

Honda Performance Development Media Conference

Friday, July 2, 2021

Dave Salters

Media Conference

CHUCK SCHIFSKY: I am Chuck Schifsky, manager of motorsports, American Honda. I'm joined today by David Salters, the president of HPD, Honda Performance Development. Thanks for joining us today here at Mid-Ohio.

I wanted to gather this group together and have David give us some background on how the season is going. To do that I'm going to start off with a question that I think is kind of important:

Of the nine races we've had so far this season, Honda has won six of them. David, give us a little background. Is this something that's just happened or is this something that has been brewing for a while, a little background on how the season is going in INDYCAR from your view.

DAVID SALTERS: So it's going reasonably well. It's motorsport, so you have to be very careful and not become complacent. There's various reasons it's going well. There's a team of people - engineers at HPD - who work really hard, and they're very smart and they work hard. That's how you get success in this business.

There are our teams that are working hard. It's sort of four or five years of building an engineering team, process, models, simulation and validation. You get luckier. The more you understand, the luckier you get. It's just building it over the last years really.

We're seeing some success now. It can always turn around quickly. But it's through the efforts of our team at HPD who have been working hard for years and years and trying to get smarter for years and years.

CHUCK SCHIFSKY: Thanks, David.

Obviously here today we're running the INDYCAR SERIES. David also oversees our IMSA efforts. We have a race that's running this weekend, second of two races at Watkins Glen. I'd be remiss if I didn't mention that, that there are two HPD-engineered efforts for Acura, Wayne



Taylor Racing and Mike Shank Racing.

David, talk a little bit about what's happened so far this year in IMSA and how things are going with the DPi cars especially.

DAVID SALTERS: It's going reasonably well. Honda, Acura, we historically won our first Daytona 24 Hour outright. That's a marquee event and a milestone achievement. That's going well.

Guys are working hard. The teams we work with are brilliant, Mike and Wayne. We won Mid-Ohio here, it was a nail-biter, a bit too close at the end, so that's pretty good. We're leading various championships and stuff.

The other bit to remember is we have fantastic support from inside American Honda with Honda and Acura. The guys in charge there are racers, so we get good support. We go racing. We're encouraged.

Honda is very authentic with the fact that we're there to build engineers. It's people and technology. We don't just pay people to do our motorsport. There's X hundred people in Santa Clarita. They go out, think about how to engineer the cars, then we make stuff, all the things Honda is good at to be honest with you.

IMSA is going well. Well poised. But so far so good.

CHUCK SCHIFSKY: Can you comment for us today on how the engine development for the new INDYCAR engine is going. I know guys are working hard on that. All of that is still in secret. But what can you tell us about how that's going?

DAVID SALTERS: That's secret (laughter). What new engine?

No, we're working hard. The interesting thing is it's like a renaissance in American motorsports. The INDYCAR stuff is very buoyant. We have 15 cars here this weekend, which is the most of an Indy field, the most there's been for years. We're supporting that, which takes a lot of supporting. But we're trying to do that.

Plus we're trying to work on the new power train. It's going okay. It's never where you want it to be. We have very high standards for ourselves internally, but it's going pretty



well.

Then there's DPi. That's going okay. Then there's LNDH. We've got enough to keep us busy for a little while I think, but it's going okay.

CHUCK SCHIFSKY: Thanks, David. We'll open it up to questions.

Q. The fact that a Honda guy and Acura guy, Ohio guy, won the Indy 500, there had to be a lot special about that one. How important and how special was Helio's win at the 500 especially for Honda and Acura and Mike Shank?

DAVID SALTERS: It was a fairytale, wasn't it? Literally fairytale. There was a moment. You get these sporting moments, and people are going to remember that, especially at the end of the pandemic. Everyone has had a pretty horrible time. Just to be there and see it I think was astonishing.

Yeah, Helio, he raced two races. He raced Daytona and he raced Indy. He won them both. His success rate this year is pretty good. We were joking with him (smiling).

We all like human stories. Honda tries to do its racing in a human way. So the human bit was just lovely. Helio is Helio. You could not find a person with more energy. I mean, he went for a run afterwards, you saw. Helio is Helio. It's in Ohio. It was fairytale stuff, I think. So lovely.

Q. Chuck, new TV package is being negotiated. If you start the races earlier, the ratings are higher. Honda invests in the TV package for advertising. Where do you see that whole thing going?

PlayerNameCh: Yeah, you're right, TV is a really important piece of the puzzle for Honda. On the consumer side we spend a great deal of money to come out and go INDYCAR racing. One of the reasons we do that is to speak to our customers about durability, the rugged nature of the Honda vehicles and performance and excitement.

So, yeah, a good TV package is important. I think, like everybody here, we're kind of waiting with baited breath to see where that goes. We're pretty happy with what NBC has been doing. I think we need to wait and see how that shakes out over the next few weeks I'm hearing.

Q. Back to the new engine. What is the timeline on that? Clearly on the dyno now. When does it lead to on-track testing, getting it out to more teams?

DAVID SALTERS: Some of that is INDYCAR's news to

make. In the first quarter of next year there's meant to be track testing and stuff. We'll see how that goes.

That's INDYCAR's news to make, to be honest. The precise timing of that... INDYCAR is doing a great job spearheading that. I think first quarter we should be trying to get on the track and stuff.

Q. (Question about multiple teams testing the engine.)

DAVID SALTERS: That's a good question.

The truth of the matter is all this stuff is new. The most important thing is getting it to work properly to start with. It's not like you're looking for the fine points of ultimate drivability, that sort of stuff.

In truth the key bit is getting track miles. If I'm thinking from an engineering point of view and stuff, the key bit is getting track miles.

Like all projects, you want to manage the risk, put the risk at the start. Let's see if they haven't thought of something. Just get out there and get miles on it.

If it's with one team or multiple teams, one driver, multiple drivers, at the start because it's all new, personally the main thing is checking it functions properly. I have yet to see anybody who gets everything perfect. It doesn't exist. So you're going to find some problems. Let's flush the problems out. I think that's the main thing. Let's get working, so... That's the first bit.

It's complex. You won't have thought of everything, so let's get on track as soon as we can and flush the problems out. The other bit probably comes later when you're trying to find the fine differences, to be honest.

Q. You mentioned the human part earlier. You're sporting 15 cars this weekend. How important is it to have the right support engineers with the right teams?

DAVID SALTERS: It is important. We try and help the teams as much as we can. We have a certain amount of flexibility. Then how they liaise with the engineers is important. We got to keep it consistent. You build a relationship. So we try and build on that.

It is human. Honda's quite human. We do this to grow the engineers. I'm an engineer. We do it to grow the engineers. We're trying to help the team. We're trying to help our own people learn, so we give them different challenges.

We're trying to have some consistency so that we just



make sure that they're always getting the best that they can. We're trying to balance those things. It's important. Consistency is important. You have to learn to work together. Different teams work with different engineers in different ways. We try to cater for that, I think.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports

