

IndyCar Media Conference

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Fernando Alonso Michael Andretti Doug Boles Mark Miles

Press Conference

MARK MILES: Good morning, everybody. I am Mark Miles, you know Doug Boles, and Michael Andretti is joining us on the West Coast via speakerphone. Thank you for joining us. This is a big news day for racing all over the world and particularly a red-letter day for IndyCar and the Indianapolis Motor Speedway. My day started very early this morning, as I woke up to read a Fernando Alonso tweet which said, "Indy 500, Here We Come," and I think that really says it all. We are so excited to welcome him, McLaren and Andretti here with Honda here to the Speedway. After the Alonso tweet, I went to BBC and then other European press and media all over the world reporting this news. So, they were ahead of it, as they woke up earlier than us in the States. And I am glad to say that this is not "fake news." Fernando Alonso will skip Monaco to race this year's Indy 500 in a McLaren-Andretti car powered by Honda. Fernando is a two-time Formula One World Champion and a three-time runner up. He has started 275 Grand Prix races and won 32 of them. From our perspective, he is the gold standard of motorsport drivers around the world. Alonso, however, has never driven an Indy car and has never driven on a superspeedway. Now he has chosen the biggest IndyCar stage and perhaps the most demanding race and the biggest platform of a race around the world. So it is going to be fascinating to watch how he, McLaren and Michael and Honda put this together. Michael will speak in a minute about their efforts. We believe he will be right in the mix. Only last year, Michael proved that he can put a rookie in the Winner's Circle and get him to that coveted glass of milk.

I thought I would take just a second about how this all came about. Quite clear that it started with Alonso, he made it aware publicly a while ago that he wanted to win the Triple Crown. He has won Monaco twice, he has not won Le Mans, he has not raced in Indianapolis. It was his aspiration that was made public that kind of started the ball rolling. Zak Brown, our friend who is now CEO of the McLaren team, jumped all over it as Zak does and worked through whatever issues that he had to deal with with McLaren, Honda and their stakeholders. Zak call me after he had a sense that this



was doable from their perspective and asked if we could help identify a quality team with a Honda here in Indianapolis. We talked about the possibilities, and then we approached some of our Honda teams. At one point in time, we were kind of long-faced because it looked like there was no ride available. The equipment was all spoken for or there were no other engines or cars out there that we thought we could make available. That was kind of a dark day. Not long after that, we stated a conversation with Stefan Wilson, who had lined up a Honda ride with Andretti that was well sponsored. He is such a terrific guy. We had a long dialogue that was over the course of a couple days and agreed that if we could take care of his sponsors, in other words, get them the benefits that they had bargained for were he to stay in the car in 2017 and if he could have future IndyCar opportunities, then he would be happy to cooperate with us to achieve this possibility for McLaren and Alonso. All of that was taken care of, and he will run in the Indianapolis 500-Mile Race in 2018, and he will be very visible and much a part of the IndyCar scene and here at IMS and not just this May and throughout the year and in the driver's seat in 2018. So we are very grateful to Stefan. It's basically how it came together. You can imagine there is a lot behind that, but we are so thrilled that is now a reality.

On behalf of everyone at INDYCAR and the Indianapolis Motor Speedway, we are looking forward to not just one day of news but the story that will unfold from now through the checkered flag of the 101st Running of the Indianapolis 500-Mile Race. With that I will turn it over to Doug to talk about this from the IMS perspective.

