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SRT Motorsports - Sprint Cup Todd Gordon and Travis Geisler Open Interview - Michigan

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Todd Gordon (Crew Chief, No. 22 Shell/Pennzoil Dodge Charger R/T)

HOW WAS THE TEST HERE YESTERDAY? "We were tight all day and never found anything that made an impact on it mechanically. We're kind of reassessing our package for today, just trying to look at what didn't work and let that lead us in the direction of where we need to work to be better. I feel like we have a couple of ideas there of things we could help ourselves with so we'll see where practice goes today. This racetrack is crazy-fast. There were seven cars in final practice that were over 200 mile an hour lap average which is a lot of time on throttle and not a lot of time off of throttle. You're racing an aero race and it'll be interesting to see what happens. You can definitely see the effect of getting the draft down the straightaways but I think you're also going to run into that bubble where since you're racing on aero you're kind of stuck when you roll up behind somebody. We'll see if the racetrack opens up into multiple grooves."

DO YOU THINK THE GROOVE WILL WIDEN OUT? "We may see the top come. It seems like the cars are all in the middle right now and you may see the top come in. It'll be interesting. Yeah, I think at some point you'll see a couple of grooves around here."

DO THE NOTES YOU HAD BEFORE HERE WITH THE OLD PAVEMENT STILL APPLY? "I think the speed, the grip level, the tire change is accommodating a resurface makes this a new venture again. I don't know that there is a lot of what you could take out of previous year's notes to help this package along, much kind of what we saw at Pocono last week. When you resurface a place, put grip back in it, you take all the bumps back out of it. A lot of things you do mechanically to try to help yourselves through those situations, they're no longer needed."

HAVE YOU NOTICED ANYTHING ABOUT THE TIRE WEAR OR TIRE TEMPERATURE? "I don't think that we've seen as much of a sticker tire to scuff tire swing in balance but part of that may be our balance was off, that we weren't close enough to see that swing. I feel like there's more consistency here. Obviously as we've repeated runs on tires they've gotten faster. I noticed in first practice when you finally got to the point that guys had to put stickers back on there was about a second that they slowed up. It's like you get faster and faster as the tires go on. The left-side tire wear is very minimal and right-side wear is normal."

WHAT KIND OF STRATEGY CAN YOU DO TO GAIN TRACK POSITION? "I think two is an option, given left-side wear. We'll have to see what happens with how balance goes in the race car but I think two is an option. I don't know that none will be an option. It may be but you're doing 200 and some miles an hour into a corner. Probably making sure the right-front tire is nice and safe is a good idea for a while (smiles)."

THIS TRACK IS KNOWN TO BE DEMANDING ON ENGINES. "That's only exponentially worse now. There's guys driving into the corner and turning into the corner wide-open. There's a very small window of off-throttle time if your balance is good. It's a 400-mile race which helps but your time on throttle is long. Engine department has already made comments about it that they're cycle time of how long you're actually wide-open throttle is longer than any of these higher speed places that we go to."

Travis Geisler (Director of Competition, Penske Racing)

FROM AN ENGINEERING STANDPOINT, WAS THERE ANYTHING FROM THE TEST YESTERDAY THAT REALLY STOOD OUT TO YOU? "We struggled for speed yesterday, we really did. I think both cars were not where we needed to be and we all worked on it really hard all day and I don't feel like we made enough gains on it for sure."

I went through last night and spent a bunch more time on it, just trying to figure out where we're missing it. There's certainly some things that are different here than any of us have really done lately. I don't think anybody has gone 215 into a corner in a while. Certainly the amount of mid-corner speed we're carrying now is pretty impressive. I think all of us are maybe a tick surprised that we're going this fast and it's going on this way (smiles) but I don't think there's no safety issue in my opinion. The margin is a very small increase over where we've been but everybody has always had this glass ceiling idea of 200 miles per hour being kind of the cutoff and obviously we've kind of blown through that. I think that's maybe looking at the data the biggest thing that sticks out at you is where you are mile-and-hour wise and where you are sustained rpm wise. And I think it's certainly going to be an engine company test this weekend. Michigan always has been but I think this one is probably going to be one of the biggest ones that we've had in a long time, especially with all the changes going into this season. This will be the first real EFI (Electronic Fuel Injection) test at a track that's this hard on it. There's certainly been places that have been hard on engines but the speed we're seeing and sustained rpm it's on up there on the stress factor I'd say for the engine guys right now. We saw the 78 (Regan Smith) had an engine issue yesterday. I'm not sure that's related or not but certainly something that kind of perks your ears up."

IF YOUR DODGE IS HANDLING WELL HERE, A DRIVER ISN'T OUT OF THE THROTTLE FOR LONG. "I would say you're probably close to 75-80 percent wide-open throttle so you're not out of it for very long (smiles). That's a lot of rpm and that's definitely hard on the engine. It's hard on everything. I mean, anytime you run that hard it definitely stresses a lot of your components. I've been thinking through everything, even from a balancing standpoint, even vibrations are a whole lot worse at that speed so when you look at all your brake components and hubs and pieces that make up all the moving parts of this, driveshafts, you've got to really be diligent to make sure you've got all the best stuff you can."

DOES THAT MEAN THAT HANDLING IS A PREMIUM NOW HERE? "I think handling is a premium everywhere we go, no matter what. That's the biggest thing we have. It's more important than horsepower, it's more important than anything because if you can't handle you can't use the horsepower that you have so a couple more wouldn't help you anyway. Certainly here I think the biggest impact is the moments that you're out of the throttle for however long they are, whether the car is turning good or not; you feel that impact the rest of the straightaway because you're wide-open so long you figure everybody is relatively close once you're wide-open. It's that little bit of time when you're not wide-open that really separates where you are and it impacts your straightaway speed so much if you're too tight in the middle and you're scrubbing off speed."

"I think the other side of things here is tire heat. I think we saw some blisters yesterday, primarily on left-sides which is kind of a concern because there's not a lot you can do about it. I think the biggest issue there is the tire just not wearing. When you look at 20-lap runs there's no tire wear on the left-sides. All they can do is build heat at that point because they can't dissipate heat and you see left-fronts, left-rears, left-rears blistered in the middle, left-fronts blistered in the middle. You can't adjust camber or what you're doing to really affect your position there. I think you're just going to have to be really careful and I think that if your car is well balanced you'll take care of your tires and you'll survive it. But if you're off, you're going to see where that margin sticks out and you're not going to make it through a full run that way. I think there's a lot of things right now bouncing around and the more time you give us at track the more things we worry about (laughs)."

DO THE SETUPS AND NOTES FROM PREVIOUS RACES HERE STILL APPLY? "There's a lot of mix and match. There are some things that are inherent about this racetrack that are the same. It's still ultra-fast, lots of grooves of racing; you've got a lot of room to move around. Turn 2 still gets flat and gets tight compared to Turn 4, just the way the track is laid out. Some of those things certainly still apply. Definitely the smooth pavement changes your shocks and your bump rubbers and your springs a little bit and you've got kind of a tweak on that. There's kind of an evolution there that has to occur."

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