

# CBS NASCAR

Wednesday, June 9, 2021

**Sean McManus**

**Tony Stewart**

**Ray Evernham**

**Sandy Montag**

**George Pyne**

**Pam Miller**

THE MODERATOR: Hi, everyone. What you just saw was a little taste of what you're going to see on Saturday night when you tune in to CBS or Paramount+ to see the debut of Superstar Racing Experience.

Good afternoon. I'm Jen Sabatelle from CBS Sports, and together with the team at Superstar Racing Experience I'd like to thank you for joining us on the call this afternoon.

Last July, CBS Sports and Superstar Racing Experience, a property created by the Montag Group, NASCAR Hall-of-Famers Ray Evernham and Tony Stewart, and investor George Pyne announced a multiyear partnership to produce a yearly six-race short-track series featuring racing legends from various disciplines competing in identically prepared cars.

After a year of planning, we are finally at race week. We very excited for the debut of the Camping World SRX series on Saturday. The primetime series featuring live races over the next six Saturdays will be broadcast on the CBS Television Network and streamed live on Paramount+ beginning at 8:00 eastern each Saturday. Drivers include Tony Stewart, Helio Castroneves, Tony Kanaan, Willie T. Ribbs, Paul Tracy, Bobby Labonte, Bill Elliott, Ernie Francis Jr., Michael Waltrip and Marco Andretti.

The six tracks features some of the most historic and challenging short tracks in auto racing. Saturday's race will originate from Stafford Motor Speedway in Stafford Springs, Connecticut, followed by races at Knoxville Raceway, Eldora Speedway, Lucas Oil Raceway, Slinger Speedway, with the final stop at the Nashville Fairgrounds speedway.

The CBS Sports announce team features veterans of the motorsport television industry as well as current and former drivers. Each week Lindsay Czarniak, Alan Bestwick, Brad



Daugherty and Matt Yocum will bring viewers inside the made-for-TV series. Each race will also feature a driver analyst with Danica Patrick, James Hinchcliffe and Dario Franchitti, each joining the broadcast team for two races on the schedule.

On the call today to discuss more on the series and what we can expect on Saturday are Sean McManus, the chairman of CBS Sports; Sandy Montag, CEO of the Montag Group; George Pyne, Bruin Capital founder and CEO; Pam Miller, CBS Sports' SRX producer; and SRX co-founders and NASCAR Hall-of-Famers, Tony Stewart and Ray Evernham.

**Q. I've talked to many of you for this project but I haven't talked to Sean yet, so for Sean, I've got two for you. It's no secret that INDYCAR and the Indy 500 rights are up at the end of the year, NASCAR is a few years away, too. Is there an element from CBS that SRX could be find of a platform to determine how much interest in motorsports your audience has?**

SEAN MCMANUS: Really not. This is a standalone property for us that is unbelievably exciting because we're getting involved on the ground floor working with Tony and Ray and George and Sandy and their teams on creating what I would call a perfect made-for-television racing series. So our priority is on SRX.

We are not currently looking at any other motorsport properties primarily because our CBS broadcast network schedule is really full. We have golf pretty much on every week that there is either an INDYCAR race or a NASCAR race, so at the moment there's really no room at the inn.

I would not look at this as a preview of more car racing on CBS. I would look at it as an exciting series and a groundbreaking and breakthrough opportunity for us.

**Q. Related to that, you have another property that's really exciting that you have a relationship with in the World of Outlaws. I'm curious, how do you guys view that relationship, and is there opportunities to have more content from them and maybe even live races?**

SEAN MCMANUS: I think there could be. I love the product. I actually did World of Outlaw races way back in the 1980s when I was at NBC, so I go back a long way with



that organization. It's good, exciting racing, and if there's opportunities from a financial standpoint and a programming standpoint, I'd love to add more, but it really depends on what the business deal is and how much available airtime we have on CBS Sports Network and potentially CBS Broadcast Network.

