

# IndyCar Media

## Conference

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# Graham Rahal

# Sebastien Bourdais

## Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: Joined now by the driver of the No. 15 Honda for Rahal Letterman Lanigan Racing, Graham Rahal, who was the driver with the fastest no-tow speed yesterday, also the driver who ran the most laps yesterday. Graham, after a full day's worth and then this morning's session, what are your thoughts heading into the night session tonight?

GRAHAM RAHAL: Yeah, I think we probably did the most laps again -- yeah, we got it, got the most laps again this morning. I don't know why, but our guys like to pound laps, so that's all right. We'll just keep driving when they tell me to.

Yeah, last night was good. You know, the conditions are tricky a little bit because it is cool. It actually warmed up more today than we thought, but it's cooler than it is going to be on the race weekend, and last night it cooled down quite a bit, and I think this evening it's going to get pretty chilly here towards the end of the sessions. Of course the grip level is way higher and everything else, so the speeds will look good. I felt good last night. We didn't really push it that hard and yet the car had plenty of pace.

This morning, you know, I don't know. I don't know, every time we try to trim out and push a little harder, we get pretty loose, which around here is not what you want to do. I was unfortunately shown by Alex this morning, there's no time to react. When it goes wrong, it happens so fast that it sure isn't a lot of fun. But we're ready to go. We're just trying to pound through a whole bunch of stuff, get through a list of a ton of things, and as a single-car team, obviously that's why we have to run the amount of laps that we do is we're really just learning off of one car.

It's been good so far, but hopefully we can improve a little bit tonight because we need to get the rear a little bit more under control, so we'll see how it goes.

THE MODERATOR: Joined also by Sebastien Bourdais of Dale Coyne Racing. Sebastien, especially yesterday you and your teammate Ed Jones saw some success, especially on the time charts yesterday. What kind of

program are you guys going through as you both get used to going to a new team this year and also each other as teammates?

SEBASTIEN BOURDAIS: Yeah, I think everybody has been working pretty well. We're still looking for a bit of extra speed, but so is everybody else. We obviously looked pretty settled straight away because Ed had that rookie day on Wednesday. We're both pretty comfortable, had the opportunity to shake his car down and do 10 laps like you can when there is a rookie day like that, so that gives you a little bit of extra confidence and we could run a fairly trim car straight away, so we could look good for the first half hour, but really that didn't last very long.

Overall, it's pretty much the same between yesterday and today. We got to the thick of it today and really trimmed the car out pretty much what we got, but you can always make small adjustments after that, get the balance a little closer so you get a bit less scrub and this and that. Yeah, we're pretty close to the best we can do here. I think Mikhail (Aleshin) probably got the very best of it from what I can see because it's about, I think, where we're going to end up on the Honda side.

But you know, after that, the racing is quite a bit different, and you've got to have a big game of patience. So that's what we're going to be working on mostly tonight. Ed has done a good job, and it's just staying a couple of steps behind just not to make a mistake and rush through. But he's pretty quick right now, and yeah, I think everything is going to plan.

**Q. How does it feel to be back united with Craig Hampson after a number of years of being apart? Do you just kind of pick up where you left off?**

SEBASTIEN BOURDAIS: Well, I don't expect the same kind of success, but yeah, I think it was pretty funny when we got back straight away in at Gateway, it was like it never really stopped, and sure enough, when we got to Sebring on the track that we both knew each other very well, the old habits kind of kicked right back in, and it was a lot of changes, a lot of reads, a lot of stuff to go through. Yeah, we're very happy with the way that the test was going. The guys did a great job. I don't recall that I've ever gone through so many changes, big changes on the car over a two-day test, and we got out of this with a very happy car.

We'll see; sometimes you get out of Sebring being very happy and you show up at St. Pete and it's all different. So we'll see. It tended to be not like that in Champ Cars, but on the Indy car side we've struggled to make things transfer from Sebring to St. Pete. We'll see how good we get it, but we're definitely really excited to get back with Craig, and obviously he completes the trio and makes it a really solid group. We've got some really good mechanics, and thanks to Dale, the whole thing has become possible. I couldn't really be any happier.

**Q. Graham, in your situation, I think you've said that your team has pretty much stayed the same, and you seem to like having the focus of a one-car team to a certain extent. Tom German has joined your team, and you alluded to a few things that he might have picked up on when he first came on board. How is that working with the new team?**

GRAHAM RAHAL: Yeah, it's really good. I think Tom is a guy who was at Penske for 10 plus years and obviously was with Rossi last year amongst others. The biggest thing with Tom is to come in and implement some of the processes that say a Penske does in areas that we aren't that strong. Even areas actually that we thought we were, and then he came in and looked and mentioned a whole bunch of stuff, and then, for instance, we've struggled with our car with massive tire vibrations the last couple of years, like it killed me at Iowa last year. I had no hope.

