



## Paddock & Press Conference Patter

© Andrew S. Hartwell

A few sound bites from the voices of the people who make the Rolex 24 a premier race event.



### **Banner Engineering Corvette**

Leighton Reese is here running his first Grand Am race for his long time sponsor Banner Engineering. He has worked with them since the early 1990's, enjoying a long career in Trans Am and SPEED World Challenge before bringing his sponsor into a series that visits key areas for Banner.

In last night's practice session, the #06 Banner Corvette moved

off course for a bit, putting the team in the position to have to play fix-it with damages done to the rear of the car. Reese gave us a quick recap of Dino Crescentini's excursion into an accidental state.

"Dino went off last night in the fastest turn on the circuit, the kink. I don't know what happened he lost control for some reason and slid across the grass and got into the wall. We are replacing the gearbox now, as we planned to do anyway. Dino just got us started on that project sooner than we expected. I'll have to remind him that I am the only one allowed to wreck the car!"

### **Team Seattle**

Don Kitch is here once again to run as many laps as possible for the benefit of the Seattle Children's Hospital. He has put together an effort that is in its tenth year at the Rolex 24, with the total amount raised to date approaching 10 million dollars.

"Our status right now is good. We are at over \$500 a lap right now and our goal is to reach \$600. We also have some activities going on back in Seattle that will help bring us closer to our goal."

Kitch has a history of tying his racing activity to charitable fund raising.

“My wife Donna and I always linked whatever campaign we were on with some charity. When we came up with the Seattle Children’s Hospital concept at the Rolex 24 we were introduced to some great people and we have been working with them ever since. You know, Donna and I have been blessed with a beautiful and healthy daughter, but there are many children out there who need medical attention and we are proud to do this to help them.”

### **Howard-Boss Motorsports Press Conference**

Butch Leitzinger, Tony Stewart and Andy Wallace comprise the formidable driver lineup running in the #4 Howard Boss Pontiac-Crawford this year. At a press conference this morning, they clearly demonstrated that there is a camaraderie and fellowship between them that can only lead to a solid result in the race.

We talked to Andy Wallace afterwards about his “new family” courtesy of his recent marriage to Catherine Crawford, the daughter of Max and Jan Crawford, the people who build the Crawford DP race cars.

Now that he was an official Crawford, we wondered what his relationship was like with his new father-in-law.



(Laughing) “Our relationship is strong, as it always has been. Max is a real racer. All he ever wants to do is go fast. I’ve known him for a very long time. He worked with us at Dyson Racing every year we came here in the past. One of our wins here came when he was the crew chief on the car.

What is confusing me is how he let me marry his daughter!”

### **Rick Howard’s Big Three**

Team owner Rick Howard is here at Daytona with three Howard-Boss Motorsports team cars set to run in the DP class tomorrow (#2, #4 and #16). He has a long time personal and professional relationship with Max and Jan Crawford, the builders of those cars. We talked with him about the weekend ahead and about team members old and new.

For starters, the #2 car is being piloted by some new faces in the series. NASCAR’s Rusty Wallace is teamed with the IRL star, Danica Patrick and they are both paired up with two of the best in the world of sportscar racing – Jan Lammers and Allan McNish. When you mix talent from different disciplines you sometimes find there are lumps in the mix. Sure enough, the crew was working out one of those lumps when we caught up to Howard in the paddock.

“Some weeks you have it easy some are hard. We had an off in the #2 car, resulting in a little damage to the underside of the car. But the cars are tough and the Crawford’s pride themselves on the cars they build, because they are racers themselves. They build the cars where you can work on them and fix them and get them right back out onto the track.”

Howard knows the #2 car will get into the race and he maintains an upbeat manner about the state of the team.

“We have three exceptionally good cars and good driver lineups this year. We are excited about the event but we didn’t plan on being the fastest cars here. We thought we would run really well. We are still hoping that will be the case. For the last two years we have raced better than we practiced.”



This weekend marks the debut of Danica Patrick in a Daytona Prototype. Howard is very pleased with her performance both on and off the track.

“Danica had a wonderful Indy 500 and sat on multiple poles. She gives full credit to her race team but she had to drive the race car. From what I saw when I watched the race, and from what I have seen while she has been in this car I can see she is a real racer. And you couldn’t ask for a better person. We have had nothing but an absolutely wonderful test days down here and all week this week has been a wonderful experience for her and for her father and mother who are with her.”

Missing from the Crawford –Howard –Boss mix this weekend is Elliot Forbes-Robinson. Howard and EFR are close friends who live not too far apart in North Carolina. Howard told us why EFR wasn’t here this weekend.

“Elliot has a son named Colin who was on the heart transplant list for several years. They just did some new type of surgery that was recently developed. They didn’t give him a new heart but they did sort of redesign the heart. Unfortunately for Colin he had a set back. He had pneumonia, not only one time but multiple times. Then he had some internal bleeding which they learned was an ulcer. But it seems like he is on the way to recovery.

“Elliot and his wife Lounette have been spending day after day with Colin so his mind has been on that. But I wouldn’t be surprised to see him back out running again real soon but he has to put family first and we understand that.

“You know, the Crawford’s have sold a lot of race cars and Elliot has delivered all those cars. He has been the shakedown driver for all those cars. He is still is a part of Howard-Boss racing. You know, this year we ran short of funding so we had to condense our driver lineup and so you have to think the lord works in strange ways.

“This is a pretty stressful time for us as we are trying to find another sponsor. We are searching for money so if anybody out there wants to get their name on an excellent race car with an excellent race team with unbelievable driver talent, call us!

“I’m from the NASCAR world and I love what the Crawford’s’ are trying to accomplish. They always wanted to build racecars and sell them and race them too, to do research and development. Max loves to call a race and see how far the team can get up in the order. You know, just watching Max’s eyes on race day make it all worthwhile.”

With the beautiful weather we have been enjoying, we can expect to see a lot more eyes walking around the grounds of the Nextel Fan Zone tomorrow.