**Q. Pam, I'm just wondering, race fans coming to this series, what can they expect from this broadcast? What are maybe some of the similarities, some of the differences that we're going to see here with this new and exciting product?**

PAM MILLER: Thanks for the question. I think what you're going to see is access like you've never seen before. We're going to be in the cockpits of the cars. We're going to be showing the drivers' personalities behind the wheel and also away from the track.

There's going to be some views from the car that people haven't seen before. We have two onboard cameras in every car, and also drone action. We'll be having a drone that will have full access. I think the race fans are going to see personality and also some great racing with some new angles for television they haven't seen.

**Q. My question is for George. I'm quite sure your business plan is proprietary, but can you shed any light on the primary revenue streams that are going to make this work financially? I'm guessing obviously you have a title sponsor, I know you're selling tickets, and I don't know if the companion video game is a conceivable revenue generator or if the CBS deal is a revenue generator. Can you put any meat on the bone?**

GEORGE PYNE: I think really for us initially the primary revenue stream is sponsorship. I think what is disruptive about this idea is -- one is the concept, from a business standpoint, the cost structure, while proprietary, is very favorable. So what we're able to do here with a single entity is put out a great product with great drivers on network television that's primarily driven by sponsorship.

Yes, we're very pleased with the video game. I will tell you I spent a weekend with a number of teenagers who loved the game. Last night I was talking to a friend of mine, a Major League Baseball manager, about the game who is a big racing fan. So the game, by the way, is a total hit, and it's a hard game to play if you're a gamer. So we're pleased with the game. We're pleased with the partnerships.

I think financially we have a very interesting model that's primarily sponsorship today, some licensing, some track

revenues, but it's our cost structure I think that gives us really long-term viability along with our partnership with CBS.

We think it's a disruptive idea. It's primarily focused on the driver skill, not money going and invested into very little speed. Having been at NASCAR for 11 years, all the money goes into very little speed that the consumer can't really notice. And so this is a showcase of the driver skills and of course champion drivers with incredible life stories.

All of that really today is primarily sponsorship, and having had the experience at IMG long-term, I think this concept has legs potentially beyond the United States.

We're excited about Saturday night. Obviously our focus is on Stafford Motor Speedway, but I think this is a concept that has real merit, primarily because of the cost structure and the value, as Pam mentioned, because you have a single entity, there's no limit to what you can provide in terms of access where in other types of racing you have multiple entities involved, therefore it's very fragmented and hard to pierce through that access point.

SEAN MCMANUS: I would just add, also, that from a CBS standpoint, we're very pleased with the advertiser reaction. To have good live sports programming in primetime during the summer is a pretty good opportunity for a lot of advertisers. Obviously not only is Camping World in as the title sponsor, but other sponsor interests and media sales have been very encouraging for us.

I think from a business standpoint, at least from certainly CBS's perspective, I agree with George that I think this idea has a lot of legs.

**Q. When you guys wake up Sunday morning or maybe it's Monday when the numbers come in, what does success look like for this first race at Stafford?**

SANDY MONTAG: I'll start. I mean, success, I think currently we have a forecast of 68 degrees and zero percent rain, so if that holds up, that's the first amount of success.

I think if we have a great broadcast, I think you're going to see a sold-out Stafford Speedway, which is going to be exciting in primetime, so I think we have an exciting broadcast.

Look, we know CBS does well in primetime. They're America's most-watched network. We know we're going to do reasonably well there.

I think from our standpoint, if we have a good clean race, if



we have a great sold-out house, good weather, I think for our first inaugural race, that would be a success.

**Q. Tony or Ray, Tony, you were a guy known in your career as much for the personality that was on display when you competed. Paul Tracy mentioned a couple weeks ago that he feels like Motorsports has become sterile in regards to personalities. Obviously the competition on the track is very important with the series, but how important to the product is having the personalities being on display outside of the cars as part of the TV production?**

TONY STEWART: I think it's equally as important, and that's what Pam mentioned earlier, to be able to showcase not only what the drivers do on the track but what they do off the track, too, what makes these drivers who they are.

It's more to it than just what they do behind a steering wheel. So having great personalities, and I do agree with Paul 1000 percent that is what Motorsports is lacking.

