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**TOWNSEND BELL CLOCKS A 223.477 MPH AVERAGE**

**SUNDAY IN A LONG QUALIFYING DAY AT INDY**

**Robert Graham Special starts 26th for Dreyer & Reinbold – Kingdom Racing in Indy 500**

**SPEEDWAY, Ind. (May 17, 2015)** – Townsend Bell drove the Robert Graham Special Chevrolet to a four-lap average of 223.477 miles per hour Sunday in qualifying for the 99th Indianapolis 500-Mile Race scheduled next Sunday, May 24, at the Indianapolis Motor Speedway.

Bell, the veteran racer from Pacific Palisades, Calif., shook his head as jumped from the Dreyer & Reinbold – Kingdom Racing Sunday, as the nine-time Indy 500 starter showed his disappointment in his qualifying effort after turning much faster speeds during the practice runs. Bell will start 26th next Sunday in the “Greatest Spectacle in Racing.” Scott Dixon won the pole position at 226.760 m.p.h.

The Indy 500 qualifying runs were postponed on Saturday due to rain and Sunday’s attempts were delayed as the Verizon IndyCar Series officials adjusted the car regulations after another major crash in the morning practice session.

Ed Carpenter’s car crashed hard in turn two Sunday morning practice and all activities were halted as series officials met with team owners and drivers. After much discussion, the officials reduced the engine turbocharger boost for the 34 qualifiers as well as requiring race setup for the chassis instead of the body kits designed for qualifying. Practice resumed at 1:30 p.m. EDT with one-run qualifying set for 3:15 p.m. with overcast skies.

Bell was the 28th competitor to attempt to qualify Sunday. Bell’s four lap speeds were 223.539, 223.407, 223.374 and 223.470 for an average of 223.447 m.p.h.

“I’m really shocked, to be honest,” said Bell after his qualifying run Sunday. “After the first lap and I saw the lap speed, it was demoralizing. I came across the finish line and I thought there was a digit out on the steering wheel speed because the car didn’t feel that bad. I am really disappointed with that qualifying run today. I was wide open and the Robert Graham Special wouldn’t go. I’m not sure I have had an Indy 500 qualifying attempt when the car just wouldn’t go. I feel I have been here at Indy too many times to be that surprised with a performance like that. We were two miles per hour faster earlier without a tow. The gearing felt right but the car just didn’t accelerate as we expected.”

Bell had recorded almost 226 m.p.h. without a tow from another car earlier in the week for practice but the conditions changed throughout the day Sunday at IMS with a strong wind.

“We will go back and look over the data and see what we happened,” said Bell. “I didn’t think we would start that far back in the field (26th) after the solid week we had in practice. We’ll run a number of laps in Monday practice to get prepared for the race next Sunday. The temperatures tend to increase as you get closer to the race. The crew worked so hard the past few weeks and the car was well-prepared. I am confident we can develop a good race car for next Sunday.”

Practice for the 33-driver starting field will be held Monday from 12:30 p.m. to 4 p.m EDT. The drivers and cars will then return to the famed 2.5-mile oval next Friday for the legendary “Carb Day” events including a one-hour practice and the Pit Stop Contest. The 99th running of the Indy 500 is scheduled to begin at 12:15 p.m. EDT Sunday with the ABC-TV telecast getting underway at 11 a.m. EDT.