Sunday."

HOW DO YOU PREPARE YOUR DODGE FOR SHIFTING HERE AT POCONO? "There are a lot of pieces that it affects. We come with just a little different motor package to kind of accommodate some of the extra abuse that it's going to go through. We run a little bit more of a road course setup with the transmission where we run a cooler on it and we plumb a little bit of air to it so it actually has its own cooler. We always run a rear gear cooler but we typically don't run a transmission cooler because it's running in fourth gear which is a straight through shaft which doesn't generate a lot of heat. And now running in third as much as you're going to be, you have the whole cluster shaft engaged which builds a lot of heat in it. We'll cool it and have all fresh components there and that kind of thing. We actually run a gauge on the dash for transmission temperatures so the drivers can watch it. If it starts to get too high, they can run fourth for a little while and give up a little performance but get the longevity back. Those are some things that you do a little differently to try to be prepared for it."

RUNNING WELL HERE IN THE TEST MUST BE ENCOURAGING. CAN YOU APPLY WHAT YOU LEARNED HERE TESTING TO OTHER TRACKS ON THE SCHEDULE? "Certainly, it always feels good when you run well. When you run well here, you know you have a good aero program. You know you have a good engine program. You know your setups have to be pretty good. It's a good shot in the arm for all the departments because it requires all of them to run good here.

"As far as racetracks that it compares to, I'd say there's one other race on the schedule and that's here at Pocono in another month or so (smiles). That's the one that you'll be best prepared for because of this one. It's pretty tough to compare to anywhere. People always kind of thought Pocono and Indy were pretty similar and similar type setups but I think from my perspective, I'd say it's the next Pocono race and that's it."

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