



AFTER A ROUGH START, THE BEST HAS YET TO COME

Flying to Montreal a week ahead of the NASCAR Canadian Tire Series race on August 4th, I fully anticipated having enough time to get accustomed to a new car and team prior to my first-ever race in NASCAR. What happened, however, was not the case.

Though I had been persuaded to find a solid team that would allow me to gain the experience I needed and to work under optimum conditions, I encountered, instead, major obstacles. They started on my first time out with the car on the small St. Eustache track, when I discovered technical difficulties. Just four laps into the test, we had to stop because of a differential problem.

Five days later, and just one day prior to the race, the car was still not ready for the 50-minute test on the Gilles Villeneuve track. Not only was I unable to familiarize myself with the track but, once again, the car. Team owner and driver, Richard Durivage, was himself unable to participate in this test due to mechanical difficulties.

Eventually, I was able to participate in the second and last test on the GV track. But that was not to be for long. After just two rough laps, the clutch gave out. All in all, it was following just two unfortunate laps, that I headed for the qualifying trials — themselves reduced to just three laps due to a gaping hole that had formed on the track!

Despite the challenge of having to discover both the car and the track while qualifying, I did my best and managed to rank 25th, having been slapped with a penalty of 40 seconds. Brake problems had forced me to cut the chicane causing a security risk.

From this second-to-last position, I launched into the race on Saturday morning, August 4th, to become the first Frenchman in NASCAR in over thirty years. Two laps later, after passing four cars, the motor gave out to bring to a close the worst racing weekend of my career, mechanically speaking.

Despite all that, I came away with memories of a week rich in experience and making valuable contacts that are likely to help me return to the track, reaching higher and stronger. I am currently holding discussions with the one of the better NASCAR Canadian Series teams, and will have further details to release on a team that will allow me to gain maximum experience in preparing for my entry into NASCAR Busch next year.

Apart from all the mechanical problems. I fully enjoyed the enthusiastic ambiance during that August 4th weekend in Montreal. As it was also the grand debut of the NASCAR Busch Series debut in Canada, NASCAR bigwigs were on hand and offered positive feedback on the participation of a French driver. While there, I was able to make contact with team owners and others who will assist me to race in better circumstances. This is now my principal objective in the days ahead. I intend to make the most of the numerous, valuable contacts I made to work towards a comeback with a team that will enable me to gain the experience I need and provide me with the opportunity to demonstrate how well I can perform, something I was unable to do during this first-time experience in NASCAR.

The frustration of being able to complete but a few laps at Gilles Villeneuve has in no way diminished my motivation, and I am more determined than ever to live out my American dream of participating in NASCAR.

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