It has got so put under the thumb of corporate America and do the right things, say the right things. That is what's great about SRX is that you have personalities -- you've got Paul Tracy, myself, Willy T. Ribbs. You've got guys like Bill Elliott, Bobby Labonte, Michael Waltrip. I don't know how you get much more in the personality category than that.

But having these guys like that that are great race car drivers and putting us all together in equal cars I think is going to be a lot of fun.

You'll see the personalities. We always have. You think of guys like Rick Mears, you saw his personality. And AJ Foyt driving IndyCars. You saw Dale Sr. and Rusty Wallace's personalities in stockcar.

You see the personalities in their driving styles, and I think that's going to show up really well. With Pam at the helm also telling the story of us, as well, I think that's going to make it well rounded. So I think that's going to create a lot of excitement this weekend and for the next five weeks.

**Q. Pretty much all the competitors we've talked to over the last few weeks have talked to the local guy as probably the guy to beat. Now, Slinger Speedway is the one I care about, so maybe this will all sort of play out between now and then, and we'll see how it works, but in general I'm curious what's the benefit to CBS and what's the benefit to the series if the local guys are winning these things?**

SEAN MCMANUS: Well, I'll mention from the CBS

standpoint, I think that's a great story. That's Rocky Balboa. If that turns out to be the story and some of the great legends in the history of motor racing are being bested by the local hero, that's a pretty darned good story. So what I look at as success is good, wheel-to-wheel racing, lots of action, lots of personalities from the drivers.

So I think whether it's one of the favorites who wins the race or whether it's one of the underdogs, that's why people are going to tune in to see what happens.

If it's the local guy, more power to him, and we'll tell his story just as actively and in an interesting way as we would a Tony Stewart or Willy T. Ribbs.

SANDY MONTAG: Why don't you talk about the Balboa idea?

RAY EVERNHAM: You know, I appreciate the question, too, and we certainly did think about that. But when we designed this car, we designed this car not to give an advantage to anybody. Even though the local guy will have probably the most laps around the speedway, some of that advantage will go away with a different -- this car and this race was particularly designed for a driver to have to be able to figure that out, and everybody that's tested these cars have kind of said the same thing.

We feel a very, very unique situation here that we have been able to do something that no other Motorsports venue, especially live, has been able to do. You talk about grass-roots and short track racing, and those people have a fantasy of getting up to the big leagues, the big game, if you will, the Daytona, the Indianapolis, the things like that.

Well, not only are we taking the big show to the fans, we're giving them an opportunity to participate. We're not just taking our superstar drivers there, we're giving their superstar driver, their local driver, a chance to compete.

And not only are we doing local driver now, we're also giving a local crew chief a chance to compete against our three superstar crew chiefs. But we've taken the advantage away from everybody. Nobody will have an advantage driving one of these cars.

If you know the track, that's great, but you're still racing against Tony Stewart and Bill Elliott and Helio Castroneves and people like that.

Our goal with this was to do something on down the line to involve, to literally involve the grass-roots people, and the Rocky Balboa-type shot up immediately with the superstars. I think we've done a good job accomplishing that.



**Q. Sandy mentioned earlier part of the measure of success is having a good, clean race. Tony, do you think there's any chance of that?**

TONY STEWART: It'll be very interesting. It's hard to say. I mean, the reason I really don't have a great answer for that is I haven't been in the car yet, and everybody is like --

RAY EVERNHAM: I'll have to order more body parts.

TONY STEWART: Yeah. It costs me money if we tear these cars up. But no, honestly, I haven't been in the car yet. I can't be in the car obviously until race weekend because then it gives me an advantage over the other drivers.

I haven't been in there yet, but I think with personalities like we have, it's very unrealistic that we're not going to tear some body panels up in the process, and especially when you're on short tracks.

You look at the best in the world at any short track in any series, they're tearing cars up. It's very unrealistic I think to think we're going to have 12 cars that the way they start the race is the way they're going to finish the race, but I don't think it's going to be a demolition derby, either.

I think everybody understands that we have to put on a good product, as well. And here's the other thing that the drivers have to think about: The car, if they take somebody out and crash that guy, that may be the car that they draw for the very next week. So if you're tearing up one of the cars, you might be tearing up a car that you have to drive in the next race or two races from then. It's very feasible that you could hurt yourself in the process.

