

IndyCar Media Conference

Thursday August 25, 2016

Mark Miles Ed Carpenter Josef Newgarden Spencer Pigot Press Conference

ARNI SRIBHEN: Welcome, everyone, to today's IndyCar media teleconference. Earlier today, IndyCar announced a 17-race calendar for the 2017 Verizon IndyCar Series season. We're pleased to be joined by Mark Miles, the CEO of Hulman & Company, the parent of IndyCar, as well as Verizon IndyCar Series competitor Ed Carpenter, Josef Newgarden, and Spencer Pigot of Ed Carpenter Racing.

Thank you for taking the time to join us today to discuss the schedule.

Mark, one thing that's very noticeable about the 2017 calendar is it's continuity with this year's schedule. How valuable was it having that level of consistency to IndyCar and its promoters?

MARK MILES: Well, I think it's fundamental. It's really important to growing the sport because the foundation of the sport is the quality and the growth of our races, our events in the cities where we compete.

You know, I had the opportunity to fly here to St. Louis this morning with these three gentlemen with me, who will have a chance to say something, and on the way I showed the calendar to Josef Newgarden, he looked at it for about a second, we're thinking 16 plus one because the 16 races which we're coming back year over year and the addition of Gateway is kind of one way to think about it. Turning a phrase, as he's prone to do, he instantly says, oh, 17 in '17, which may become the new handle on the race.

But the foundation of it and the priority for us is to the greatest extent possible have continuity from year over year with our races and date equity to the greatest extent possible and to just grow that base carefully, and I think the 16 plus one or 17 for '17 demonstrates that.

ARNI SRIBHEN: Mark, today's schedule as you



mentioned included the addition of Gateway Motorsports Park and a formal contract extension with Watkins Glen International. Tell us about the significance of those two venues.

MARK MILES: Well, Gateway is the addition from '16 to '17, and I can tell you, we're still in St. Louis, I couldn't have been more pleased with what we saw today, where every sector of the community on both sides of the river turned out, and there's great anticipation and enthusiasm. Elected officials from Washington through their state legislature and local mayors, all the not-for-profits that make an urban center what it is that are interested in growing the community from the chamber to their convention folks to develop downtown St. Louis, they're all here, and a significant number of private sector business leaders were here.

All the components seem to be coming together from an event perspective, and probably better than the drivers than I speak about the track, but Curtis Francois bought the track I think in 2012 or so, repaved it, has done a terrific job in making improvements, so those of our fans who think of it from many years ago will be delighted with what they see. It's a terrific place, and it was designed for IndyCar racing. It'll be a compelling race for sure, another short oval we're pleased to add.

So that's terrific. And Watkins Glen came to us and was added to the Verizon IndyCar Series with very little notice this year. We're looking forward to being there in less than a couple weeks and expect a great event. So to be able to extent them even before the first race was part of the plan to lock in the great races that we have.

I think it's fair to say that all of the existing races have contracts for more than 2017, so I expect they'll be back not just for '17 but in the future, as well.

ARNI SRIBHEN: From a drivers' perspective, an IndyCar driver really has to be good at all disciplines. How much of a challenge is the 2017 schedule with its six ovals, six road courses and five street courses?

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: I can speak to that. I think from a driver standpoint, the IndyCar Championship is really kind of a dream championship if you seek to be the best at all disciplines. If you seek to be the best

and the most well-rounded driver within the world, I think IndyCar is really the only championship that offers that.

So for me, I like the challenge that when you're working with your team, your engineer throughout the season, you have to be able to switch between a street course, road course and an oval back-to-back-to-back every weekend in facing a challenge of going from one to the other every time. It's not easy for a lot of people to do, and I think experience shows really well in IndyCar, and the reason it does show well is because of the challenge that you have with the diversity of the schedule.

I think we've had that for the last four and this being my fifth year in the IndyCar Series, I think that's been one of the great things we've been able to talk about within the series, and going forward you're going to see much of the same.

