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Joel Miller's blog: A challenging but rewarding race

Infineon Raceway / August 23, 2010 - Race day finally arrived at Sonoma. It was something that



I had worked hard to achieve and I took a few minutes in the morning to savor the day ahead. Bryan Herta Autosport had done a great job in helping me to get re-acclimated with an Indy Lights car and now it was up to me.

I was looking forward to getting back out on track after a good night's rest and time to look over some notes. Another chilly morning greeted us when we arrived at the track. We had made a few changes to the car since qualifying but the biggest was an engine change. That meant I had my work cut out for me as we would now have to start from the back of the grid.

At 9:40 a.m. we took to the track for the quick 20-minute warm-up session. Straight away the changes made to the car felt good. I had much more confidence through the high-speed sections. The car was just a little bit loose though so we decided to pit for a change midway through

the session.

My engineer did a quick damper adjustment, and I went back out. At this point in the session I was running P6. I had time for three flying laps and I put two identical laps together that moved me toward the top of the charts at P2! Things were beginning to come together as I was within a couple hundredths of a second to J.K. Vernay in P1. I was happy with the changes made and both my engineer and I thought we had a pretty balanced racecar capable of coming from the back of the field.

I was making sure that I was well-hydrated leading up to the race, as the weather had become a lot warmer than the previous days. Also, getting something quick to eat would be key for strength in the race so a simple PB&J was on the menu; something light and simple was all I needed.

Seeing the whole field in front of me on the grid, it looked to be a hard task ahead but the plan was to pick them off one at a time. The race was 40 laps and I wasn't planning on wasting any time. It was straight to work once the green flag flew and I managed to get past two cars on the opening lap. Early on, I maintained the gap to the cars right ahead but then I started developing some understeer issues.



I began using the tools in the car (front roll bar and brake bias) to help the situation. Unfortunately, the issue only decreased by a small amount using these. When this happens, it is time to try and drive around the problem and to figure out a way to run as fast a pace as you can given the balance issue.

It was quite strange that such an understeer developed so quickly compared to the morning session – but then again, the temperature had risen a lot since the warm-up. In the end, keeping my nose clean resulted in a top-10 finish of ninth for my second-ever Indy Lights race. Now I can't wait for the next one and I am more motivated than ever.

I have to say thank you to Bryan Herta, Steve Newey and everybody at BHA for their help in getting me up to speed in the car, and to my engineer Ian Brown for his hard work. I hope to have the chance to work with him again and produce the finish we know we can achieve at the front.

My sponsors this weekend were a terrific group – Doug Mockett & Company, Lamborghini Travels, Blanco Basura Clothing, Valli Construction and Paradise Landscape. Without them, none of this would have been possible and, once again, I would like to thank them for their support. Also, it was great to see Doug Mockett run his historic Wolf chassis F1 car in the vintage race this weekend! It was very cool to watch cars race from that time.

The new goal now is toward next year and getting a full-season drive. I know I can run at the front, which I showed in the warm-up. I will be working extremely hard to accomplish this goal and will not give up!

I hope everybody enjoyed an insight into my weekend. Thank you for following along, and thanks to *Racer* for letting me tell my story. For future updates, please visit my website: www.joellmilleracing.com.

Joel