

IndyCar Media Conference

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Michael Andretti

Zach Veach

Dan Towriss

Press Conference



had the opportunity and the privilege to bring several new partners into the IndyCar racing world with NAPA Auto Parts recently Ruoff Home Mortgage, Expedite, and various others. How important is it for the growth of not just racing but the series to continue to bring in new partners?

MICHAEL ANDRETTI: Well, I think it's huge, and I think it's great. It says something about IndyCar racing. It shows that we are coming back, and to have great companies like these guys coming on board, you know, says something about that. We're really excited, and it's not -- this is a long-term deal, as well. They're coming in full-bore, committed to really getting behind this program, and I think listening to all of their plans for activation and stuff, I think it's exciting for not just our team but IndyCar racing.

I think these are all really good stories for us in the last year or so.

THE MODERATOR: Some of those new partners had some pretty decent success in the last few years, so maybe that's a good omen for Zach.

MICHAEL ANDRETTI: I think so. I think Zach is going to do a great job. Just so happy we were able to finally get him -- we're proud to say that we brought him up through the whole ladder system from 2000s to Mazdas to Indy Lights, and now he's going to be in the big cars, and I'm so happy we were able to complete that whole thing. I'm excited. I think he's going to do a great job, and I think Zach is going to surprise a lot of people. I think his work ethic is second to none, and I think that's going to be one of the things that makes the difference for him, and I think having three teammates to work with, I can guarantee you he's going to be going to each and every one of them to try and soak up as much information as he can, and he's going to take it home at night and he's going to come back the next day and be better because that's what he's done all the way up through the whole ladder system, so I see that happening. I think Zach is going to do a great job, and we're really proud to have him on board.

THE MODERATOR: Zach, welcome home.

ZACH VEACH: Thank you. For me this is what the whole Mazda Road to Indy has been about. It was a privilege from day one to be associated with Michael's team and USF 2000, and I think when we started that relationship early on, we knew this was going to be a

THE MODERATOR: Good afternoon. Thank you all for joining us today. On Wednesday, Andretti Autosport announced that Zach Veach will be joining the team full-time in 2018. Zach is the fourth driver announced to Andretti's 2018 Verizon IndyCar Series lineup. He will join Americans Ryan Hunter-Reay, Alexander Rossi and Marco Andretti for an all American team. We're here today to introduce the Verizon IndyCar Series world and our family to Group One Thousand One, the primary sponsor behind Veach's No. 26 entry in 2018.

We're joined by Michael Andretti, CEO of Andretti Autosport; Dan Towriss, CEO of Group One Thousand One; and Zach Veach, driver of the No. 26 Group One Thousand One Honda starting in 2018.

Dan, we'll start with you. Welcome to Andretti Autosport and welcome to the Verizon IndyCar Series.

DAN TOWRISS: Thanks, it's great to be here.

THE MODERATOR: For those of us who may not be aware of what you do, tell us a little bit about yourself and what you do.

DAN TOWRISS: Yeah, Group One Thousand One is a group of insurance companies based in Indianapolis, and again, we're growing our business, and we're excited to be associated with Andretti and with Zach in this newest venture of ours.

THE MODERATOR: Tell us, how did you get connected with Zach and what led you to Zach and the Verizon IndyCar Series?

DAN TOWRISS: So we met Zach earlier this year and we formed a relationship and really just quickly identified in Zach a lot of shared values that are important to us, and as that relationship grew and the opportunity came to be involved with Michael and with Andretti Autosport, we just saw a match there for us that was perfect. We loved the way Zach will represent our brand, and we think, again, those shared values will be key to that.

THE MODERATOR: Michael, Andretti Autosport has

family and a home for us. We were very lucky to continue up the road to Indy with them, through USF 2000, Mazda and Indy Lights, and we really got spoiled in a way to be with them from day one, and I think as things have progressed and for a little bit we kind of -- future was a little uncertain. We came back to Indy Lights. It was a little heartbreaking competing against your friends, but just to see this day is something that we've always wanted to get back to, and to finally have it is something that will always be incredibly special to me, and to do it with Dan and Group One Thousand One is going to be just such an awesome experience, just because we started this relationship early in May with the Indy 500, and it's just continued to grow.