And already he's cured that in this test with ideas and knowledge that he brought from Penske over the years. There's stuff like that that we were just struggling hard with, and Tom has brought a wealth of knowledge.

But you know, overall, it's just another addition to our great core of engineering and people and mechanics and everybody. Yeah, we're a small team. Do I like the focus of a one-car? To be honest with you, I was pushing -- I can't tell you how many sponsor meetings I had this winter pushing for Oriol to try to get him in here on a full-time second, and we were close, but it just didn't work out. But I'd love to have a guy like that because he could certainly help us.

One of my concerns is always just stalling out. As a single car, you see the amount of laps we're pounding here, and we have to. I mean, we're trying things on tires we probably shouldn't be running on, but we have to try to do things because as a single car you're only getting knowledge from one source.

It would be nice to have Oriol (Servia) or somebody like that if we could. Oriol has always been my first choice because he and I are extremely compatible and have

the same read on things, but you know, it hasn't been in the cards just yet. We'll see what happens. But Tom has been great, and I think Eddie (Jones) and Martin (Pare) and Mike (Talbot) and the whole core group of guys has done an excellent job.

We lost one guy this winter, and so far we haven't really filled that spot because we haven't needed to. It'll be interesting to see how it goes forward. But everybody is working hard, and trust me, there's a lot of -- they want to be top Honda team once again, and we want to go fight for a championship like we have the last couple seasons.

Everybody, there's a lot of fire in the stomachs and ready to go.

**Q. You want to be a top Honda team again, but yet you've got sitting next to you a guy who's on a much-improved Honda team with that operation. What's that going to be like to -- he's going to step it up with the engineering and it's going to be a powerful team.**

GRAHAM RAHAL: Look, I've worked with Seb and I've worked with Hampson and I've worked with them both, and I fully expect them to win races. I think everybody does. And obviously let's not forget those other guys that have joined Honda. They're going to be damned good.

I mean, you know, we've already seen things today from an aerodynamic standpoint; they're parked right next to us. We're seeing aero configurations on their car that we've never seen on a Honda before. With the tunnel and stuff that they have, they have access to learn that info, and for us, we're sitting there looking at it going, Jesus, what have they figured out that we haven't over the last couple years as far as the basic aero package and stuff.

But they're going to elevate the game, too. We're all going to have to push very hard. As Seb said, I think here we're going to be lacking a bit of pace, there's no doubt, particularly in qualifying, because my lap was half decent. I tried to trim more than that and about ended up in the fence, so I'm not sure how much more there is, but we'll have to see come race weekend. But everybody is going to elevate their game. We're all pushing hard.

And I say top Honda. We don't want to be just top Honda. Obviously we're all here to win a championship, right, so that's the focus. That's what we're trying to do.

**Q. Were you guys in your cars when Rossi crashed or were you getting in?**

SEBASTIEN BOURDAIS: Yeah, I was about to start.

**Q. Did you hear it?**

GRAHAM RAHAL: Yeah, how could you not?

SEBASTIEN BOURDAIS: Yeah, even with the helmet on I think it was pretty distinctive that something big had happened. My spotter came on the radio and was like, oh, boy, that was big. We never really want to hear that. And I was about to go and do a quality run, as well. It was like, damn, I didn't really want to hear that right before. It kind of hurts a little bit the confidence.

GRAHAM RAHAL: Yeah, I was in the same spot. I was literally buckling in, and we were going to go do a qual sim, and as a driver that's one of the hardest situations and challenges to go through is you see that, you hear it, and you know you're next man up. So it's always hard to just get it out of your mind.

I mean, I've been in the qualifying line at Indy sitting there next to go, and RHR crashed in '08 right before -- it was my first ever qualifying at Indy, too, and I'm sitting there just absolutely sweating bullets.

Yeah, I haven't seen Alex or talked to him. I hope he's good. He's going to be sore. Those sort of things happen. But thank -- and I think I speak on behalf of everybody. I've got to say yesterday, we had a safety meeting, and I could not feel better or more thankful for Jeff Horton, Terry Trammell, the group of people we have behind us, because those hits used to take you out for weeks, and nowadays they've improved it so much.

I've seen other motorsports and stuff, and the guys that we have are absolutely the best, so really appreciate them.

THE MODERATOR: Gentlemen, thank you very much. We appreciate your time.