



Speedway Classic 7.8.25

Transcript from today's media availabilities at Bristol Motor Speedway, with executives discussing the progress of field construction for the MLB Speedway Classic.

- **Bristol Motor Speedway:** Jerry Caldwell, President
- **Speedway Motorsports:** Steve Swift, SVP, Operations and Development
- **Brightview:** Murray Cook, MLB Field & Stadium Consultant

JERRY CALDWELL

Are you pleased with the progress?

It's looking great out there, it's coming together. You can kind of see this baseball field growing up out of the center of the racetrack. And it's really neat to see these progressive videos that we have that are really commemorating this special event. History will be made in August and we are thrilled to be able to pull all that together.

Now that the turf is going down, it actually looks like a field. Does it feel more real?

You know, this has been years in the making. We've been talking about this for really, three or four years now, and being able to see all of this come together. The buzz in the infield and around the facility and in the community is something for us all to get excited about. And what's been the biggest challenge in the last few weeks, it's just staying on schedule. You know, there's tons and tons of planning, but putting on these big events are challenging, and it's a lot of work. We've got an amazing team here at Bristol and Speedway Motorsports and with Major League Baseball and all of their vendors, it's really just staying on schedule.

What do you see as the next big challenge?

It will just be continuing to get ready. This is like preparing for Christmas morning, as I say, and this is part of the process. So now that the field is going down, we'll start dressing everything up. This is kind of the construction work, the bones of the facility, and then we'll start putting the window dressings on. Now, after this, you're going pretty much from the frying pan into the fire, because then you've got to turn everything around, build your walls, and get ready for the race. That's right, we've got NASCAR racing coming up with the Playoffs in September, so it'll be a busy next couple of months around here, but it's what we do. We put on big events. It's a Big

League Year at Bristol Motor Speedway. We all knew this was coming, and we're prepared for it, and it's going to be a lot of fun.

Now, that leads me into the next question. We've done football, we've done concerts, baseball's here. What's next?

Who knows? There have been lots of conversations. We'll see what shakes out. But with the team here at Bristol and Speedway Motorsports, we're open to conversations and welcome the next big thing.

How has interest been in ticket sales?

So far, it's been great. Yeah, a lot of lot of interest. A tremendous response from baseball fans, NASCAR fans in the community. So we're really thrilled. We're looking forward to setting a record. We'll see what that record is going to be on August 2nd, but we'll be setting a record.

What do you think a thing like this, an event like this, will do for Bristol or the Tri-Cities area?

You know, I think any time we can showcase our region, it's a good thing for us. It's a good thing to put us on a national and international spotlight. I think this region shows really well. The people here are so welcoming and accommodating to not only the sanctioning body in Major League Baseball, they've been great to work with. This is only possible because of the cooperation of the local municipalities in the state of Tennessee and Commonwealth of Virginia, but it also allows people to come check this area out. And we've heard story after story of people coming to visit and then they want to move here, whenever they spend a little bit of time in this region.

How satisfying is it when you guys are able to pull off an event like this that a lot of people would think, well, that's going to be impossible?

Well, I love it. I love being able to showcase this facility, but also I've got such faith and confidence in the team that we have here at Bristol and Speedway Motorsports, it's really fun to see them shine, to see them be put on a big national stage and show what we can do. These events are hard. They're hard to put on, but our team has proven that we're able to do that. And when you bring in a world class partner like Major League Baseball and their vendors, it really allows us all to shine together.

And then not only do you have a lot of local media attention, but now you're dealing with national news outlets like NBC, News, FOX and ESPN. How is that different for you guys?

Well, we've done it before, and thrilled to be able to do it again to help put Bristol Motor Speedway and this region on an international stage with the major players out there. That's where Bristol deserves to be. We are one of the largest spectator facilities in the country, and while we're known for our NASCAR racing, our core business. We love being able to showcase on these other stages.

MURRAY COOK

How are things going so far?

It's Progressing. We're putting turf down today. It's going real well. We are two and a half to three weeks into it, and have made some great progress. And in all areas, I think, from not only the field of play, but the seating bowl structures, we've got our foul poles in. So we are real happy where we are. Everybody's working on a tight schedule.

Are things progressing on schedule?

