

**Jeff Burton, driver of the No. 99 Citgo SUPERGARD Taurus, and his car owner, Jack Roush, conducted a teleconference shortly after NASCAR's presentation on the Dale Earnhardt investigation. A transcript of that teleconference follows:**

### **TELECONFERENCE TRANSCRIPT**

**JEFF BURTON --99-- Citgo SUPERGARD Taurus --** WHAT WERE YOUR THOUGHTS ON NASCAR'S PRESENTATION? "I was impressed with the thoroughness of it. There were no, in my opinion, major surprises that came out of it. It was very revealing based on all the factors that went into developing the theory that made you think about a lot of things, so, all in all, I thought it was very well done and very thorough. I like to look at commonsense practical things in conjunction with engineering and everything that they said makes sense to me and, because of that, I believe it to be thorough and believe it to be correct."

WHAT'S YOUR REACTION TO NASCAR MANDATING CRASH BOXES NEXT YEAR BUT NOT HEAD AND NECK RESTRAINTS? "I'm very pleased about the crash data recorders. I think it's imperative to continue to understand what it is the race cars do when they wreck, then, from there, what the drivers' bodies do after the race car wrecks or while the race car is wrecking. I think that also shows a major step on their part because someone has to study that data and someone has to understand that data and in order to have those boxes, you need a full commitment that is more than just paying for or installing the recorders, it's about understanding and being able to use that equipment. So, mainly, it's a show of continued support to make racing safer. As far as mandating a head and neck restraint system, I don't think that mandating it is necessary. We live in a country which allows us freedoms to do things that we do. Making a decision as a race car driver not to have a head and neck restraint system, understanding all of the positives that come because of it, in my opinion, that's your prerogative. The only person you're putting in danger is yourself. If you choose to do that, then I believe that to be your choice, so I don't believe it needs to be mandatory. I think education is a great power and the continued effort by NASCAR and by outside companies to educate drivers, crew chiefs and owners on the importance of many safety items, not just the HANS, is more important than making them mandatory."

WHAT IS THE UPDATE ON YOUR SEAT PROJECT? "Just to clarify, I have spent some of my own money, but Roush Racing has spent a tremendous amount of money and effort also. We have continued to try to build a better and safer seat. As seen by us, the composite seat offers a lot of advantages but there are also some disadvantages -- some of which we know and some of which we don't know. So, until the composite seat comes on the scene, which, in my opinion, is way down the road, there are some immediate benefits that can be done with aluminum. It may turn out that we can get all of the benefits of a composite seat through aluminum, so we have worked diligently to build an aluminum seat that has all of the factors that the proposed perfect composite seat has. We've been able to make tremendous strides on it and we'll continue to work. Kevin Harvick ran our latest design or rather a design that was developed through Butler Motorsports in the sled testing that we did. But he's been running that and we're testing it next week. We believe that there are tremendous advantages in aluminum and there are tremendous advantages that are available to us today, rather than waiting for a composite, which, in my opinion, is way down the road."

WHAT IS THE DESIGN OF THIS SEAT LIKE? IS THERE MORE SUPPORT AROUND THE SHOULDERS BECAUSE THE EXPERTS SPOKE ABOUT BODY ROTATION IN AN ACCIDENT? "I agree wholeheartedly with what they said. The research that became available to me last year over 12 months ago indicated that we needed more support in the shoulder areas. In my opinion, having support in the rib areas isn't wrong, having support in the shoulder area is correct. So what we tried to do is continue the support in the rib area, which some of the information that's been given to us through our testing says that the rib support is

good for frontal impact. In addition to that, we've added shoulder supports and made the shoulder supports very strong and very beefy to help control the upper body movement. So we've tried to use both approaches."