I think for me personally having Gateway added on is just a bonus for me. It's one of those type of tracks that I really like. I think it's going to put on a great show for IndyCar, and it's going to add more to the diversity of what we already have.

ARNI SRIBHEN: I know, Ed, you went out to Gateway to do some testing for compatibility for the car. Talk a little bit about Gateway as a facility and how you think it will race with the current IndyCar.

ED CARPENTER: I think it's going to be a really good track for the current IndyCar. It's a very unique and demanding track. Turns 1 and 2 are very tight. 3 and 4 are a little more open. Having probably a little more downforce than the cars had when they were last here in 2003, I think it's just going to be a good thing for the quality of racing, the quality of show that we can put on for the fans.

And from the enthusiasm that we've seen here in St. Louis today, I think we'll be looking for an exciting event.

ARNI SRIBHEN: Finally, back to you, Mark, this announcement comes several months earlier than when we made the schedule announcements last season. How beneficial was getting the schedule out to the series and to the stakeholders?

MARK MILES: Well, we thought it was important. You know, if you're committed to making the foundation of a current year the bulk of the schedule the next year, then we didn't see any reason we couldn't do it, and I think it's important from the point of view of the next step, which is careful tailoring, crafting of the television schedule. But also for the tracks; here happily we are

in August, and we're announcing a schedule, and they have a year to prepare.

I think every promoter would relish, as we have in Indianapolis frankly, the opportunity to be selling next year's tickets at this year's race. In order to do that, we've just got to get ahead of the game.

So for the promoters, I think for fans who will travel, for our broadcasters, for our teams as they prepare, this plus for them the test schedule that will come out before long, the sooner the better, and we're delighted.

We kind of put the stake in the ground that we'd get this out in August, and I think we're still in August, so we're delighted to have met the goal.

Q. Mark, will you have any success in maybe talking to Iowa into going into a night race again, and can we assume Gateway will be an evening show?

MARK MILES: Let me take them in reverse order. I do think you can assume Gateway is going to be under the lights, and people here are excited about that. They know IndyCar sparkles, looks great, and might take a little bit of the edge off the summer climate in the Midwest.

For Iowa I think next year that is less likely because it looks like a Sunday, and Sunday night is tough, and I think that's probably us trying to do the best job we can at balancing the interests of the fan who travels and the fan who wants to be at the track with the even larger number of fans that want to tune in if it's broadcast at a time that works for them.

Yeah, so yes and no. These will be these two races for next year.

Q. Assuming that you want to expand the schedule further in the future, what's the philosophy on whether you'd like to take races to more traditional markets where you assume you already have fans and potential ticket buyers or trying to feed the series into more maybe higher risk, higher reward areas than aren't as accustomed to the series?

MARK MILES: Yeah, that's a good question. I don't think you can make a blanket answer to say we're less risk averse or more. I think we can look at each opportunity individually and evaluate it for all that it brings to us. We were pleased to say to the assembled here in St. Louis that they got the one spot we decided to add to the calendar for next year through a rigorous process that went on for months. Some of you are aware of and have written about it, and there were options to be sure, lots at the start, narrowed to some finalists, and we think there will be even more for next

year.

Our philosophy about growth is careful, managed growth where we add to fill in gaps on the schedule, and those to me looking at next year, we still believe there may be an international opportunity at the very beginning of the year to be abroad, and that will do lots of things for us if we can find a great opportunity for '18 in February. And then there may be one more opportunity to add during what we currently have kind of staked out as the heart of the Verizon IndyCar Series schedule in North America.

So I don't see it expanding in the next year or so in any major way, but given the demand and the interest, I think we'll have good choices and can be quite careful.

We think about all the factors from the balance we want to try to keep in terms of the type of racing, which we've already talked about, in terms of urban versus more park-like as we have now in so many of our races, Midwest versus other regions of the country. We're pretty Midwest based, and I think there's an appetite west, northwest, east or southeast in this country, urban versus more rural.

So all those things go into it, and I think we just look at the options on a case-by-case basis and try to make the best calls.

