



DRIVERS KICK OFF CHAMPIONSHIP WEEKEND WITH BUBBLY EVENT

By Cathy Kightlinger | Published: Sep 16, 2017



SONOMA, California – Verizon IndyCar Series championship weekend kicked off Thursday evening much the same way it will end: with corks popping on bottles of champagne.

INDYCAR drivers, Napa Valley winemakers, including wine-world celebrity Jean-Charles Boisset, and dancers from the San Francisco Ballet gathered on the picturesque deck of Sonoma Raceway's executive offices for Bubbles and Bites, an exclusive event to get the weekend off to a scintillating start. The view overlooks Sonoma's rolling hills and the track where the GoPro Grand Prix of Sonoma will be run on Sunday.

Sparkling wines – the bubbles – were provided by Boisset's JCB Collection and paired with hors d'oeuvres created in honor of Verizon IndyCar drivers' favorite foods. Noted wine country chef Victor Scargle surveyed drivers a week before the event and made "bites" to suit their tastes. Boisset's variety of wines paired with each dish.

Reigning Verizon IndyCar Series champion Simon Pagenaud's menu included bacon-wrapped akaushi flatiron beef with blue lake beans and, of course, sauce Bordelaise, named after the Bordeaux region of France, Pagenaud's native country.

Pagenaud was grateful for the opportunity to relax with fellow drivers and wine lovers.

"We're often so busy on race weekends that we don't take a moment to slow down and realize how beautiful our surroundings are," Pagenaud said. "This is a stunning view of the track and I'm always excited to meet new chefs and winemakers like chef Scargle and Jean-Charles. Our friend, Sofiane Sylve, from the San Francisco Ballet stopped by as well, which is really what this event is all about – sharing our sport with new people!"



Drivers Ryan Hunter-Reay, James Hinchcliffe, Conor Daly, Charlie Kimball and Zachary Claman DeMelo also attended the event. Scargle made tuna poke with coconut dressing to celebrate Hunter-Reay's fondness for fish; baba ganoush with roasted peppers on naan for Conor Daly, who is vegan; bison sliders for Canadian meat-eater James Hinchcliffe; and cod tacos with avocado mousse made from avocados from the family farm of Kimball's parents.

The intimate soiree, with about 100 guests, ended with toasts C.J. O'Donnell, INDYCAR's chief marketing officer, and Boisset, who asked the group to raise their glasses in honor of the drivers, the Verizon IndyCar Series championship race and making new friends.