MANY OTHER PRO SPORTS HAVE FORMER PARTICIPANTS IN MANAGEMENT POSITIONS, BUT NASCAR HAS PRETTY MUCH STAYED WITH THE FRANCE FAMILY. DOES THAT DISAPPOINT YOU THAT MORE FORMER DRIVERS DON'T GO INTO THE AREA OF HELPING NASCAR? "I've never really thought about that. My initial thought about it though is that the way NASCAR has run their program, especially over the last 12 months, has been including the current drivers. We have an open forum every weekend -- or anyday that we decide we want to call NASCAR -- that they can get direct information from current drivers. I think they do a pretty good job of taking that information and understanding that sometimes we have competition in mind and sometimes we have safety in mind. They're separate issues. I feel like the way they run their program today offers the current drivers and open forum and I think that's better than having an older driver or a retired driver in a permanent situation. I think it gives them immediate, current information that they can use for our benefit and their benefit as well."

NASCAR DIDN'T RECOMMEND MANY CHANGES AT THIS TIME. ARE YOU SATISFIED WITH THAT? "I disagree with you on that. Surely today they didn't come out and say that this is what you need to do better and this is what you need to do better and this was wrong. But what they have done through the investigation, as it's gone on, is they have changed some of their inspection policies and they have come around and given ideas about belt locations and different ideas on belts. They have been proponents of the HANS system or a head and neck restraint system, not necessarily the HANS system. They've been proponents of building better seats, so it is true that today they didn't come out and say, 'Here are the things we need to be doing that we aren't doing now,' but they have over the last -- really I want to say 12 months -- but especially the last five months, bit by bit, given us information and made themselves available so that we can make our cars better. There have been a lot of changes inside of our race cars since the Daytona 500 that most people don't know about and, even though they haven't been rule changes, they've been recommendations based on the experience that they've been gathering."

THEY SAID THERE WAS SOME VARIATION IN THE WAY DALE EARNHARDT SET HIS SEAT BELTS UP. DOES THAT GIVE YOU PAUSE ABOUT YOUR BELTS? "Well, there are certainly a lot of variations in how seat belts are mounted. If you really walk through the Winston Cup garage and look, you see a lot of different ways of doing it and I'm sure all of them are right in some situations and some of them are wrong in others, so what we've tried to do is look at practical experience -- which is what Dale Earnhardt was doing as well. In addition to that, through the sled testing that we've watched and been a part of, we've paid attention to belts. We've been aware of the belt situation since Daytona. Before Daytona, it came to our attention that our belt locations were wrong as well. We changed them before Daytona during the winter, so it's a continuing effort. It certainly makes me look even harder at the belts and where the belts are mounted and how they're mounted. I believe today that my belts, with the exception of we haven't incorporated a six-point harness yet, but with the exception of that, I believe my belts are wonderful. But Dale Earnhardt believed the same thing, so we have to use some science and go do some studying and NASCAR is gonna do a lot of that to confirm they are what they need to be."

**JACK ROUSH, Car Owner -- Roush Racing** -- HAVE YOU TALKED ABOUT DOING ANYTHING WITH THE FRONT END OF YOUR CARS, LIKE THE COMPOSITE BUMPER? "I don't have any plans in the immediate future to put Humpy Bumpers or any other device on our cars. We are open and anxious to participate in additional sled tests and additional analysis to try to look at the various things that might be done to see if there would be a beneficial effect. The one thing you must do once you see the prospect of something that could be beneficial, you must go through a fairly exhaustive process to say, 'Alright, this is different, this

could be better, under what circumstances, how many circumstances, and how much worse could it be in those situations.' That can't be taken lightly and it can't be done too quickly. I know in the meeting we had this morning with the drivers and some of the owners with the NASCAR folks and got the preview of this presentation, a question was asked by one of the drivers, 'Is there a plan now to come back and make changes in these front ends to make them softer so they will absorb more?' And what the opinion was of the experts that participated in this research and in the conclusions that were being presented -- some of which we being presented and some of which weren't -- but with that question he said, 'Well, the thing that would have been helpful here was for the car to have been stiffer in the direction where it collapsed and the number of g's that the passenger compartment would have seen would have been less if the car had been stiffer.' But for many potential, predictable accidents that could occur, the stiffer car would be worse and would result in more injury. The thing that is real easy to overlook is the fact that this chassis and these safety systems that we have in these cars have resulted from over 50 years of fairly continuous and concerted work by people who maybe didn't do analysis beforehand, but had a chance to look at an untold number of accidents and all kinds of scenarios and that has resulted in placing the bars and mounting the seats and locating the driver and mounting the steering wheel and all of these other things so the driver wouldn't have the prospect of being injured the next time that particular wreck occurred. So, if you go back and change that for one reason, you've got to do a really exhaustive look at all of the history and all of the other possibilities so you don't create a scenario that has a worse consequence than the one you're trying to solve. So, as far as what the Humpy Bumper is and what any other, I'm gonna say knee-jerk thing that somebody might come up with that could be beneficial for one scenario, I stand behind and beside and very much with NASCAR -- being proud of the cars we have and anxious to see them continually improve as they have improved over the last 50 years to get them where they are today."

