

Up Next...

The next race on the schedule is the **Long Beach Grand Prix** which will be the first time that Meira will have seen the 11-turn, 1.96-mile course on the streets of Long Beach, CA.

It will be televised on **Versus (VS)** **Sunday, April 19th**, starting at 3:30 p.m. ET

Race Report: Honda Grand Prix of St. Petersburg

ST. PETERSBURG, FL April 5, 2009—ABC Supply was out in full force this past Sunday to kick off the IndyCar Series season at the Streets of St. Petersburg. Over 200 associates, customers, and their families were in attendance to cheer on the ABC Supply team and enjoy the roof-top hospitality where they had an exciting view of the course. Guests also had an opportunity to meet ABC's newest driver, Vitor Meira, before the race to get autographs and hear from the driver about his expectations for the race.

The race itself proved to be an action packed event. Vitor Meira described the Honda Grand Prix of St. Petersburg as a "survivor's race." He survived to finish ninth despite an accident which resulted in having the nose and front wing assembly replaced on the No. 14 ABC Supply Dallara/Honda.



Vitor Meira signing an autograph at the ABC Supply hospitality tent on Sunday



Vitor Meira on track at The Streets of St. Petersburg on April 5th, 2009

"It was a survivor's race," said Meira. "I almost went out when [Alex] Tagliani blocked me. We had to replace the nose which put us to the rear. It is so hard to recover from that on these street courses where it is so difficult to pass. I had the pace and was able to run with people but once you're behind, it is really hard to catch up. I feel we had a little luck just to finish today."

Ryan Briscoe won the race which was slowed by five full-course caution periods. Following Briscoe across the line were Ryan Hunter-Reay, Justin Wilson, Dario Franchitti, Tony Kanaan, Will Power, pole winner Graham Rahal, Darren Manning, Meira and Tagliani.

The weekend started with Meira running in the top 10 in practice on Friday and Saturday morning. A problem with gaining traction

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Race Report: St. Petersburg



The #14 ABC Supply/A.J. Foyt Racing Team sending the car off after a pit stop at the Streets of St. Petersburg

became magnified in qualifying under the hot, greasy track conditions which resulted in Meira's 17th place qualifying run.

There was a miscommunication between the engineers and the driver which delayed sorting out the traction problem until the post-qualifying debriefing session. The car was changed for race day. The morning warm-up proved that the change worked. Meira did spin towards the end of the session, blaming himself for braking too late; he tagged the wall lightly knocking the end fence askew on the rear wing. The ABC Supply crew replaced the rear wing for the race.

For this season, Firestone Tire Company has introduced a new concept to the IndyCar Series by supplying two different compounds of race tires for the street and road courses. The normal compound race tire is black-rimmed while the softer compound tire (which is faster but less durable) is red-rimmed. At St. Pete, each team received six sets of black-rimmed tires and three sets of red-rimmed tires, with the provision that at least one set of reds had to be reserved for the race. Teams could choose to start on either reds or blacks, and the majority of teams chose to start on the reds, including Meira.

In the race, Meira advanced to 12th by lap 21 but he pitted the next lap under green to switch to the normal compound tire, saying that the softer tires had really lost their grip. He dropped back to 17th

and was challenging Alex Tagliani for position on lap 30 when Tagliani blocked Meira, clipping Meira's front wing. Tagliani was forced into a run-off area and Meira continued albeit about three seconds off his pace. A lap later there was a full course yellow for an accident involving Danica Patrick and Raphael Matos.

The ABC Supply crew changed the No. 14's front wing and nose assembly after changing tires and Meira dropped back to 15th spot, nearly the last car on the lead lap. As different fuel strategies cycled through Meira ran as high as sixth (briefly) before pitting on lap 69 for his final stop. He emerged in 14th and had climbed to 12th when a four car accident on lap 87 claimed Dan Wheldon, Hideki Mutoh, Marco Andretti and Robert Doornbos.

Meira was in eighth place when the race restarted on lap 93 but Manning nipped him going into the first turn as Meira had a problem with the rear brakes locking up entering that turn on the restarts and the first couple laps following the restarts. Once the brakes heated up (and lost some of their stopping power), the brakes worked fine.

"The car kept locking the rear brakes on the restarts which made it hard for Vitor to get into turn one as deep as he needed to—that's where the couple cars that did pass him were able to get by," said team owner A.J. Foyt. "We'll make some changes for Long Beach so he doesn't have that problem again. Overall though, I think Vitor and the team did a good job for the first race of the year. I'm glad that we rolled out of there in one piece."



Vitor Meira holding off the competition in turn one at the Streets of St. Petersburg