I think guys will be smart, and I think guys are going to be aggressive. They're going to race each other hard, but I think they'll race with a lot of respect, as well.

SANDY MONTAG: What I meant was a good, clean telecast. We don't really care about a clean race. Ray can build a new car in about three days, so it's not a problem. And about the local driver, I still have my money on Smoke so I'm not worried about that either.

TONY STEWART: Yeah, I'll be honest, I was starting to take offense at that, too, because if you think there's six local drivers that's going to kick our ass for six straight weeks, you got something coming, Dave.

**Q. Well, you got four weeks to prove me wrong.**

TONY STEWART: You put whatever amount of money

you want and I'll bet against you on it, because I can promise you if you think we're laying down for these Balboa drivers, that is the total opposite of what you're going to get.

**Q. This will be for Tony or Ray, if you'll indulge me a local question. Can you speak to the thinking behind choosing Stafford as a venue to get this started?**

RAY EVERNHAM: Sure. Tony, if you don't mind, I can take that. What we wanted to do was find historic tracks that have just a difficulty factor but really a great following, a great DNA in Motorsports.

And if you look at Stafford Springs, Connecticut, and the open wheel modified division there, it has sent many people up the ladder to stockcar racing, like the Bodines, the Bouchards, Richie Evans, people like that, and then people like the Andrettis and Gordon Johncock, guys that have gone off to Indy.

And the Boston fans, let's face it, the Boston fans in that area love their sports and they've been dying for something like this to happen. Every time they release seats at Stafford Motor Speedway they sold out immediately. The track has a difficulty factor. The corners are a little bit different; Turn 1 and 2 are different than 3 and 4. It creates good side-by-side racing and hits right about the speed that we wanted to be at.

To kick it off there, I don't believe we could have found a more perfect place to do it, as I said, right smack in the middle of New York and Boston. The fans are dying for things like that. And again, it's a fairly neutral track. A lot of our superstars have not competed there.

With the car being difficult to drive and the track being neutral, I think we're going to provide some really good racing.

**Q. You were really eloquent before about when you were discussing the absence or erosion of personality as an element of auto racing, especially this type of it. Ray has also been pretty eloquent in his remarks. And I love -- as a former Philadelphia area resident, I love the reference to Rocky Balboa and I'll be happy about that any time I hear it. Ray, you and Tony have both been in a place like this before and you've both been highly successful at it in your respective capacities. Aside from what you people have done in terms of making drivers the stars here, what translates directly, if anything, from your prior experience in a genre of racing like this? What translates? What doesn't?**

RAY EVERNHAM: Well, first thing from me building the

 . . . when all is said, we're done.®

car is the things that had to translate were safety. We did a lot of work making sure the cars were safe for our drivers to go in. And then certainly durability. We want to make sure the cars are all running at the end of the event, and with some of our partners with Ilmor engines and things like that, certainly helped get that done.

But we had to almost reverse engineer a car. We knew where we wanted to go. We didn't want to build a car that was going to be perfectly fast around an oval. It's going to be good on a road course, definitely transition into road courses, and then it's going to be -- it'll be a good dirt car and it'll be an okay oval car, because most of our drivers have pavement oval experience.

We really wanted to equalize the car and use some of the knowledge from the past on, okay, what are the things in that car that the driver can make a difference with. Quite honestly, that's the steering wheel, the gas pedal, and the brake.

We've given them some bias adjustment and we're going to have four crew chiefs working on some things there so that the drivers can make some small changes and whatnot. But we really worked hard. Tony and I discussed a lot of things on what we could do to keep the cars so it wasn't about aerodynamics and it wasn't about slamming them down on the ground and getting center of gravity low.

We wanted to build a car that was controlled by the driver and not easy to drive. These cars are not going to be easy to drive anywhere. They're going to be very sensitive to driver input and driver line.

We recently had a test at Nashville with cars that were running the exact same total lap time but making it up in different parts of the track, and to me that's what has the ability to create the most passing.