DOUG BOLES: Thank you, Mark. It is fascinating how this story came together. So I appreciate your stewardship on this. This is a big day for the Indianapolis Motor Speedway and for the Indy 500. Getting Fernando Alonso to come and run here is a spectacular moment. I saw a tweet earlier today from Peter Windsor, who some of you may know, who said this is the first time that a Formula One driver who has run the regular season, stepped out and had avoided Monaco and then stepped back in and ran the regular season later since Jimmy Clark. And we know how well Jimmy Clark did here, so that has to be exciting for Fernando. From my standpoint, somebody that grew up and falling in love with the Indianapolis Motor Speedway in the 1970s, McLaren was such a huge part of what happened here in the 1970s. They started

here in 1970 and really ran through 1979 and had three wins, two of them were the McLaren cars and one that was Penske's first and maybe one of the coolest cars ever to have run here at the Speedway, with Mark Donohue behind the wheel in their privateer McLaren. So having the McLaren name come back with the Andretti name and with Alonso is spectacular for those of us at the Indianapolis Motor Speedway. I have had a chance to talk to a couple of our drivers in the Verizon IndyCar Series today, and they are also very excited about the idea of getting to compete with Fernando Alonso at the track that they all love more than any other track in the world. So from a driver's standpoint, from a fan standpoint and certainly, from an Indianapolis Motor Speedway standpoint, this is a great story that we will all be watching as we lead to the 101st Running of the Indianapolis 500 in 46 days from now.

MILES: Yes, I saw a tweet from Alexander Rossi welcoming Fernando to the team enthusiastically, and we have heard from drivers like James Hinchcliffe who are really excited about the possibilities. So, Michael, I didn't say much about how it all unfolded for Andretti Autosport, so welcome and thank you for dialing in. It is still early out on the West Coast, and we appreciate you being on the line, so take it away.

MICHAEL ANDRETTI: Yes, thank you. I can't tell you how excited I am. This is going to be awesome, and I think it is awesome for everybody involved, including the whole sport of auto racing, and such a big story. It is pretty crazy the way it unfolded, and we were working with Michael Shank and Stefan Wilson on putting a deal together for a sixth car, and then when you approached me. We started dialogue with Stefan to see if he would be willing to step aside for this one and hopefully get something together for next year. He was great, and he worked well on getting through all of this with his sponsors, and it truly is a team effort. You have to say between us and Honda and IMS and McLaren, I think this was just a great effort to be able to put this together, and again I am so excited and it is going to be a great deal. This couldn't happen without Michael Shank Racing, and he will be bringing his resources into this team and sort of similar to what Bryan Herta did with us last year. Obviously, that worked out pretty well for us. So we are excited about it. I think we are ready for a challenge, and we are set and we are really well organized to get this all done and put six competitive cars on the racetrack.

MILES: Michael, before we open it up to any questions do you want to tell us what you think Fernando's prospects are as a rookie here?

ANDRETTI: I think it couldn't be a better situation for us in terms of the team. He is going to have four veterans, well, I guess we call Rossi a veteran, helping him. He has a steep learning curve; I think that will be key for him. I think if you look at our record with rookies

in the past, you know that we had Carlos Munoz with us and we went out and finished second. We had Kurt Busch, who was a rookie and was very competitive and finished sixth, and last year obviously with Alex and coming there as a rookie and winning the race. I think that having the talent like Alonso, who is one of the best, if not the best, drivers in the world, I don't think he is going to have a problem with that. I think our environment is going to be really good for him to get up to speed. I think Indianapolis is a perfect place, as well. Which I have stated is because you have so much practice time, and there is a lot less pressure because of that practice time and you can really build up to it. And so there is no question in my mind that if we have competitive cars this month of May, Fernando is going to be very competitive.

MILES: Great, thanks. We are happy to take any questions.

Q: In 1993, Nigel Mansell raced over here and brought worldwide attention, though he did the whole season. Are you familiar with the Mansell case study and do you think there is potential for huge outpouring of interest of the Indy 500 and the IndyCar Series?

MILES: We think so. We have already heard from a number of our international broadcasters, and they are obviously excited about it. They would always be covering the race and broadcasting live in most cases, but there is a special sense of excitement because of this. Our view is there are a lot of parallels (with Mansell in 1993), although there some differences, and basically we had an unbelievable 100th, and that wasn't lost in this country or around the world. I think this gives the rest of the world another reason to be very focused on Indianapolis and IndyCar on Memorial Day Weekend and really all of May. So we think it will make a difference for us, not just in terms of the 101st and IndyCar's global exposure, but I think over time we will see long-term benefits.