And to know that this is a long-term deal, it just gives me the expectations that I can just keep learning and improving, and that's what all this first year is going to be about is just getting comfortable, trying to do the best we can and learn as much as we can. We have so much experience surrounding us with Marco, Hunter-Reay and Rossi, and of course the newcomers to the team with the 500s have pretty good reputations the past couple years, so hopefully we can use a little bit of that luck, too.

But I'm just excited to get started. It's a dream come true. I think for me, this has been 18 years in the making. I'm just ready to be back in a race car. I'm just lucky to be associated with Dan, Group One Thousand One, everybody involved with his program, and of course associated with Andretti Autosport. I know I have two of the best people behind me now, now it's all up to me to get the job done here on the racetrack. Just excited for what's to come in the next few months.

Q. Dan, can you let us know if you had any previous involvement in motor racing at any kind of level? And Zach, it's very rare and not common in motor racing, not even in IndyCar, any kind of motor racing championship, that this early time you have already confirmed as a driver. Do you have at this moment already expectations for yourself, what you can achieve next year in 2018?

DAN TOWRISS: So this is our first involvement in motorsports, and I think, again, as we've gotten to know it here a little bit, as I think about what all the effort that they put into trying to shave off a tenths of a second, looking at all the details, the expertise and the professionalism that goes into that, there's a lot of parallels to our business and where the details matters, and so for us I think we see a great parallel with racing, with motorsports in that regard, so this is our first time, and we're very excited to be a part of it.

ZACH VEACH: And as far as it goes for me, extremely lucky to have something come together this early. I think it's no secret, Dan, we've worked hard to get things done as quickly as possible, and to try to keep this under wraps was extremely hard because we've

known about it for a while now. But for me, I mean, I think you always have expectations in racing. First and foremost, I just need to work as hard as I can this winter with the team and with myself just making sure I'm prepared physically for the start of the 2018 season and mentally just learning and soaking up as much as I can before testing and then when testing starts.

But that's the nice thing about it being a long-term. I know I have time to develop and then progress. We want to take each day as it comes, learn as much as we can and just take in everything that's around us.

Q. Zach and Michael, just talk about this journey of perseverance from just coming up from USF 2000, Pro Mazda, Indy Lights, and then you guys going your separate ways for a couple years and now the journey is finally complete all the way up to IndyCar.

ZACH VEACH: Yeah, I think a lot of it just goes through -- just every day you have to keep digging, just always staying faithful to what your passion is and what your dream is. Luckily when we had to go our separate ways from Andretti Autosport, we left on great terms. No bridges there were damaged. We all knew where we stood, it's just that's the opportunity that I had to take for my career at that point.

We always joked about, well, one day we'll be back, and it was funny, earlier in the year when we were trying to work on this, I remember seeing texts from JF Thormann saying, one day hopefully we'll get this worked out. To have that finally worked out is extremely special, and I just want to do the best job I can for Group One Thousand One and the team here because they've shown so much faith in me.

MICHAEL ANDRETTI: Yeah, for us, too. I always felt that in the end Zach was going to end up with us. I didn't know how, but I always felt that way. As Zach said, we kept a great relationship after he did go and do the other -- with the other teams, and we would constantly stay in contact with Roger Veach, Zach's dad, and he said, hey, there's a few things going. There might be a possibility here.

There was a few times when he said that that they were working on some other things, and then when this one came up, it actually happened quite quick. I remember Roger calling me, saying, hey, I'd like for you to talk to Dan, this guy Dan, and talk about Zach, and we talked, and geez, I thought we had a great conversation. The next thing you know I think a couple days later we were working on a contract. It was really cool to see the way it happened.

As you said, to finally have him come back is really cool. I'm glad that we were the first ones to have him go all the way through the system. I don't think any other driver has actually gone from 2000s to IndyCar I don't believe, with the same team. Proud to say that

we were the first ones to do that. Says something about the ladder system, as well. I think it's a great thing that they have there with the whole system. If you look at the grid now, I mean, I think 90 percent of the guys have gone through the system, and I think it really says something about that. There's a lot of great talent coming up through.