If drivers can run identical lap times but they're making it up at different ends of the track, that's what's going to keep the cars close together and passing. Some of that technology was almost reverse engineering of everything we had to learn over the years.

**Q. With Sean McManus in the audience, I've got to send this shout-out to his dad, who was the best in the world at what he did and turned a lot of people into race fans, including me.**

SEAN MCMANUS: My dad loved car racing. He loved the Indianapolis 500 for decades that he did that show. He loved Monte Carlo, he loved Darlington, he loved motorsports, and he loved the drivers and the personalities behind the drivers. You're really nice to say that, and my

dad would love this series.

**Q. Tony, there's already a lot of star power in the series, but what does it mean to have Helio Castroneves who only just won the Indy 500 a few weeks ago competing in the series?**

TONY STEWART: Yeah, I don't think you can ask for anything better than that. I'm sure we're all going to have to have special passes just to be allowed on pit road next to him now that he's a four-time winner. His head will be swollen and he'll be lucky to get his helmet on over that head. We all know much he loves his hair and wants to protect his hair. He's going to be hard to deal with this weekend I have a feeling.

Joking aside, we're all proud of him. I know all of us at SRX are proud of him and the competitors are going to be really proud, because what he accomplished at the Indy 500 this year was record breaking and record tying, obviously.

But to be only the fourth four-time winner of the Indianapolis 500 and have him with the SRX series is something we're all extremely proud of and proud of him for his accomplishment, and excited to bring him back to reality and show him it's not going to be that easy for the next six weeks.

**Q. Sean, one of the biggest things I've noticed with CBS's coverage is this will also be streaming on Paramount+. How important do you think it is to have a product on a streaming platform?**

SEAN MCMANUS: I think it's really important. In many ways, the future in broadcasting is in some ways going to be determined by how successful you are with your streaming product.

I think like all sports, our goal is to enable the viewer to consume this content in any way that he or she wants to, whether it's on a phone, whether it's on a traditional TV with a cable bundle or satellite bundle, whether it's on his or her laptop or a streaming device.

Whatever the mechanism is that the viewer wants to consume this content, we want to make sure he and she can do that.

Steaming is a huge priority of this company. The Paramount+ is growing substantially each and every month, and to have on really good content that skews towards sometimes a younger and even a more diverse audience is something that we're striving for.



This series fits right into the wheelhouse for both CBS primetime from a linear standpoint and also from Paramount+ from a steaming standpoint. It's a great vehicle for us, and I think it's going to drive subscriptions, and it's going to hopefully drive viewership on our network.

**Q. Tony, it's a bit philosophical, but it's very basic to you I'm quite sure. I imagine for a champion race car driver, if you can't have a car that's better than everyone else's, you want one that's at least no worse. Could you speak to what I imagine is kind of the fantasy or the baseline wish that you could take out every single variable in a race except your skill and your ability and test that against the next guy? Am I over-romanticizing or does that ring a bell with you?**

TONY STEWART: No, it absolutely does. I think you're hitting the nail on the head. When I used to race in the IROC series I was proud to represent NASCAR and I was proud that I felt like they felt like that I was one of the top-tier drivers that deserved that invite for my respective series.

I feel like this is the same thing with SRX, bringing as many drivers from as many different series as we can get that truly belong and truly have proven that they deserve to be where they're at.

To have that ability to get in 12 cars that I know -- and to have the utmost confidence that Ray and our group have built cars that are identical, they're very equal. But with that, every driver has a different driving style, so having the ability and Ray's vision and Sandy and George's vision of giving us crew chiefs and giving us a small window to work in to tweak these cars to our driving styles doesn't take away the fact that they're still identical.

They're going to have identical springs, identical shocks. The tires are identical. Everything is identical. We can change some of the variables in the equation to suit our driving style.

If a guy that likes a tighter-driving race car than another driver that likes a looser car, if those cars for that particular race happen to be on the tight side, then they're going to favor a driver and his driving style.

So having the ability to tweak those cars to our driving styles to match, I think that is something that we never saw in IROC. We had 12 identically prepared cars and you had to try to figure out how to drive around whatever the condition was.

