

Motorsports

Stewart still unsure of return date for final season

By GREG BEACHAM
AP Sports Writer

LAS VEGAS — Tony Stewart still doesn't know when he'll be back in his car to begin his final NASCAR season.

And yes, the three-time Sprint Cup series champion says he's still done after this year.

Stewart is hoping to return to his car quickly, but he'll know more about his recovery from back surgery when he has X-rays next week. He defied his doctors' wishes with a cross-country flight to Nevada this week, although he spent most of it flat on his back.

"I'm definitely breaking the rules," Stewart said Friday. "But I can't lay in bed any longer. It's about to kill me. We did everything short of bubble-wrap me to ride out here on the plane."

Rest is necessary to ensure a full recovery for his broken vertebra, but Stewart wanted to support his Stewart-Haas Racing teammates and employees at Las Vegas Motor Speedway this weekend when NASCAR opens its three-race Southwest swing. Brian Vickers



NASCAR driver Tony Stewart speaks during a news conference Friday, March 4, 2016, in Las Vegas.

is driving Stewart's No. 14 Mobil 1 Chevrolet in Las Vegas, and Ty Dillon also will drive the car in other races.

Although he isn't following the letter of his doctors' instructions, Stewart also won't return to his car until body is ready.

"This is a different injury than the leg injury," Stewart said, referring to his broken leg in 2013. "The leg injury was a much more severe injury, but this is a much more sensitive injury. If this doesn't heal right, if we do something that messes it up, it could affect me the

rest of my life. It's more important to let this thing heal right. We're not rushing to get back in the car."

Stewart was injured in a low-speed dirt buggy accident near the California-Arizona border on Jan. 31. He had surgery to stabilize his back, but his doctors haven't examined his progress or allowed him to begin rehabilitation.

Stewart's injury and his truncated season led to speculation that the notoriously competitive driver wouldn't want to go out like that. Some wondered whether he would run a limited schedule next year, perhaps competing in the Daytona 500, which he has never won.

Stewart quashed that speculation in Las Vegas, shaking his head at the suggestion of a future Sprint Cup career beyond this season — and he lamented the circumstances of his injury, which happened in a 25-foot drop off a sand dune.

"I'm not going to change the plan because I got hurt," Stewart said. "These are the cards we were dealt. It was a weird accident that nobody ever thought would happen. ... The story about how I got hurt, I can't even make it sound cool. I

got hurt driving 5 miles an hour. I wish I could tell the story of — I was jumping a 50-foot gap, running 60 miles an hour, it flipped over, caught on fire and I broke my back. That's not what happened."

Stewart sat at a podium to answer a few questions Friday, even though he knew sitting wasn't good for him. He needs to be flat on his back, or he has to keep moving around.

Although he's getting off to a late start, Stewart hopes to get a medical waiver from NASCAR that would allow him to compete for a spot in the Chase for the Sprint Cup if he wins a race and manages a top-30 finish in the standings. Kyle Busch got into the Chase last year despite missing the first 11 races with a broken leg, and he ended up winning the championship.

But Busch was injured during a NASCAR event, while Stewart was on his own time.

"I'll do the best I can," Stewart said. "Whatever they decide, they decide, and I would like to think it's going to be similar to what they did last year with Kyle. The biggest thing I'm worried about is just getting this to heal properly."

NFL

Rams gather in LA to plan moves, get details about new home

By DAN GREENSPAN
Associated Press

MANHATTAN BEACH, Calif. — Although the Los Angeles Rams are in a hurry to get established in their new home, linebacker Alec Ogletree has an even more pressing deadline.

Ogletree's wife is pregnant, and her Aug. 2 due date falls early in the Rams' first training camp back on the West Coast.

"We definitely want to get her settled in," Ogletree said.

The Rams met in Los Angeles for the first time Friday, with roughly 80 percent of the roster attending a voluntary meeting at a hotel several miles from the building site of their palatial new Inglewood stadium, which will

open in 2019.

The Rams are moving back to Los Angeles after 21 years in St. Louis, and they've got plenty of work to do before their regular-season kickoff at the Coliseum in six months.

"We're not technically here yet," Ogletree said. "We're still in the process of moving out here. But today, being out here, it's exciting learning about everything we need to do and how everything is going to go."

The meeting included information for the players on where the team will prepare for the 2016 season. The team is still sorting out many details of the move, including the location of their regular-season training complex.

"It was a bucket load of information," quarterback

Case Keenum said.

Coach Jeff Fisher said the Rams will hold organized team activities next month in Oxnard, California, a coastal town about 60 miles west of downtown Los Angeles. Training camp will likely take place at UC Irvine, 40 miles south of LA in Orange County.

Owner Stan Kroenke's franchise is looking at sites around Thousand Oaks — another far-western suburb of LA — for its in-season home. The Rams also are thought to be interested in building a permanent training complex in the same area.

The Dallas Cowboys have held their training camp in Oxnard for the last four seasons, so an already-established facility provides one less logistical

challenge for the Rams to address.

"It's an ideal situation for us," Fisher said. "The Cowboys have been very cooperative."

The Rams staged two days of joint workouts with the Cowboys in the complex last August, so there is some familiarity in a new environment.

Ogletree said the mild temperatures and ocean breezes of Oxnard were a pleasant reprieve from their St. Louis base, which was next to a landfill.

"It's a lot to go through, but I think the process is going to go very smoothly," offensive lineman Rob Havenstein said. "We got a bunch of great resources, especially with the Rams. Coming in here to LA, everybody wants to be

BRIEFLY
Kurt Busch wins pole in Las Vegas

LAS VEGAS (AP) — Kurt Busch has won the pole for Sunday's NASCAR Sprint Cup race, claiming the spot for the second straight week with a top speed of 196.328 mph in his hometown.

After setting a track qualifying record in Round 1, Busch won his second career pole at Las Vegas Motor Speedway in his No. 41 Chevrolet, turning a lap in 27.505 seconds Friday.

"It was insanely fast," Busch said.

Joey Logano will start up front alongside Busch on Sunday after clocking a lap in 27.572 seconds. Matt Kenseth came in third at 25.582, and Brad Keselowski was fourth.



Busch

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