

## Billy Venturini Talks Daytona Wreck, Recovery, and His Return

*ARCA RE/MAX Series driver's first interview since breaking his neck at Daytona Int'l Speedway on February 12th, 2005.*

Concord, NC ([PRWEB](#)) March 8, 2005 -- Once you walk through the doors of Venturini Motorsports, you can't help but notice the field of balloons in a near by office. You turn a corner, enter the race shop and on a table near the entrance are a stack of cards, magazines and other gifts. All of which have been sent by friends, fans and competitors for the recovering Billy Venturini.

Venturini was injured in the ARCA RE/MAX Series's season-opening event, the Advance Auto Discount 200 at Daytona Int'l Speedway. With just two laps remaining on the scoring tower a multi-car wreck broke out. The aftermath left Venturini with a broken neck and severe ligament damage that will leave him sidelined for a portion of the 2005 racing season.

"I remember all of the accident - I never blacked out. The No. 9 and the 60 got together. The 60 went around pretty quick. He started to flip over when I dove to the inside. I thought I had the wreck cleared and someone got into my right rear and turned me," Venturini explains.

"We were just about through it when I got clipped in the right rear, which threw me nose first against the wall on the back straightaway. I came off the wall some and stopped. I saw TJ Bell go by, just missed me and the next car came along and just clobbered me."

After the wreck Venturini knew instantly things were serious. With his crumpled No. 25 Chevrolet engulfed in flames, he had no choice but to climb out of the machine and wait for help. The problem was, at first try, he couldn't.

"I felt a sharp pain. I wouldn't have normally climbed out but the car caught fire. I went to climb out, but I lost motion in my hands. Then, in about three, four seconds, the feeling came back. I took my belts off and climbed out. I needed to climb out, the car was on fire. It wasn't good - I had to maneuver pretty good just to get out. Once out, I took my helmet off, and noticed my neck was hurting pretty bad. I just stood there while Mark Williams, safety official for ARCA held my head in place. He did a hell of a job to keep me safe." After being taken to the Halifax Medical Center Billy received treatment for his injuries which, were all serious. "Basically only about 20% of people walk away without paralysis or death," he says of his neck injuries that left him with a broken vertebra.

"I didn't just break the C2, I blew ligaments out of my neck. They had to replace a disk in my neck; I now have a titanium plate in its place. They said my spinal cord was like a loose piece of spaghetti."

His injuries, sustained while wearing a safety Hutchens Device, very well could have happened had he been using a HANS. The injuries were all circumstance of the neck snapping sideways rather than forward, the purpose of both head and neck restraints. Venturini, along with the doctors who are treating him, feel that the injuries based on the side impact were unavoidable.

In order to set the spinal cord as it heals, Venturini was placed in a halo and will continue to don it for three to four more weeks. Once it is removed, as silly as it sounds, he says the next step is getting back behind the



wheel of his No. 25 racecar.

“I would have driven the next day if I could. If all I had was a broken bone - but it was a vertebra. They told me three to six months before I can get back in a car. It’s healing pretty well so I’m hoping to be back in the car as soon as possible.”

Now, as he recuperates and waits out the healing process, he spends his time where else, but at the team race shop reading cards and well-wishes from fans all over the country and accepting phone call after phone call from friends, rivals and fellow drivers.

Five-time ARCA RE/MAX Series champion Frank Kimmel has sent his well wishes along with Nextel Cup names Ryan Newman, Ken Schrader, car-owner Ray Evernham, and golf legend Jack Nicklaus to name a few. The Chicago native also received best wishes from some of his favorite hometown icons, Chicago Cub young guns, Kerry Wood and Mark Prior. Billy even received a note from Chicago’s very own, Oprah Winfrey. “The support has been amazing. I’m so grateful. It means a lot to know just how many people care,” says Venturini.

As he recovers he also takes on a duty he doesn’t like so much – putting someone else in his seat. But, it’s business as usual including, working closely with his new crew chief Troy Selberg and his newly signed sponsors, Central Merchant Services and ReadyHosting.com.

“My sponsors have been great. Both Central Merchant Services and Ready Hosting.com have supported me during this entire ordeal. They are going to stand behind me for whatever we do. We will have a replacement driver for at least three or four races but that’s what I’m hoping for, to miss only three or four.”

Although the team is holding off on making an official announcement, Billy says, “It has to be someone who will help the team now and in the future. We’ve toyed with the idea of fielding a second car so it has to be someone we see with us in the future.”

Moving forward, he plans on attending the Nashville event which, will more than likely be the toughest step in his recovery as he watches someone else race his number. But, at the same time, it could be the best medicine just knowing in a few short months, it’ll be his ride once again.

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