



American Endurance Racing

22 April 2019

To Whom It May Concern:

A few days ago, a short YouTube video was released by VinWiki that featured John Hope Bryant. In the video, Mr. Bryant makes certain statements related to an on-track incident that occurred at one of our races. This post is meant to bring out all of the facts of the situation, at least from our perspective. In this video, Mr. Bryant makes certain statements about his actions and about AER. It is the position of AER that he is not accurately portraying the facts as they occurred on that day, and leaving many facts out. It is our position that he is minimizing the dangerous situation that he created.

In February of 2018, American Endurance Racing (AER) held their season opening race at the world-famous Road Atlanta race track in Braselton, Georgia. One of the sixty teams entered had a Mr. Bryant as a registered racer. AER did not have objection to this, since Mr. Bryant represented (as he had in the video) that he had considerable racing experience, and held an SCCA Competition License (#472997). For this particular event, the format was our conventional 'double-9', meaning that each of Saturday and Sunday races were a nine-hour race.

On Saturday, February 17th, 2018, Mr. Bryant was in the car for three different stints; the first from 12:16p to 1:19p, the second from 1:23p to 1:32p, and the last from 1:33p to 2:16p. During his third stint, at approximately 2:11p, there was a on-track break-down of a race car that resulted in a full-course yellow (FCY) condition. According to Road Atlanta and AER standard procedure, a FCY results in the safety car being deployed and the field must immediately reduce speed and suspend racing. At this race, our rulebook version 2018.1.1 would have governed, and had the following language:

Section 3.9.1, "When an incident occurs on track which requires the use of a flagger to display a standing yellow flag, cars shall reduce speed. Should a waving yellow flag be displayed, cars shall significantly reduce speed. Passing of any other car is prohibited from the moment you are able to see a yellow flag ahead until you pass a manned flagging station that is displaying a green flag."

Section 3.9.7, "Under no circumstances are cars to pass each other for any reason while under FCY conditions."

Further, during our driver meeting, it is standard for us to discuss what the yellows mean, how drivers should react, and further how important it is to be safe, cautious and courteous around emergency workers.

Fortunately, AER has been provided with in-car video of the subject vehicle during Mr. Bryant's stint. It is available at <http://aer.af/bryant-video> and includes his entire third stint.

In the video, the first waving yellow occurs at time index 48:25, and Mr. Bryant immediately passes a car mid-corner. The first indication of FCY is at time index 48:47 at T9 (and continues until the end of his stint); from that point to the end of the stint he passes nine cars. It should also be noted that his final two laps occur at nearly full race pace (his stint fast-lap was 1:41.1, and the two yellow laps were 1:42.2 and 1:44.1. And most notably is at time index 50:20, where the subject car and driver initiate a pass under FCY, passing emergency vehicles at over 99 mph.

Subsequently, at time index 52:41, Mr. Bryant entered pit-lane because he was being black flagged in response to ignoring yellow flag conditions and creating an unsafe situation around emergency vehicles and workers. At time index 53:44, one of our pit stewards tells Mr. Bryant to "exit the track and go to [his] pit stall." Mr. Bryant then proceeded to his pit stall and exited the car.

When Mr. Bryant exited the race car he was confronted by one of our race officials, and we do not deny that the discussion was heated, as characterized by Mr. Bryant. However, we feel it is important to consider our position and mindset in this situation:

- Mr. Bryant had just completed two laps, at full race pace, under full-course yellow conditions.
- Mr. Bryant had passed nine cars in these two laps.
- Mr. Bryant initiated a pass, under FCY, at over 99 mph, while passing emergency workers.
- It was fresh in our minds, the death of a corner worker at this track just eight months prior at another event.

AER, above everything and anything else, takes the safety of its participants, volunteers, employees, officials and track workers as the highest priority of our mission. The driving of race cars at speed on track has enough elements of danger on its own that we have virtually no tolerance for any person creating any situation that is unsafe for any person involved. Pursuant to this belief, Mr. Bryant was ejected from this event and the team in question was not allowed compete for the rest of the day.

Could the race official used a bit more decorum during the encounter just after Mr. Bryant exited the race car? Sure, we concede he could have. As people who have raced with us know, we take professionalism and impartiality very seriously. However, this was a very serious infraction putting life and limb at risk, and simply, the official was very charged over the situation. After the fact, as cooler minds prevailed, the official apologized to Mr. Bryant and even invited him out to dinner. Mr. Bryant did not reply to the apology or invitation. But the actions of this official do not minimize or remove the unbelievable risk and danger that he presented to all parties involved. And now, a year later, it is our opinion that Mr. Bryant is minimizing and being cavalier about the facts of the situation. For instance, Mr. Bryant states that there was "a yellow flag", and that he "wasn't going very fast." As you can see from the in-car video above, this is not representative of the truth; Mr. Bryant ignored over twenty-five yellow flags and was driving at race pace..

For the record: As we did on the day of the event, we again apologize to Mr. Bryant for the way that he was treated on that day in the moment. This behavior is not typical for AER and anyone who knows us knows that we strive to have a great customer experience at all of our events. To Mr. Bryant's point, AER was created in response to the 'old-boys club' that he outlines. We seek out teams and individuals who are looking for a more inclusive and fair racing environment. Customer feedback that we receive after every event tells us that we are succeeding in this endeavor. However, at the same time, we can understand the passion and outrage that our official had in the minutes following the incident. Mr. Bryant created an unbelievably dangerous situation as we have documented above, but in our opinion he has not accurately portrayed or accepted on his part how dangerous it truly was.

Respectfully Submitted,

Mr. John Kolesa  
Mr. Alex Rubenstein  
Mr. Ed Tatios  
Mr. Justin Stone

Links:

VinWiki Video, released April 19th, 2019: <http://aer.af/vinwiki-video>

Complete in-car video of the stint, February 17th, 2018: <http://aer.af/bryant-video>

Details of the stint in question: <https://race.americanenduranceracing.com/stint-detail/734>