Great American talent, as well, which I'm really proud to have four Americans on our team. People talk a lot about that, and it's important, and I'm glad that we've been able to do that.

Q. Zach, when you look at the last couple years where either you weren't full time or back in Indy Lights, how important was it to stay present at tracks even if you weren't in an IndyCar to keep your face out there and keep pursuing the dream?

ZACH VEACH: I think it was extremely important just from the standpoint of showing people I wasn't going to go away. I think I got a little criticism from others involved sometimes just saying, well, why are you there if you're not doing anything and not driving, and you have to stay relevant, and that's just what we were trying to do. Luckily enough, IndyCar Radio gave me a great opportunity. It's the first kind of real job I ever had with them. I owe them many thanks, and of course the Indy racing experience with the two-seater. Even though it's a two-seater I still got to run at places I've never raced at before. So I'm going to a few new tracks next year. It's not the same thing but at least I know which way to go. I think that's going to help us be a little quicker.

It's just never giving up on the dream. It's learning every day. It's never taking no for an answer. That's why I'm so excited to be with Group One Thousand One. Their values are exactly the same as mine, and there's so many programs we're thinking of for community outreach that has always fit into what I've cared about growing up. Not only am I getting to do my dream of being an IndyCar driver, but I'm getting to help people along the way. It's one of the most incredible experiences I've ever felt. I'm just ready to get to work.

Q. Dan, are you prepared to ride in a two-seater with Zach?

DAN TOWRISS: We'll be doing that this afternoon.

ZACH VEACH: Yeah, actually.

Q. And Zach, looking at how the aero rates are changing for 2018, do you think the new car is going to suit you?

ZACH VEACH: I'd like to say so. The thing I'm excited about is we're starting fresh with all the other drivers. Obviously everyone is going to have different levels of experience in IndyCar, but the chassis with the aero kit, we're all going to be starting on page 1 in January, so that's exciting for me because I think we can all

progress at a similar rate, and with my teammates, of course being so experienced as they are, it's going to really give me an advantage in a way of just trying to get up to speed and learning as much as possible.

I'm excited for that because I think racing is going to be a little closer, and hearing that the grip is going to be coming from the bottom of the car more, it's something that's even more exciting for me, as well.

I'm just ready to figure out what it's going to be like. We've got a lot of time to sit and think about it until then, but as a rookie getting into his first full-time ride, I think the timing couldn't be more perfect.

Q. Michael, how far along are you on the fifth car?

MICHAEL ANDRETTI: Right now we're not working on one. Is it possible? I guess yes, but it's not like -- it's most likely not going to happen. But I'm very, very happy to be able to say that this is the first time in the history of our team, even going back to the Andretti Green days, that we've actually had four committed drivers for the first season -- for the next season at the last race of the prior season, and that's never happened.

And what's even more exciting is that they're all multiple-year deals. That means so much to our team. I think it's going to be really big. Continuity, we always talk about it, and it's not something that's just words. It really means something. And to have all the guys working together for many years is going to, I think, only make us a better team and get us better results. I'm very excited about that. I'm going to be able to have a really nice Christmas this year.

Q. Zach, when you go back to the beginning of when you started the ladder system, you had a pretty good rivalry there with your teammate sage. How much would you like to see him return so you two can reemerge in that rivalry?

ZACH VEACH: I don't think either one of us liked beating someone else more than each other. For me, I think that would be incredible. I really do hope that we see sage full-time in IndyCar, and of course guys like Gabby Chaves which of course is close, Matthew Brabham, those are all my graduating class. That's the crew I grew up with and learned to race against. I always have special feelings racing with them. It's definitely less intimidating racing with them, and then when you see Dixon pull up on you for sure, but hopefully that's going to change. I mean, it's great to see that we're all starting to finally find our strides and getting these opportunities in IndyCar. That's the thing, you've just got to work hard at it and focus on you and just enjoy racing with whom you're with come race day at St. Petersburg.