Q: Doug, is this an addition to the field that you think will help to sell tickets? I know ticket sales have been good, but you know have an international name that you can market outside of USA.

BOLES: I think certainly from an international standpoint it will help us draw people who have to make a significant commitment to come over to the United States. I think in the United States and even in Central Indiana, this is another good talking point, and one of the great things about the Indianapolis 500, even from the beginning the best drivers in the world compete here, and we say that every May. The best drivers in the world are competing, and when you add Alonso to the field, it is pretty hard to argue against that statement. So I think that is another reason why people will choose to come. Our ticket sales have been fantastic coming off of the 100th Running of the Indianapolis 500, so we are excited. But this is just one

more reason that you don't want to miss the next century, the beginning of the next century of racing of the Indy 500 in 46 days from now.

Q: Can you just talk a little bit more about how Fernando kind of reached out to you and what he said about racing this year and maybe why he chose this year and not last year?

MILES: Within limits, so I have not spoken with Fernando directly. My communication has been with McLaren and then directly through Alonso has been with Zak Brown, the CEO of the McLaren team. And as I said, I think it started with Fernando making it publicly known globally that he wanted to win the Triple Crown and obviously had one of the three that he could check the box with. And I don't know exactly what prompted him to think that this would be the year or the opportunity for him to run the '500,' but the pieces all fell into place. I think we should say more about Honda. The Formula One program is a commercial arrangement through Honda in Japan, and the IndyCar is really Honda here in the United States. Both had to be able and comfortable with this arrangement, and it was really important that they came on board, both in Japan and California. And Zak had to do heavy lifting, I am sure, to pull all the pieces together in terms of McLaren's board and leadership and all their sponsors who will be represented here as I understand it on Alonso's car at the Speedway. So it all started with him and his desire to come and take at least a first shot at winning the Indianapolis 500 Mile Race, and the pieces were pulled together after that.

Michael, thank you for joining us and congrats on getting this to this point. It is going to be a great story over the next 46 days.

FERNANDO ALONSO Q & A (Provided by McLaren)

Q. Fernando, what drew your interest to the Indy 500? Are there any drivers, legends from the Indy 500 that you either find interesting or have spoken to about this dream?

FERNANDO ALONSO: Well, I think the interest is very clear. Is one of the best races in the world, one of the most prestigious races in the world. As a driver, if you want to be the best, if you want to be considered the best, you need to be able to drive all type of cars in all different series, and be able to be competitive in all of them, and if possible to win all of them.

So after, you know, a successful F1 championships, I think the opportunity to race in Indy 500, the opportunity to race one day in the future in Le Mans, that dream of the Triple Crown, winning all the big three, is something very attractive for a driver point of view.

Together with McLaren and Zak, that was thinking to open McLaren for the future to different series, and one

of them was Indy, I think this brave decision to compete this year already with a very short period of time to adapt and to learn many things that will be necessary, that's a huge challenge in front of us. The challenge is so big that is exciting at the same time.

I didn't spoke with anyone yet from the legends of Indy, or the current drivers. But I'm sure that we will have a lot of help from my teammates, from Andretti Autosport, with a great experience in rookies, as well, as we saw last year with Alexander. Yeah, receive a couple of SMS also from different drivers. Also Juan Pablo Montoya wrote me a couple of hours ago saying, Welcome to Indy. Anything you may need, I'm here.

So, you know, there is a great respect and a great welcome so far in the first couple of hours. So, yeah, I will try to listen as much as I can, and to learn from everybody because definitely is a completely different series and a different driving technique that I will have to learn very quick.

Q. How do you rate your chances of winning? Do you think you have a good chance of winning?

FERNANDO ALONSO: I don't know. Really, I don't, let's say, put any expectations. I don't go there with a clear target. I'm very open to anything. I feel very privileged starting on just participating to the event.