**BURTON CONTINUED** -- DOES THIS BRING ANY KIND OF CLOSURE? "I think today's example of an exhausted effort to figure out what happened and then to maybe perhaps more importantly figure out how to prevent this or another fatality from happening again, shows the willingness of NASCAR to do the right thing. That has been questioned by a lot of people. I know the authorities of NASCAR have taken that very seriously. They want the competitors to understand and they want the fans and the media and everyone involved to understand that they do car about safety. I believe that Mike Helton and Gary Nelson and everybody at NASCAR wants it to be as safe as possible for every driver and to the fans alike. So I think it shows the skeptics that they are serious about it and I think that's the strongest statement that it's made, more so than the result of the study."

**ROUSH CONTINUED** -- "As far as closure is concerned, over the years there have been, unfortunately, many drivers seriously injured and a number that have been killed. Out of each of those tragedies that has resulted from somebody trying to make a living doing the thing that they like to do...out of their death or their injury comes a bit of information or something that will benefit the folks that come down the road. Dale Earnhardt's accident is over. He was unfortunately killed. I had conversation today with a number of people within the teams about what had happened with the car and through the accident. There is no doubt in my mind that by his death that we have accelerated the analysis and accelerated the improvements to the cars probably four years. That's part of his legacy, that the thing that he was doing when he was out there racing his car with great enthusiasm, which resulted in his death, will result in the prospects for survivability for additional drivers coming down the road. I think if Dale looked down from wherever he is and saw that, that he would find his life added additional meaning that it might not have had if he had gone full term and retired and then left the three or four years that he's given back to some of the drivers who might have otherwise been hurt in the timeframe from where we were in February to where we are today."

**WHY AREN'T THE CRASH BOXES SOMETHING THAT COULD BE PUT IN CARS THIS WEEKEND?**

"My understanding is that NASCAR is not sure about the technology. They're not sure that the technology that is available will do all of the things that they would like to have done without having some consequence or some side effect, some detriment, to the car or to the systems in the car that could upset competition. They obviously need to be reliable and they need to be consistent. They need to be something that will provide meaningful and accurate levels of data for the foreseeable future, and my understanding was they weren't sure they had that technology defined yet."

**SO THEY COULDN'T JUST USE THE SAME TYPE OF SYSTEM CART HAS?** "I'm not familiar with what CART has today and they didn't comment on it, so I can't respond to that. The cars are obviously different and I suspect, not being familiar with the CART system, that the systems wouldn't tailor ideally to what we have. I don't know that that's true."

**THE CRASH BOXES IN THE IROC CARS ARE POWERED BY NINE-VOLT BATTERIES AND THEY'RE PASSIVE RECORDERS. HOW COULD THAT SYSTEM AFFECT A MECHANICAL CARBURETOR AND MECHANICAL DISTRIBUTOR LIKE YOU GUYS HAVE?** "I can only tell you what NASCAR said today. My understanding from their comments was they weren't sure that the technology that was available was ideal for our situation. I respect that from an outsiders point of view and I am an outsider on that because I'm not familiar with what's in the IROC cars or in the CART cars. It would appear to me that there ought to be a system that we could put in there that could give us some data that we could tune up later, but NASCAR said they didn't feel that was true."

