



2019 Open-Wheels.com 500 Mile Race

Press Conference

Sunday, November 17, 2019

Henry Bennett

Driver, No. 007 Powerslide Motorsports Dallara IR-18 Honda

MODERATOR: Now joining us in the Media Center, the driver of the No. 007 Powerslide Motorsports Dallara IR-18 Honda, our third-place finisher in the 2019 Open-Wheels.com 500 Mile Race, Henry Bennett. Welcome to the Media Center, Henry.

HENRY BENNETT: Thanks, Tanner. Good to be here.

MODERATOR: P3 finish today – walk us through your race, front-to-back. How were the 500 miles for you today in that Powerslide entry?

BENNETT: Overall, I have to say it went really well. We were a little unsure how competitive our car would be to start the race. You can never really get a clear picture from practice because people are running really different wing packages and fuel levels, so it is difficult to gauge that. It seemed that everyone was struggling with the really hot track today.

But surprisingly, we coped really well with the conditions. I managed to stay at the front in the first half of the race. My teammates Chris Stofer and Adam Blocker actually joined me at the front, and we were looking really strong (by) managing to go further on the fuel than the other frontrunners. (We went) two, three laps further (on our fuel runs), which would have really been an advantage at the end of the race had it gone green all the way.

But then the caution came out, and before that I lost a little bit of time. I overshot my pit box and managed to hit the wall, so I needed a front wing repair and that lost me a few seconds. But I was

confident that I could catch back up to the leaders. Then the caution came out, and it was a split decision in the team on whether or not to pit at that point. I think there were just 100 laps to go, and if you are careful with fuel saving, you can make it to the end there.

We decided to pit, which sent us back down into the 'teens, and again we made our way through the field quite nicely. But I was just a little bit short – maybe one or two laps short – on making it at the end after fuel saving. I was following Michele for that last stint, saving fuel with him. I knew he was good on fuel because he pitted two laps after me on that last stop.

I was praying that I could save enough fuel – I was half a lap short (towards) the end, and with 10 laps to go, I thought 'I have to go into major fuel-saving mode.' It was panic station... I dropped off of the draft of Michele, thinking that I could save a bit more fuel by clutching and coasting or using a different fuel map, but in fact, I started using more fuel that way even though I was going two seconds a lap slower.

At the time, I was 10 or 11 seconds (ahead) of Liam in P3, and I thought 'maybe, maybe I can save enough fuel and stay ahead of Liam' in third, but I was losing too much time and not really saving any fuel by myself. Liam passed me, and within like a lap, I'm sure I would have been passed by the pack. I could have held on to 10th, at most at that point, but lucky for me the caution came out when it did.



I should have stayed with Michele and saved a bit of fuel, and I could have had a second (place finish). But I am incredibly lucky to get third (place).

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MODERATOR: Henry, were the track conditions better or worse than what you team predicted?

BENNETT: For the start of the race, when the track was cooler than expected, it was definitely better than we expected. We were really unsure as to what aero package to start the race with, but the cooler track made that decision a bit easier. We went with slightly lower downforce, and that helped massively.

But the track did get very hot towards the middle and the end of the race, but our car seemed to cope well with that (and did) better than expected, really.

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MODERATOR: What did it mean to you to finish on the podium in the inaugural Open-Wheels 500 and bring home a third place result for the Powerslide team.

BENNETT: It means a lot for everyone at Powerslide. We work hard at our IndyCar racing. We have had some success, and some failure. I haven't really had a great result in any of the Indy 500's I have been in so far; we have always had strong cars, and my teammates have gotten very close to winning before. Adam (Blocker) in the iRacing Indy 500 came second last year by a fraction of a second, and Andrew (Kinsella) came second before by a fraction of a second.

It would have been nice to come first, of course. I'm sure everyone says that. A third, especially (considering) the circumstances and the strength of the field – and this race, which is probably the biggest and most prestigious race I have been in in my sim racing career – it means a lot to finish on the podium.