I know that there are some driving techniques that are very different. I need to learn many procedures, like the restart, the pit stop sequences, many things that will be new for me, apart from obviously the car and racing on the ovals that definitely is a big challenge.

So, yeah, this is a step forward in my career. If I want to be the best driver and the most complete driver in the world, I need to learn, I need to know how driving those cars in the ovals at the maximum speed, driving so close to each other, respect each other. Yeah, is something that I'm looking forward.

You know, I don't put any target. But also as Zak mentioned today, last year a rookie in the same team that we are in with Andretti, they won the Indy 500.

You need a little bit of luck. You need the strategy with you. You need many things. But nothing is impossible in motorsport. If I want to be the Triple Crown one day, I need to win Indy 500. Is challenging in the first attempt, but we will try to perform as best as we can.

Q. Fernando, I know you've always been fascinated by the Indy 500. Can I ask you, did this idea come from you or from Zak? When did it start?

FERNANDO ALONSO: I think it's a mix of us two. To be honest, the journey start on Australia. We have a conversation at the circuit. Zak ask me what were my ambitions, my plans for the future. I mention the Triple Crown, you know, to be the best driver in the world. I either have to win eight World Championships and

have one more than Michael Schumacher, which is unlikely at the moment, or winning different series.

I used to remember when I was a kid, you know, the best drivers driving the best cars in the best championships in the world, the best series in the world. If that was an ambition for me, Zak told me that it was an ambition for McLaren, as well.

He's much more open compared the past McLaren about expanding McLaren in different series, in Indy 500, that McLaren won in the past, in Le Mans 24 Hours, that McLaren also succeed in the past.

Q. If the McLaren Formula One car had been more competitive this year, obviously it would have been more difficult to miss Monaco?

FERNANDO ALONSO: Yeah, yeah.

Q. In many ways, this is a very good year to be doing this, isn't it?

FERNANDO ALONSO: Yeah, definitely. I think, you know, I have to be honest, knowing that in a way if we were competitive, if we were fighting for the world championship, we cannot afford to lose 25 points possibility.

But, yeah, we are not in that position unfortunately. This possibility I think is a win-win situation for McLaren as a team. The partnership McLaren-Honda is reinforced with this commitment. For me also is a great opportunity to experience this race.

Is good also for the sport. I think the motorsport fans, they have to love it, as well. For Indy is good news. For the Formula One is good news to go in North America, to compete in this prestigious race. To come back in Austin in September, keep talking about this participation. I think everyone is winning a lot this. We will have to take it like that and enjoy the experience.

Q. Do you anticipate having any simulator time with Honda or Dallara before you hit the track the first time?

FERNANDO ALONSO: Yeah, the program is still not yet defined. Still some conversations about this possibility of testing in the simulator either in Italy or in Indianapolis, together also with some seat fitting that is required in Indianapolis in Andretti's factory. Yeah, let's even talk about some possibility of testing the car before the three practice.

As I said, still very open. The only one thing that is confirmed is that I will attend to the race next weekend in Alabama. Is not an oval, but I will go there to see the race behind the scenes and have the first touch with the team, to have a great atmosphere when Indy comes. Yeah, try to learn as much as possible and maybe have the help from someone or ex-drivers, like a coach or something, you know, to have as many conversations as possible in these couple of weeks.

Q. Do you think this would be your only shot at the 500? You obviously said you want the Triple Crown, that's a big career goal. If it doesn't work out this year, is it an event you'll keep coming back to until you eventually win it?

FERNANDO ALONSO: Difficult to answer right now. I think the first thing is quite obvious. If I want the Triple Crown, you have to win it. If it's not this year, obviously the preparation is tough, will be extremely challenging, maybe in the future can be more attempts to this victory.

But at the same time, you know, I cannot be hundred percent sure now because I need to experience the race, I need to experience the event, see how it goes, see how much fun I get there from the car, from the fans, from the event in general. After the race probably I have a clear picture of what I will do in the future.