Fundamentally, the most important thing, irrespective of what kind of track and where it is in the country or the world, we want races like we have for the most part where the race is an event that captures the imagination of the community and more and more people come every year, which makes for a great event, young people, traditional fans want to be part of on side, and makes for great television, because not just what happens on the track is compelling but there's the vibe that's communicated out for television viewers, as well.

Q. The only noticeable date change it looks like is Phoenix moving from start of April to end of April. With Phoenix and Long Beach back-to-back, was that considered, or was Phoenix always going to move, always owing to other considerations?

MARK MILES: Yeah, there was a big other consideration, when Phoenix came on for this year we knew that in '17 Phoenix would host the NCAA Final Four, and we agreed with them that it's better to avoid that in that community. That's a lot of fan choice and a lot of focus from the local media.

That's the reason that it changed from '16 to '17. I think that makes sense. And I think the schedule still works fine for our competitors.

We are looking at what that might look like in '18, and whether it stays more or less where it is or whether it goes back to -- I guess we can't call it the traditional date since it's been one year, but the '16 date, and that's a decision we'll make obviously in the context of putting out the '18 calendar.

Q. Could you please tell us what it would take for either Auto Club Speedway or Mazda Raceway Laguna Seca or even Portland to make the sched? Is it a question of competing quality of bids, competing events, weather, a combination of it all?

MARK MILES: It's a combination of it all, to be sure. I think we talked a lot about Fontana about a year or so ago where their needs in terms of climate and time of day and even the sunset, which affects our drivers' ability to be safe and run a great race, which affects the time of the race, which affects broadcasts in eastern time. It's all related, so that one we just couldn't sort out. Laguna Seca, interesting track, race history. We are kind of in that part of the world if you consider Sonoma northern Cal along with Laguna. Sonoma seems to be kind of solidifying a place for us as the season finale, which we love, and I think our fans and our stakeholders appreciate.

So whether there is another time when it could make any sense to be so close to that Sonoma race geographically is the question. You might say, well, let's go to the spring, and maybe there could be a place on or calendar in the spring, but then you have a conversation about, well, how early in the spring could they run there and feel confident about the climate, and I don't mean to go on at too great a length, but all those things enter into it, and those two examples have been very carefully and completely thought through, through discussions with us and with the promoters.

I can't remember the third one you mentioned --

Q. Portland.

MARK MILES: Well, Portland has a great history and is a part of -- further north. That's not northern Cal, and is an interesting region for us. So I don't know. I don't know that you've heard the end of the possibilities for Portland.

Q. Have any of those three tracks come closest to making the sched this year?

MARK MILES: You know, as tempting as it is, we decided that we want to encourage communities' interest in going down and getting in the process, so I'm not going to list finalists. Nobody lost. Some are just reupping for next year's consideration. So I'm really not going to directly address or answer your question.

But we've learned a lot through this process. I know a lot more about a number of communities' interests in places like Portland and others that I think offer great options for the future of the IndyCar Series.

Q. As kind of a courtesy question, first of all, could you tell us was there any significant damage done to the speedway as a result of the Indiana storms, or did any of your staff people encounter any personal difficulties as a result of that?

MARK MILES: You are very thoughtful and I appreciate your interest in asking that question. There was zero damage at the speedway. There was one huge walnut tree across my driveway busting my fence at home. But no, I don't know of any real personal issues and none to the speedway, but thanks for asking.

Q. Obviously there was reporting in the last several weeks about the 2008 schedule also being announced in the near future. Is that still a possibility, or is that now more kind of moved back to not to be expected soon?

MARK MILES: I loved the idea of putting out the '17 and '18 calendars at the same time, and we were really close to doing it, and that's exemplified by the fact that I've already told you that I expect everybody that's on the calendar for '17 to be on the calendar for '18. But there are still a couple of details like the one I mentioned with Phoenix as to which week -- the approach to which week would make the most sense for them, and that's something we'll be talking with Brian about as early as he thinks he has enough information to participate in that conversation.

And we do think there's still some prospects that need a little more time to be fully developed for both international and other domestic opportunities for '18. So we decided not to go.