**BURTON CONTINUED -- COMMENTS ON CRASH BOXES?** "They are coming. We will have them next year and I'm sure they're not sitting on the Walmart shelf somewhere. I'm sure at some point someone has to build these things. I'm sure they're not in inventory somewhere. I'm sure there are a lot of things that go into putting those boxes in the cars rather than just bolting them in the car. I'm sure it's not as simple as that, so it is true that we won't have them from now until Atlanta, but at Daytona we will and I think that's a step in the right direction."

**ONE OF THE POINTS MADE WAS THAT YOU GUYS ARE GOING TO HAVE A TRAVELING PHYSICIAN WITH YOU. IS THAT SOMETHING YOU LOOK FORWARD TO?** "I think you ought to be careful in saying that we're gonna have a traveling physician that goes with us. I don't think that's what Mike said. I think what he said was that we would have a liaison from the drivers to the medical staff. I'm not sure he said it would be a medical doctor. It may very well be a person that understands both sides of the picture but is not a doctor. I don't know who that is, but I think it's wrong to assume it will be a doctor. Certainly, from a driver's standpoint having someone that is familiar with our background, that does understand the things we go through every week and the crew members go through every week, can't be wrong. Someone that's there to make sure that everything is handled properly is, in my opinion, a great thing. I think it's very positive and I'm glad they did it. It certainly can't be wrong."

**ROUSH CONTINUED --** "From an owners point of view, one of the things I've had conversations with Mike and Gary about, and for that matter Bill as well, over a period of time is looking at the level of medical staffs and capabilities that we've got in all the various markets and situations that we go into. On one hand, you could make a case and we've gotten some criticism as a NASCAR community for not carrying our own expert doctors with us. But from NASCAR's point of view and from my point of view, when you take a look at it and you go into Michigan last week, we needed to have somebody that was there that knew specifically where the doctors were and where the best equipment was for any one of hundreds of different scenarios where a driver or injured crewman would need some help. So, that really needs to be somebody on the ground. But, at the same time,

that we've had discussions about why it makes sense to continue doing what we've been doing, it was my position and has been my position -- and I doubt that I'm the only owner that has taken this position -- that if we had somebody, and I prefer that it is a doctor and my understanding is that it will be a doctor from the discussions I had with Mike, but to have that person be very, very familiar with -- if Jeff had a vertebrae that was hurt before or had an injury that could be complicated by something that's going on -- anything that could be known by Jeff's medical past, to present and interact with the people that were gonna give him attention if he was injured would be timely and save precious minutes. NASCAR recognizes that and a number of other people, not just drivers, have encouraged it."

**IT WAS ALSO MENTIONED THERE WOULD BE SOMEBODY TO ESTABLISH PROCEDURES AS FAR AS ACCIDENT INVESTIGATIONS IN THE FUTURE. WHAT IS YOUR THOUGHT ON THAT?**  
"My take on that, and I also had conversation with NASCAR about the way this investigation and, particularly, all the fallout and criticisms from the skeptics and the feeding frenzy that went around this accident and this horrible loss that we've had, NASCAR needed somebody to be point for the technical side, which is Gary, and the operators for the sponsors to coordinate the information in a timely manner that satisfied the needs of the working NASCAR media and also the national press corps and they didn't have that. There was not a way in where they could get the information that they needed in a timely manner and get it out so it was concise and it was clear. So, NASCAR needs to have somebody not only to just deal with damage control, but to get as much information as is known out as soon as possible to the media so that they can satisfy the interested folks that want to read about it and know what's happened. They weren't prepared to do that this time. This thing overwhelmed them and they want to come back and have somebody that will be able to understand what the media needs and to be able to extract from all the different activities that are involved as much information as is accurate and complete at any given time."

**BURTON CONTINUED** -- "There's not much more I can add to that other than to say that the more people NASCAR has on staff -- adding people doesn't necessarily help a problem -- but having a designated person that does a designated job certainly makes things more efficient. Efficiency and compiling the information and understanding the information as quickly as possible, helps prevent the next injury as quickly as possible. I'm proud of them for doing it."

