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SRT Motorsports - Sprint Cup Keys For Success - Pocono

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NASCAR Sprint Cup Series

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KEYS FOR SUCCESS: POCONO 400

Each race weekend, selected SRT Motorsports Engineers, Penske Racing engineers and crew chiefs, drivers or engine specialists give their insight on the 'Keys for Success' for the upcoming race. This week, Howard Comstock, SRT Motorsports Engineering, provides the keys for Sunday's Sprint Cup race.

Track: Pocono Raceway (Race 14 of 36 in the NASCAR Sprint Cup Series)

Race: Pocono 400 (160 laps / 400.00 miles)

Trivia Question: Who is the most recent Dodge driver to win a pole at Pocono? (Answer Below)

HOWARD COMSTOCK (SRT Motorsports Engineering)

Fuel Economy: "Yes the track is fast, incredibly fast, approaching 12 miles per hour faster than it was last year. That's a big deal and it makes a big difference. I think a couple of the unknowns are things that teams are going to have to focus on. One is with the increase in speed, what has that done to the fuel economy? We all know that this is a very important place for fuel economy. You cannot risk running out on the backstretch on a flat track or you'll never get back to the pits. So the speed is great but how bad does that hurt fuel economy? We're in the throttle so long around the track now that it's using fuel to get the kind of speeds that we're seeing. I think the teams are going to have to be very careful about fuel economy. They're going to have to be conservative for at least the first stop and I think they're going to have to watch it all day."

Tires: "During all the testing and practice that we saw this week, the tires actually get better the longer you run 'em but with the format that they run here at Pocono now, all of our practice is done on Friday. You don't get your race tires until practice is over. The teams proved that scuffs work better than stickers but all the teams are going to be forced to put stickers on during the race. They're going to have to solve the mystery of how to do you get stickers up to speed and what's going to be the consequences of putting stickers on a green flag pit stop. It's going to be tricky."

"If there are some quick cautions, you might see some teams putting older tires back on but the amount of track position you lose here would be nearly impossible to make up. If you gave up a top-five position to run that strategy and ended up 25th, you couldn't race back 20 positions. I think you're going to see more road course strategy here than maybe we have in the past where, if teams are going to make green flag stops, as long as you're close to the front of the field you can stop, get your service and still be on the lead lap. I think for fuel economy and road course strategy reasons, you might see more teams stopping sooner rather than later.

"I would think that four tire stops would be an endangered species. These tires last and they're better scuffed than they are new so why would you put on newer, slower tires except for wear reasons (smiles)? Eventually, you've got to consider wear but if the wear looks good and the tires are just as fast old, why put on something that's newer and slower?"

Second Groove: "I think it'll get worked in, unless we see rain. Then, that's going to be a problem. If there's rain, it's just going to slow the process of working in that second groove. I think you'll see a lot of one-groove racing for a long time if we get considerable rain. And the added uncertainty is this is 400 miles now instead of 500, so you don't get that last 100 miles to where that second groove is nicely worked in. You're going to have to get your business done early tomorrow."

The 400 Mile Factor: "To me, it's all about strategy. It's not about durability. I like the change to the 400-mile format because I think you will get better racing packed into 400 miles. In a 500-mile format teams had to ride, had to just log laps for a long time in this race waiting to get to a milestone so they could work some strategy. And now that that's gone, I think you're going to get a better race in 400 miles than you did in 500."

TRIVIA ANSWER: Kasey Kahne, who captured the top starting spot for the 2008 Pocono 500 with a lap speed of 170.219 mph.

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