



**NASCAR SPRINT CUP SERIES
ORAL-B USA 500
ATLANTA MOTOR SPEEDWAY
TEAM CHEVY DRIVER PRESS CONFERENCE TRANSCRIPT
AUGUST 29, 2014**

TONY STEWART, NO. 14 BASS PRO SHOPS/MOBIL 1 CHEVROLET SS AND BRETT FROOD, EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT OF STEWART-HAAS RACING, met with members of the media at Atlanta Motor Speedway. Full Transcript

THE MODERATOR: Good morning. I'm director of communication for Stewart-Haas Racing. Up here is Tony Stewart, driver/owner of Stewart-Haas Racing, and Brett Frood, executive vice president of Stewart-Haas Racing.

Tony has prepared some remarks. We'll let him read those.

TONY STEWART: Thanks.

This has been one of the toughest tragedies I've ever had to deal with both professionally and personally. This is something that will definitely affect my life forever. This is a sadness and a pain that I hope no one ever has to experience in their life.

With that being said, I know that the pain and the mourning that Kevin Ward's family and friends are experiencing is something that I can't possibly imagine.

I want Kevin's father, Kevin Sr., and his mother Pam, and his sisters Christi, Kayla, Katelyn, to know that every day I'm thinking about them and praying for them.

The racing community is a large family, as you guys know. Everyone's saddened with this tragedy.

I want to thank all my friends and family for their support through this tough emotional time, and the support from the NASCAR community, my partners, all of our employees, it's been overwhelming.

I've taken the last couple weeks off out of respect for Kevin and his family, and also to cope with the accident in my own way. It's given me the time to think about life and how easy it is to take it for granted.

I miss my team, my teammates. I miss being back in the racecar. I think being back in the car this week with my racing family will help me get through this difficult time.

I also understand that all of you have many questions and want a lot of answers, however I need to respect the ongoing investigation process and cannot answer and address the questions at this time. Emotionally I'm not sure if I could answer them anyway.

We're here to race this weekend, and I appreciate your respect. There will be a day when I can sit here and answer the questions. Thank you.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you, Tony.

Again, Brett Froad, executive vice president of Stewart-Haas Racing, will be available to take a handful of questions.

Q. Brett, NASCAR issued a statement yesterday that Tony had received all necessary clearances to race. What was the process of going through clearances? What approvals did he need?

BRETT FROOD: Well, as you all know, when a driver's out of the car, there is that process. I'm not going to get into the medical side of it, but I will say we've been in close contact with them throughout the process, have gotten from them what he needed to get back in the car right now.

Q. The investigation as we understand is still open. Was there any thought to not having Tony race until it was closed? Why now?

BRETT FROOD: Well, I think for Tony, it's all about this healing process. That's part of why he's in the car.

Besides his mom, his dad, his sister, his niece and nephew, his family is here, it's at this racetrack. It's part of the healing process of being with his family that he's been with since 1999, knowing that these people are going to help him get through this. I think that's one side of it.

The other side of it is he's a racer. We have 270 employees. I think him putting a helmet on will help him cope with this situation.

Q. Brett, respecting the process, the investigation, knowing there's things you can't comment on, are you able to say whether you know whether Tony has a clear picture in his own mind of what happened that second or two that night?

BRETT FROOD: I am not going to comment on the incident itself. It was a tragic accident. Right now the focus is to be on Tony and the car this weekend and how he's going to get through this.

Q. The fact that Tony is racing this weekend, should we read anything into that about what you know about the investigation and where it's at in the process?

BRETT FROOD: No. I mean, we've really been respecting the process, as Tony said, and the

investigation. Him being in the racecar right now is about him getting through what has been a very emotional two weeks, what his next step is in coping with this.

There's been a great deal of empathy and sympathy for that family and what they're going through. For Tony, it's just been extremely emotional. This is what is going to help him.

Q. Can you talk about where Tony is at emotionally right now to step into the car? Was it 100% his choice not to race the last couple of weeks, without the involvement of the sanctioning body that we will hear from next?

BRETT FROOD: I'll address the latter first. Yes, the decision to be in the car is 100% Tony's.

Q. Please define his emotional stage at this point. A very fragile Tony Stewart at this point.

BRETT FROOD: You just saw Tony. It's been a difficult two weeks. But Tony is ready to be in the racecar. He wouldn't be here if he wasn't.

Q. Brett, you've worked for Tony for a long time. You've seen him in ways we have not. How would you characterize his preparation for this and what you think he'll experience as he gets back in the car?

BRETT FROOD: I think it's going to be very overwhelming being in that garage today. He's going to feel an awful lot of support. As I just mentioned, this is his family. It's the crew members, it's the officials, it's the drivers. It's his family that he's been with since 1999. This is going to be part of that process for him. I believe it's going to be an overwhelming process, this weekend.

That being said, Tony Stewart is a racecar driver. He's been a racecar driver for the past 35 years. When he puts that helmet on in practice, I'm quite convinced he'll be ready to race the car, he'll be able to separate the two.

Q. Brett, this obviously is a tremendous tragedy. Obviously in the sport of racing, these guys learn to deal with that part of the sport. Why do you think this has hit Tony so hard?

BRETT FROOD: Because he was involved in an accident and a young man died. I can't imagine what he's going through. I can't imagine what the kid's parents are going through.

It's something, as Tony said, that he hopes no one in this room or certainly anywhere will ever have to go through. He was involved in a tragic accident.

Q. I noticed Tony mentioned Kevin Ward's family members by name. Has he reached out to them personally at all?

BRETT FROOD: Tony has sent the family flowers and a card around the services. Besides that he's been very respectful of them and their time to grieve.

I do know that it will be very important, it's important for Tony, to spend time with the family. I do believe that will happen in the appropriate time.

Q. Obviously it's an emotional time. Internally how do you deal with it as an organization, the prep work? Let's face it, it's not an ordinary weekend that all of you are dealing with.

BRETT FROOD: We've got 270 employees back in Kannapolis working hard. Tony has three other team members. These are folks that are at Stewart-Haas because they believe in the leadership, they believe in the ownership, believe in the folks that we have surrounding them, and we believe in them.

So for them, I think their focus has been undeterred over the last several weeks. They're obviously really excited to have Tony back in the car, that leader, the guy they believe in. So I think the focus will be there this weekend from those guys. We should be good.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you very much for your time. We certainly appreciate it.