**ROUSH CONTINUED** -- "One of the things that happened, obviously, is that when they went through the accident it became clear that nobody had properly interviewed everybody that had been in contact with the car or with the effort to extricate Dale from the car. As a result of that, the one fella that thought he had seen the seat belt was not broke, he wasn't interviewed and they didn't understand that he had that perspective. It was wrong. The things he said were wrong and what he had seen was not what he thought he had seen, but they weren't able to have the dialogue and understand that before he went public with something that really created a firestorm over something that was not right."

**BURTON CONTINUED** -- **ARE WE SEEING THE EVOLUTION OF NASCAR RIGHT NOW?** "I agree with NASCAR when they say that they've been evolving for the last 50 years. I agree with that. They've made changes as problems have prevented themselves. They've worked really hard to make it as safe as possible and as safe as they knew how to make it. The difference today is the availability of technology and the willingness of NASCAR to go and grab that technology and use it to their benefit. So, in some ways, yes it is an evolution, but in other ways it's just an adaptation to what they've been doing. I applaud them 100 percent for going out and finding technology and figuring a way to expedite the process, rather than waiting for something to happen and then go circulate it, or figure out what could happen and then fix it before it happens. That's the best process and it appears to me that's what they want to do and that's where they're headed. Yes, it is an evolution but I think it's an adaptation of the evolution."

**ROUSH CONTINUED** -- "From my point of view, as NASCAR goes outside the region of the southeastern United States and has contact with folks that haven't grown up with the sport, there is a necessity to provide greater explanations and to conduct their business and public relations affairs more consistently with the way businesses and sport and industry of this size does it throughout the rest of our society and they're getting lined up to do that. I applaud it."

**BURTON CONTINUED** -- WHAT ABOUT NASCAR ADDRESSING THE STYLE OF RACING AT DAYTONA AND TALLADEGA? IS THAT COMING TOO? "I don't know what's coming with Daytona and Talladega. Certainly, it's an animal. You can't take restrictor plates off and send us on our way because we go way too fast. When you put restrictor plates on us, we get bunched up. It's a difficult fix. It's hard to know how to fix it. I think the majority of the drivers don't like the way it is now, but you know what, we didn't like the way it was five years ago either. So, restrictor plate racing is like paying taxes, you hate to do it but you have to. It creates a set of problems, but there are also benefits from it. I don't know what the answer is. If I did, I'd be in Daytona expressing myself. It's a very complicated issue. Jack and I have talked a lot about it, but it's just not an easy fix."

**ROUSH CONTINUED** -- "You look at various race tracks and they have personalities. The Daytona race track is one of the oldest race tracks that we go to. The tires have changed, the cars have changed. There is the potential to not just change the powertrain formats and the car formats, but to also change the race tracks. NASCAR has been reluctant to do that. There is the potential only to carry some barriers that might be helpful. There is the prospect of doing some things that would cause the drivers to slow down and not to have to run wide open around the race tracks. I made the suggestion that they might put chicanes in the backstretch to slow them down, so you would have to brake and accelerate and wouldn't have these speeds that threaten to have the cars fly out of the race track. But certainly NASCAR, I'm sure, is looking at the race tracks for things that they could do. We're gonna go back to, I think Talladega, the Monday and Tuesday after the Bristol race and there are gonna be considerations of things that would allow the cars to compete effectively on the Daytona and Talladega tracks and not get as solidified as balls as they do with many cars in the draft. They're wanting to separate them and I think they may have some ideas to improve on that for Daytona. It's an ongoing analysis by NASCAR. They are sensitive to the criticism they get for the way these tracks work. I'm not thrilled to go back to Daytona and Talladega. If we went to those races and that's all we did 35 times a year, I wouldn't be involved in Winston Cup racing. I don't find that as interesting, nor am I excited about the prospect of the drivers being caught up in somebody else's problem continually and not being able to keep themselves out of harm's way. But four times a year that's what we're doing now until we can figure out a system for the car or for the track that will separate the cars and let it be more like some of the other tracks we go to."