Absolutely. Yeah. I think in some cases we may be a little ahead of schedule, and some places a little bit behind. So I think we're pretty much even now that the turf's going down. So, does it really kind of feel real now? Yeah, it does. It's always great to see the green side up, and that's where we are today. You know, yesterday we put down some, and today we're going to finish up quite a bit, and hopefully by the end of the week, it'll all be green.

What's been the biggest challenge so far?

Well, obviously, we've been working straight through and some really hot days. So that's been fun. You know, putting the guys to work is, you know, the long days and hours that's been challenging. But really and truly, the whole project's been going really smoothly. We are really happy with the progress.

How would you say this compares to the other projects you've done?

It's bigger, you know, from doing the Stadium in London. It's a similar type of a build to what we did at Queen Elizabeth Stadium, where we have to build it in 18 days, the whole ballpark, and we're using a lot of the same materials and products that we have at this ballpark, the same fencing system that actually is a UK fencing system that we brought over here and are installing here for this fencing system. So a lot of similarities. Is just bigger, from 4,000 tons of gravel to close to 18,000 tons of gravel now. So it's just a bigger project.

And I know you said the field area is a lot bigger than it was for the battle at Bristol. How do these two projects really compare?

Well, the Battle at Bristol, I really wasn't involved with that one. So that was our astro turf friends. And BMS kind of ran with that project, and they did, from what I hear, a great job with it. And some of the guys on the crew with the Astro Turf were actually here for that game as well. This is a particular turf that's used in Major League Baseball. So, it's very specific to baseball.

What is this turf?

This particular turf is called the Diamond Series. Asher Turf Products is a turf that's used by the Toronto Blue Jays. Currently, there's only five major league ballparks that have synthetic turf, the other four, another vendor. But Asher Turf is an official sponsor of MLB, and they want to be a big part of this. And they brought out the big team, and they're out there putting it all out.

What's the next big challenge?

Well, I think over the next, you know, couple weeks, and we start getting into details, we got to tighten up all our clay areas. So once, once the turf goes down, hopefully Mother Nature will cooperate with us, so we can get our clays in where they to be placed, properly. Build the

mounds, bullpens, home plates, and the net part is important, and then tying everything together, from the seating bowl structure and the dugouts. And of course, we've got great partners there with Bam and Populous, who are right there with us and been with us in a lot of projects around some great vendors, local guys we've used with the Baker Construction, and you know, they've they're doing a great job for us and the Chattanooga tent companies putting up all our tents, so you have a lot of local vendors.

Now that you see the turf going down, do you feel like it's real now?

It is. It's really cool. I mean, I'm from Roanoke (Virginia), and been talking about this site, potentially, since 2017 when we first brought it up, you know, as an idea. And it was after the Battle of Bristol in 2016. And obviously the challenge was, you know, the dimensions and making sure a baseball field, regulation baseball field, could fit in the venue. And we do some tweaking. As you know, we have to take out some pit walls and to remove half a building, and some signs here and there, and some lights, and, you know, tweak it over just enough towards the towards the west facing center field to ensure we have a ballpark that meets all the standards. Colossus TV is there in foul territory, so we came up with solutions, and we're really excited about seeing it happen. I know there's a race coming up just a few weeks after the game. It's going to take a lot of people breaking things down.

Are you going to be involved in the teardown before the race? And are any of the the turf, or anything else going to be able to be reused somewhere else?

Yeah, there's a lot of discussion around the turf being reused in the future at other places, along with the clay and other things, I know the MLB is looking at different options there. I also am aware that, you know, Steve Swift's pretty busy planning for the bump out, right? So, I mean, he's got to get his walls back up and hang around run the pit crew, and you know, they've got a great team there to put all that together, but we'll be obviously packing everything up right getting out as soon as we can, so we give them time to get everything back together before the race in September.

STEVE SWIFT

Is it really starting to feel like it's really happening?

It is. It's pretty wild to get a better vantage point. So when you go to the suite level up on the roof and look down at the track, you know what was a racetrack has now become a baseball field, and you can kind of see that. You can kind of see that process with the field starting with the stone, and then naturally, the walls going up and things of that nature. So the turf is like the shiny Penny, it's the last piece of the puzzle that kind of really brings it to a field, instead of just seeing stone down there.

What's been the biggest challenge so far?