The other thing is -- to go and announce the '18 schedule now.

The other thing is the further out we get, the harder it is to really fine-tune the television broadcast schedule, and that matters to us. As you know, we've made real progress with our broadcast partners in finding optimal broadcast times, which help us attract more viewers. We want to continue that focus. The further out you get, the harder it is to pick the exact date when you know a little less about their other programming, so we'll take a little more time.

But saying all that, I don't think we have to wait until August of '17 to release the '18 calendar. I can't give you the date on which we'll do it, but I do expect that it'll be even earlier before '18 than it was before '17.

Q. And for Ed and Josef, obviously there was a lot of talk at the Phoenix race this time about perhaps the package had too much downforce. In your conversations, Ed or Josef, with Bill Pappas, Jay Frye, whomever, what are you expecting the package to be at Phoenix next year with the idea obviously of improving the entertainment value?

ED CARPENTER: I think things like that are something that there's always on going conversations with when we feel like we can do a better job as a series to put on a better race, but I don't think it's ever as simple as just saying we need to do this to the aero package, reduce downforce or add downforce. I think there's a lot of factors that go into it, having the right combination of aero configuration with tire package and other factors, so I think it is being discussed. I don't know that there's any decisions made at this point. I expect there might be an off-season test there to zero in on some of those things.

But I do expect it to be better racing next year than it was this year.

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: Yeah, I would agree with Ed. It's always difficult when you return to a venue years later with a new car, new package, and then try and fine-tune that for a great racing product the same year. So I think there's going to be improvement from year to year. I think if you ask people that saw Ryan Hunter-Reay on the restarts, they probably enjoyed the show somewhat. I think he put on enough of a show to make a great race, and I think from a driving standpoint, Phoenix was an awesome race, awesome track to go to. I think Ed is right; I think I'd be surprised if the race isn't better next year. I think it was a great race, but I think there's room to improve it. I think we will improve it for next year, and it's always fun driving IndyCars around Phoenix. They're fast, and you don't get anything like that with the other racing events that they have there.

Q. Is there any expectation that the package would be the same?

ED CARPENTER: I think the package will be similar to what it was. I don't think you're going to see us go back there with a speedway package. Phoenix is a one-mile oval. I think it is challenging when you go to tracks that are newly repaved and as smooth and as nice of a surface as Phoenix. We saw it when Iowa was new, when there's that much grip on the track, it can make it a little harder to get the package just right.

But I think that between the aero kits, the level of downforce, the tire that's run on the car, I think there will be -- we'll massage the package to make sure we put our best foot forward and put on the best show we possibly can for the fans in attendance and those

watching on TV.

Q. I just want to clarify, Mark, you said most of the current tracks have multiyear contracts right now but not all, correct?

MARK MILES: Actually I think everybody goes through '18.

Q. So that's pretty firm. You don't see any chance of an addition to the 2017 schedule?

MARK MILES: I don't expect that, and I don't know where that would come from. At least the Verizon IndyCar Series Championship I think is set.

Q. And finally, you touched on the testing which will come out. Do you expect a severe reduction in in-season testing?

MARK MILES: I don't know about severe, but I think it will be changed in a way that changes the mix of preseason and during the season team and private tests and open tests, and Jay is going to put that out I think pretty soon. I think maybe just on or before Watkins Glen if things work out as he has in mind, along with some other important technical news.

Spencer Pigot is here, been a star with the media here. I can't believe you reporters are not chomping at the bit to ask him a question. You had a great question about the importance of the ladder series and how he sees coming up the ladder and being in IndyCar. Just know that we have another voice here if you're so inclined.

Q. Mark, with Watkins Glen reupping for another two years and obviously Pocono earlier announced that they're going to be there for the next two years, can you just talk about the importance of IndyCar having two races in a northeastern market?

MARK MILES: I think it's important, and I think it's an opportunity for the two to collaborate and help each other and IndyCar grow the northeastern market. There are a lot of IndyCar fans there, and to see both the oval and the road course racing with the traditions of Watkins Glen and all that Pocono has to offer should be very attractive to fans. So we've got our kind of beachhead in the northeast, and it helps anchor that part of the geography for us.

