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SRT Motorsports - Weekend Motorsports Preview - June 21

SONOMA ROAD COURSE AWAITS DODGE BOYS

Villeneuve in Nationwide Series No. 22 Dodge at Road America

June 20, 2012, Auburn Hills, Mich. -

SONOMA, Calif., (Thursday, June 20, 2012) – The grind of NASCAR's summer schedule kicks into high gear this weekend as Sprint Cup drivers 'turn right' for the first time this season on the often slippery road course at Sonoma. Fuel economy, tires, brakes, you name it – road course racing is a different beast. Just staying on course is a challenge itself.

Drivers completing all 110 laps Sunday on the 11-turn, 1.99-mile course will make 1,100 turns during the afternoon. In addition to dealing with the track itself, the Sprint Cup regulars will also be challenged by a large contingent of road course ringers.

Dodge has won three of the last five Sprint Cup races at Sonoma including last year when Kurt Busch led 74 of the 110 laps in the No. 22 Dodge. Other Dodge winners at Sonoma include Juan Pablo Montoya (2007) and Kasey Kahne (2009).

Brad Keselowski (No. 2 Miller Lite Dodge Charger R/T) isn't a road course rookie but hardly a veteran. He'll make just his third Sonoma start on Sunday, but can reflect on last year's 10th-place performance as a positive omen. Currently 10th in the Sprint Cup driver standings, Keselowski's road racing prowess is underestimated. What sets the driver of the No. 2 Miller Lite Dodge apart from other non-winners is his near victory at Watkins Glen International last August. The Michigan native, driving with a broken ankle, finished second, losing the lead to Marcos Ambrose with two laps remaining.

"I've seen Brad make great strides in his road course racing," said Keselowski's crew chief Paul Wolfe. "He's very much a student of the game and he constantly looks for ways to improve. I feel confident that we've put together a good car for this weekend – one that he can race up front with. This usually turns into a fuel mileage race, but you still have to have a car that can race with people at the end. Brakes play a big part in that. Road course racing is very hard on brakes, so you have to constantly remind your driver to not abuse them. I love road course racing."

Penske Racing teammate A.J. Allmendinger (No. 22 Shell/Pennzoil Dodge Charger R/T) will rely on his past open-wheel experience when he buckles into a Dodge Charger for the second time on a road course. He finished seventh in 2009 while driving for Richard Petty Motorsports. The California native will be making his fifth career Sprint Cup start at Sonoma. He knows how demanding that the winding stretch of asphalt can be.

"As always, the key for Sonoma is keeping all four wheels on the track," Allmendinger said. "You need your car set up to be able to make your move underneath entering Turn 11 because that is the major passing point on the track. You have to have forward drive off all the way through the 'esses' and that's certainly what we'll be hoping to have working for us this weekend."

Robby Gordon (No. 7 MAPEI Dodge Charger R/T) will certainly be a threat as he returns to competition this weekend. Gordon, who has two career road course wins (one each at Sonoma and Watkins Glen), will attempt to make his first start since March 4 at Phoenix. He leads all current Dodge drivers in laps led at Sonoma – 158 (fifth most of all active Cup drivers).

What You Need To Know

The Races: Toyota Save/Mart 350 (Race 16 of 36)
The Place: Raceway at Sonoma
The Date: Sunday, June 24
The Time: 3:00 p.m. (ET)
The Track: 1.99-mile road course
The Distance: 110 laps/218.9 miles
TV: TNT, 2:00 p.m. (ET)
Radio: MRN, Sirius XM Ch. 90

NASCAR NATIONWIDE SERIES

Sam Hornish Jr. (No. 12 Alliance Truck Parts Dodge Challenger) leads a two-car Penske Racing attack as the Nationwide teams visit another road course – Road America in Elkhart Lake, Wis. The massive 4.048-mile facility is the longest of any track in NASCAR

"I like road racing, but I just haven't had much luck," admitted Hornish. "Our Alliance Truck Parts Dodge has been fast all year. Road America is such a wild card race. You almost hope to just get through the race with a good points day. I haven't been to Road America since 1999. I like the track a lot and I'm looking forward to it. You have to make sure that you don't get caught up in the havoc that seems to come with racing up there. That race and Montreal, it seems like they come down to the last couple of restarts and everybody goes nuts. Hopefully, we can just be ahead of it."

Former F1 champ Jacques Villeneuve (No. 22 Discount Tire Dodge Challenger R/T) returns to the seat of the No. 22 Dodge Challenger where he is scheduled to compete at both Road America and Circuit Gilles Villeneuve for Penske Racing.

"Road America is one of my favorite tracks and I'm excited to be returning there with Penske Racing," said Villeneuve. "It was a tough race last year but ultimately we had a strong and exciting run. I know the No. 22 Discount Tire Dodge Challenger will be competitive this weekend. It's a track I know well – long straights, high-speeds and big breaking zones. This is my third Nationwide outing at Elkhart Lake. I ran at the front in both of the previous two races, so hopefully it'll be third time lucky."

What You Need To Know

The Race: Sargento 200 (Race 12 of 33)
The Place: Road America
The Date: Saturday, June 23rd
The Time: 3:30 p.m. (ET)
The Track: 4.048-mile road course
The Distance: 50 laps/202.4 miles
Television: ESPN, 3:00 p.m. (ET)

NASCAR CAMPING WORLD TRUCK SERIES

The NASCAR Camping World Truck Series is idle this weekend and returns to action on Thursday, June 28 at Kentucky Speedway.

Dodge Weekend Motorsports on TV

(All Times Eastern)

Friday, June 22

3:00 p.m. – Sprint Cup Practice at Sonoma (SPEED)

11:00 p.m. – Sprint Cup Pole Qualifying (SPEED)

Saturday, June 23

10:00 a.m. – Nationwide Pole Qualifying at Road America (ESPN2)

3:00 p.m. – Nationwide Countdown (ESPN)

3:30 p.m. – Nationwide "Sargento 200" (ESPN)

Sunday, June 24

2:00 p.m. – Sprint Cup Countdown to Green (TNT)

3:00 p.m. – Sprint Cup Race at Sonoma (TNT)

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