You know, it's been, again, going back to that planning process, and what MLB and the teams that they brought in to really plan this thing. When you go through the planning process and you have a lot of conversations, it makes this process just so much easier. So there's not been

any big hiccups, not big changes that have happened. You know, the first week when we started putting stone down, we had a little bit of rain, but those rains have subsided, and we've had the heat now that's kind of came upon us. But you can work in sunshine, and it keeps us from having all that. So there's not really been any big hiccups. It goes back to like I said earlier, a great plan and great teamwork that's been put together over the last couple of years are leading into this.

The turf's going down. What's the next big step?

So you'll see the turf naturally is going in, as we see, and the next big step will be to start building out the clubhouses and all the things that make the teams feel like they're back at a stadium. Their weight rooms, the coaches offices, those things will start progressing after the field. The field naturally took precedence in the construction process, because that's the main piece. You can't do a game without the field. But all those other pieces will start falling into place now. So a lot of tents will go up. A lot of construction. Of the grandstands will continue the press boxes and things that really make it, you know, into that baseball stadium.

What are those things made out of? I'm just curious. Is this just stick-built stuff?

Yeah, you're seeing a lot of scaffolding put up out there. You know, that's not anything new to anybody in the sports industry or on the entertainment side. There's a lot of different temporary grandstands that go up. But on top of those temporary grandstands, it will be stick-build. And actually, that's the fastest, easiest way to do it. It'll be two by four construction and plywood, things of that nature that meet code, but are easy to put up in a quick fashion.

You've talked before about the Bristol way. Talk about the advantages of having contractors, you know, and people who do good work here near you know, that's the great part about this area.

We've got contractors that have that can do attitude. So no matter what you ask, they always know there's a deadline. They always know there's that race date or baseball game date that's coming and trying to achieve that and be ahead of it, or to really under promise and over deliver and exceed on those expectations. And, you know, we all wear wristbands that say 'Exceed Expectations.' That's really a company motto, and that's our contractors, the BAM team, the bright view team, and the MLB team, who was able to capture a lot of those contractors and work with them directly as well. And they're seeing that attitude. They're seeing that we'll take whatever we need to do to make that happen. And it just says a lot about this area and just how we are all hard-working people. You know, we're in the mountains of Northeast Tennessee, but naturally we all try to do things the right way. And Bristol Motor Speedway, it means so much to this area that anytime there's a big event, everybody jumps in full-fledged, goes 100 miles an hour, and it's showing out here. That's why we're a little bit ahead of schedule. And everything's rolling like it should be.

How is this project been similar and different from the battle at Bristol?

You know, this one was a little bit more. There's a lot more obstacles on this one than the Battle at Bristol. Naturally, the field at Battle at Bristol was in the center of the track, so it wasn't near as much demo. There wasn't near as many things that had to be removed to put in

the football field as with the baseball field, we had cut walls out, take half a building down, remove a lot of the mirror tram poles, completely, wiring and all. Whereas battle of Bristol, we didn't have to do that. So that part leading into being prepped for them to start building the field was a lot different than the Battle of Bristol... After this is over that's really when you will see the can-do attitude continue to shine through, and those contractors are back in here, putting this place back together so we can have a NASCAR race.

Speaking of that, I guess, is there anything to be said about World's Fastest half mile turned into a baseball field, which is also known for speed with 100 mile per hour baseball pitches, base runners trying to steal and the swing of the bat?

It's always really awesome to see how our company does a lot of firsts, so, you know, with the Smith family, definitely Marcus now and Bruton back in the day, we always try to do things that are new and innovative. This is definitely new and innovative. There's never been an official MLB game played in the state of Tennessee, so having that capability of playing a baseball game in the Last Great Colosseum, in turning a racetrack into a baseball field, just speaks volumes to the vision our company leaders have. And, you know, MLB reached out to us and they saw that the possibilities and what we do as a company, and how well we do things as a company, is a real attribute to the team that we have, and the events that we put on, and how we can take things that are something that people would think is not possible, and turn them into possibilities. So pretty it's awesome. You know, it's not many times, especially if you'd asked me 10 years ago in my career, if I was gonna go build a baseball field, I probably would have said no. But here we are, and, you know, here, in a few weeks, we'll have a baseball game and that really will be the the icing on the cake when that first pitch is thrown, and hopefully somebody hits one over the wall.

-MLB/BMS-