Q. And just a follow-up, is there any thought to perhaps adding another 500-mile race at some point to the schedule where you maybe would bring back the Triple Crown that would include Pocono and Indy?

MARK MILES: I don't think I can say that that's an objective. Again, we're probably more focused on looking at the opportunities to kind of flesh out the rest of the geography in the country where we think there's

demand and the mix of different kinds of tracks and urban and park-like. Those things probably trump three 500-mile races and the Triple Crown at this point.

Q. Josef, obviously you've been very strong on ovals this season. How excited are you going to be going to Gateway next season?

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: I think selfishly I'm pretty excited about it. I feel like ECR as a group have really put out great race cars on short ovals. When we had Milwaukee, as well, on the schedule, I thought we were quite strong there, and that carried over to Phoenix and Iowa, as well. I think Ed and me had a really good opportunity to find success at Phoenix earlier in the year, and it didn't quite come together for really either of us, but I feel like we have great cars on short ovals and that type of package, and I love them. I actually think it's some of the best racing that we have in IndyCars on short ovals. I'm very excited to go there. I've never been there. Ed got to test there not too long ago. Was that last year? Yeah, so Ed has already been there, and I've got to hear a little bit about it.

Selfishly I'm really excited for it. I hope that we put on a great race there. I don't see why we wouldn't be able to. From what I've heard from the grip level standpoint and the diversity between the two ends of the track, I think there's going to create some opportunity where you could see some Iowa-esque type racing, potentially two types of grooves going in the racetrack. I'm really excited about it. I think it's very encouraging for our racing series and what we're going to be able to put out for a product, and me as just a driver, I think it's going to be one of my favorite types of tracks.

Q. Mark, I wanted to ask you, now that you've got date equity pretty much handled with the '17 races for next year, are there any moves afoot to make certain that the times become regular like they are with NASCAR and with other series? And the possibility of having earlier times like George got with Road America?

MARK MILES: Yeah, so that's the next level of difficulty, and it doesn't escape our focus. Obviously as I think I may have mentioned before, we have to work with our broadcast partners to find the right balance between the show, the event on-site for the fans who buy tickets and come out, and the fans who will tune in on television. One of the things that we've found is that it's better for race fans I think generally if we can minimize overlaps with NASCAR coverage. I'm not in any way defensive about saying that. We think there are a meaningful number of fans of both series, and we'd like for all of them to be able to watch both kinds of racing.

You know, it's just easier said than done, and I think we're getting better at it. The more we are predictable

from year to year and years out in picking the days, the more likely we are going to be able to get the time of day part more consistent. So it's an objective. It's going to take time.

Q. I think it's a really good thing for IndyCar to have our schedule out so early so we know where we're going to be next year. My question was basically on the testing, if we have going to have in season or if we were going to have out of season, and so you didn't really -- we don't know that yet, right?

MARK MILES: Well, we've got a pretty good handle in my office, but we're not ready to kind of put that out. We've got a little more, I think, dialogue to have with the teams before we make it all official.

I think there will be fewer tests altogether, and the mix of them pre and during will change some. But the specifics will come out before long.

Q. Do you think that being on NBC Sports, being with NASCAR half the season this year, our television ratings obviously are up, but do you feel that helped it?

MARK MILES: I feel it's a contributing factor. It's really helpful in the second half of the season that the same broadcasters programming both NASCAR and IndyCar, so it's in everybody's interest to maximize the windows for both, and I think that's happened, and you've probably seen kind of the add-up of that, the significant reduction in the number of races where there are overlapping telecasts and the number of hours. It's much, much less than it was even three years ago. I think that helps all race fans.

And ABC has worked with us, as well. You're always trying to minimize key conflicts in the sports horizon. NBC's objective or one of them is to be the motorsports platform, much as they've done in golf, and they have grown as a cable provider, and they've grown their audience for motorsports, and certainly they've been helpful in the growth of our television audience.

