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THE DB COLUMN

My personal views on the world of motorsport.

THE DB COLUMN

Taking positives from Mid-Ohio.

Another second place at Mid-Ohio for round six of the American Le Mans Series bagged more valuable points for the Patrón Highcroft team last weekend but, at one stage, we were in a promising position to challenge for the race lead.

My team-mate Scott Sharp had a great stint and held the gap to the de Ferran car at nine seconds, which was no panic, but he unfortunately got involved in an accident while navigating traffic. It caused quite a lot of damage to the front left side of the car and a large hole in the floor tray that cost us a significant amount in downforce – around 15 per cent - with an aero balance shift forwards of three per cent. As a result, we also had trouble getting heat into the tyres. With competition as close as the ALMS, any loss of downforce means you're in real trouble.

When I was out there, I was driving as hard as I could and I was setting virtually the same lap times as Gil with a car that was badly damaged. That's a sign that, if I had the car underneath me, we probably could have won. It just goes to show that to win races you have to be perfect all the way through the race.

Qualifying was extremely close, with just six-hundredths of a second between the Patrón Highcroft and de Ferran Acuras. Gil put a great lap together. I know how hard I was pushing and Gil is always very strong at Mid-Ohio. He's often got pole there, so to be that close to him was a good sign and I felt confident that we had a good race car. Unfortunately, with the damage, we weren't able to fight de Ferran for the win as much as we would have liked, but we still got points and learnt a lot from the weekend.

With back-to-back races, we head to Elkhart Lake and Road America this weekend to put it all together and aim for the win that we so desperately need.

Although we've had some tough races, I think the team has actually got stronger as a result. With just four races left, we really need to be on top of our game. All of the experiences we have gone through in the last few races, in a strange way, are helping us to prepare to attack the last few rounds with everything we've got.

We don't have to change too much for Road America. We just need to keep doing what we are doing and improving in some minor areas and we should be really strong.

This will be the first track where we run the car with the least amount of downforce. We've not been able to test the car with that set-up, so we head there hoping we've come with the right balance. We've made some changes in different areas of the car to suit Road America and, obviously, we have good knowledge from this track in the P2 car. That data, combined with what we know from the P1 car, will hopefully give us a good set-up and a fast, reliable, car all the way through the race.

Before Mid-Ohio, I got together with Racers Who Care, a group of drivers who visit different parts of the community to help under-privileged children who have a variety of difficulties. Some have been homeless, abused or have a disability - kids who have a tough life.



American Lemans Series.
7-9 August, 2009. Acura
Sports Car Challenge. Mid
Ohio Sports car Course.

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It was a great opportunity that arose because we flew out early for the Mid-Ohio round to visit the Honda R&D centre, which was another amazing experience. It gave me the chance to use a spare morning to do something worthwhile to support Racers Who Care.

I went to the Buckeye Ranch at Grove City in Columbus to give a talk to a group of young people who had earned the privilege to listen to guest presentations due to their good behaviour.

I slightly modified a presentation I give when working with young karters and racing drivers through my Brabham Performance Clinic as, for me, the principles in life are very much the same no matter who you are. Whatever we do with the tools we are given, our thoughts, feelings, emotions and desires; channelled in the right way these tools can help us in many ways.

For me, it's about highlighting those areas, the choices we make in life and the resulting outcome. I was worried that I would lose their attention during the 40-minute presentation, but I got their full focus - I even stayed on to answer questions, so it went really well. It was a great thing for me to do and the feedback I have received so far is that the kids enjoyed it. Some of them had never even seen a race car before, so showing them pictures of the cars I drive really captured their attention.

It's definitely something I'd like to do again; it's just a question of when, not if. It was a great experience I'd like to repeat.

For more information on Racers Who Care visit www.racerswhocare.org

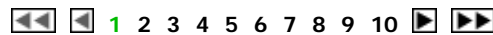
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