Q. Dan, can you tell us a little bit more about the company, and then can you give us some hints on the activation plans you're looking forward to in

2018?

DAN TOWRISS: Sure, I'll start with the first one. So again, Group One Thousand One, a family of insurance companies. We're focused predominantly in the retirement space today, but we'll be expanding that out into multiple lines of insurance. And really the goal of making insurance more intuitive, more accessible. I think our business is very complicated today, not as complicated as racing thankfully, but there are things that companies like ours can do to make sure these products fit with consumers in a way that's, again, intuitive, easy to understand, and most importantly accessible to all socioeconomic groups up and down the spectrum.

With respect to asset activation, we have a number of plans underway. Those we won't start to reveal until 2018, but we're very excited about that. I think just the branding excellence that Andretti Autosport has to be able to combine that with what we're doing, I think, but also even on the philanthropy side and what Zach has been able to do and what he represents and kind of being able to be involved in communities, so we want to do well as a business, but we also want to make sure we're giving back into the communities where we work and live, and Zach is going to be a big part of that, as well. I think in all areas we're going to look to be activating programs there, and we're very excited about what 2018 holds.

Q. Zach, you talked about this being the fulfillment of a dream. This is a great moment. Let's go back; was there a point when you said, this is not going to happen? How did you handle that?

ZACH VEACH: I think never to the point where I wanted to believe that it wasn't going to happen, but there was times where you think that you are at the end of your rope, per se. But I was really lucky to have the support system that I do around me, especially with my family, that any time we found ourselves kind of backed in a corner and things weren't looking too great, I always had the support to say, well, you know what, let's just try this again, let's try to look at a different angle and just keep going. That's exactly what we did. We tried everything at least once, and finally all the right things led us to the right things happening. Just one of those things of being -- just continuing to work. It's as simple as that. You're going to get told no a hundred thousand times, but eventually if you keep going, it's going to work out for you, and I think that's been the biggest lesson I've learned, and I think that's the hardest lesson I will have to learn facing these next through years because now the fun work starts, but it's just having that drive, just always going, always keep digging, keep pounding the pavement, and luckily that came pretty natural, so I think we're going to be pretty good next year.

Q. Michael, you said earlier you have four American drivers in 2018; is there maybe from your point of view a big possibility that more American

companies will join you now as a national IndyCar team?

MICHAEL ANDRETTI: I don't know. I mean, it would be nice. All you American companies out there, if you're... Yeah, I don't know. I think it's just a cool thing. It's not something that was really planned. It just happened. We're proud that it did happen. I think we have four great American drivers on our team, and you know, America should be proud about their drivers because we've got the best. We can race against the best in the world.

Q. Two questions for Zach: First off, you ran a couple races earlier this year. Do you feel that just getting a little bit of a taste for the current car, even though next year we're going to a whole new aero package, do you think that happened? And the second question is you told me a while ago that growing up Michael was your favorite driver. Talk a little bit more about how that journey is complete now that you're getting to drive for him in the big cars.

ZACH VEACH: Yeah, of course. I look at it as the two races I had the opportunity to do this year are blessings because maybe, yeah, the car with the aero kit is going to be slightly different, but pit stops aren't, the changes that you're going to be fighting through to try to make aren't. That experience just put a lot more tools in my toolbox to start off with next season, so there's a lot I can take away from that and a lot that I still think about today that I'm just constantly building on for next year.

And secondly, yeah, for sure, this is such a special opportunity for me. I mean, I remember meeting Michael for the first time, and I probably didn't say more than three words. I was just so nervous when we got the call to come over and talk with him because before that it was 2017 at the Indianapolis Motor Speedway, I saw him walk through Gasoline Alley and I had the 39 Jim Beam car and I freaked out, and flash forward three years after that I was sitting in his office talking about doing USF 2000 for his team. I mean, just even today, how everything has kind of fallen in line is unbelievable for me, and I couldn't have predicted any of this, and I think that's the main thing is keeping an open mind because it's never really going to go to plan, but you've just got to react to how it does go.