Q. I thought I'd direct this one to Spencer since he's not getting a whole lot of love today. This is kind of where your time with Ed Carpenter started. The double-header weekend in Detroit, do you feel that's an odd one out? Does it remain that way because it's a tough circuit, even though Josef has putting the beat down at Iowa, he said that was a really tough place to be at for the G-forces mainly, but the bumps and whatnot remain difficult, so how do the drivers continue to feel about that event?

SPENCER PIGOT: Yeah, I think Detroit is I think an important market for IndyCar and obviously Chevrolet, so it's good to be there, but for me personally it was a very difficult track to learn. We only had one practice

session before qualifying, which makes it even trickier, but that's part of the challenge as a race car driver you enjoy. You enjoy going to places that aren't easy. It's very rewarding if you're able to do well at a track like that. Again, the competition that we have in IndyCar is so high that if you're able to run up front, it's very satisfying.

It's a very difficult track, and to have two races there is very tough on our bodies. We're being knocked around the cockpit quite a bit with all the bumps, but it just adds a little unique characteristic to the track, and it's the same for everybody. For me, I think it's a good event and provides some great racing. It seems like every year we have a bit of a crazy race in at least one of them, and it's just a joy to watch, I think.

Q. Mr. Miles, kind of sticking on the same tune, in a series like Pirelli World Challenge we're seeing street circuits kind of being kicked out the door. Does it remain kind of an important focus in IndyCar?

MARK MILES: I couldn't actually hear your question, like Pirelli World Challenge what?

Q. They're kind of having their street circuits disappear one by one over the years it seems, but do they remain a sort of focus and do they remain important in IndyCar?

MARK MILES: Yeah, absolutely. They're complicated and they're hard to sustain, but I would say there is at least as much interest in communities that are not on the calendar now that want to be considered for street races as any other of our formats. You know, every city can imagine having their city shown off like St. Petersburg, Florida, or Long Beach, California. So there's real interest for that format. I don't see it declining. It's obviously got its degree of difficulty because it does impact on the logistics for a city for a couple days. But I would just point to the viability of the format by looking at St. Petersburg where I think we're 12 or more years now, and it seems like every single year rain or shine it gets better and you can just feel that it's more part of the fabric of that community, as they look forward to it in the spring every year, and then you can look at Long Beach 40 plus years where it's just the epitome of what IndyCar wants to be and is, in some of its best iterations.

Long Beach has come a long way in the time that IndyCar has been there, and I think we've had at least a small role in the development of that place and its identity and individuality around the world.

Q. Mark, is it fair to say Stephen Starks is the unsung hero of this schedule putting-together process?

MARK MILES: You know, Steven is seated right beside me, and I saw him on his phone -- I didn't know if it was a text or a tweet or whatever, so did he put you on that?

Q. No, I tagged Jay earlier, and then Jay tagged Stephen, so I know he's been newish but a key part of it.

MARK MILES: Stephen has brought great, fresh thinking about all this. You know, together we can focus on the few things we want to do better, and timeliness was part of it, the things we've been talking about, so he does deserve huge props for driving this process inside IndyCar, being I think a great resource to those who wanted to be considered to join the series and extending the agreements for those who have been on and now will be on with certainty longer. He spent a little bit of time with us and our legal department, so he understands that side of the business, and now he's really gone to town, and I think the future is bright not just in terms of the schedule-making process, but our ambition is to add more value to the promoters that we have.

When I look at other leagues, the NBA has a great team-services group, for example, and they're able to share best practices in a serious way that adds to the value the league provides to their franchises.

When one of them figures out something that helps them promote ticket sales and get ticket sales in earlier, they all know about it, and I think we can, under Stephen's leadership, add that kind of value to our promoters, as well.

I can see his head swelling. We may have a hard time getting him on the plane on the way back.

ARNI SRIBHEN: Seeing as we have no further questions, we will thank Mark, Ed, Josef and Spencer for their time this afternoon and wrap up today's call. That will conclude today's IndyCar media teleconference.