SRX we have the ability to match these cars to our driving styles but still keep them equal at the same time, and that's

something that, I guess to a certain degree, is a dream. It's nice to have that luxury, to have that ability of having 12 cars that fit 12 different drivers' driving styles against each other.

**Q. Tony and Ray and Sean, how excited are you guys to come here to the historic Nashville Fairgrounds and race, and what was the thinking about making it the final race and the banquet here?**

TONY STEWART: I can tell you from the drivers' standpoint I'm excited about it. The last time I was there was in a dirt sprint car racing on the legends car track that they covered with dirt. But to run the full sized track, that was one of the very first races that I ran in my NASCAR career in the Xfinity Series. It was a lot of fun then.

I can only imagine how much fun we're going to have with it now. And obviously Nashville is a great town to not only race at, but obviously with country music and all the star power around Nashville, it's in my opinion a perfect place to finish our season. But I'll let the other two guys speak to that.

RAY EVERNHAM: From the standpoint of why it ended up on our series, exactly what Tony was saying. Nashville is such an incredibly historic track that has made such a huge difference in auto racing, certainly in that part of the country. I've been going down there for several years. The track is just -- it's got that look to it that you want, the covered grandstands.

You can almost hear some of, I call them the ghosts of the past there, whether it's the music industry or some of the great drivers that have gone there.

We tested there just last week. It was an amazing test, I can tell you that. As I said, we ran four drivers through the cars. They all ran just about identical times. The track allows for side-by-side racing. You're going to have to take care of your tires there and it's going to bring in -- there's going to be something really magical about our championship being done there.

It'll be good racing. It'll be the fastest place that we go to. Top speeds there will probably be a little bit higher than anywhere else we're going, but the cars really behave themselves well. And again, I think in that Nashville market you're going to see those grandstands packed.

SEAN MCMANUS: Yeah, I would say from a television standpoint it's the perfect way to end our series. Any time you hear the word "fairgrounds," you think of great, historic and traditional racing, and it's pure Americana.



I think this series has a very international flavor in many ways, but it's also really an American product. To be at these historic tracks and to be at the fairgrounds and to be in a city which is as great as Nashville is I think is great. I think it's a dream come true from a television production standpoint, and I think it's going to be just a great way to end the series.

GEORGE PYNE: I'll just throw in Butch at the tourism board there. They approached us. They were progressive. They were aggressive. They've been great partners, and there's no doubt in my mind that the leadership in that city who has been great to work with is a great part of that city's success and why it's one of the most popular places in America.

They've been fantastic to work with.

**Q. Tony, I'm curious if the kind of struggles on the Cup side have taken either more of your time, some time away from the SRX, or have you said, Hey, you guys got to figure this out? I'm curious how that dynamic has impacted kind of you trying to get this off the ground, as well.**

TONY STEWART: It hasn't changed anything. I've been able to dedicate the same amount of time to the NASCAR program as always.

That's the great thing about being retired as a driver, is I have a little more flexibility in my schedule and have a lot of time that I can shuffle things around that are on my portfolio and make sure that when Ray has needed me or George or Sandy have needed me, that I've always been available.

We've been able to juggle the balls, so to speak, and still get everything done that we're trying to get done.

**Q. George, I'm curious how sponsorship talks have gone as far as companies that have been involved in NASCAR, companies in motorsports, and other companies that haven't been involved. Obviously Camping World has a heavy motorsports involvement. I'm kind of curious how those talks have gone, and did you see more interest from companies that were involved in racing or as much from those who had not been involved in racing at all?**

GEORGE PYNE: I think as Sean mentioned, the advertising support has been fantastic. We're pleased with the sponsors we have. We're happy with where we are and we're excited for the season. I would also say that Ray and Sandy and Tony has accomplished all that we've accomplished in the middle of a global pandemic. So to

launch what we're launching remotely in many cases is nothing short of amazing. We're really happy with where we are and we're grateful to the sponsors we have, and we're excited about showing and telling our story on national TV Saturday night and for the five following Saturdays.

Happy with where we are and excited about the future.

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