

IndyCar Media Conference

Tuesday January 16, 2018

Jay Frye Josef Newgarden

Press Conference

MODERATOR: Welcome, everyone, to today's INDYCAR media teleconference. Earlier today at the North American International Auto Show in Detroit, INDYCAR formally introduced the car that will race in the 2018 Verizon IndyCar Series season. We're happy to be joined by one of the gentlemen who made that formal introduction today, Jay Frye, president of competition and operations of IndyCar, and a little bit later we'll be joined by the 2017 Verizon IndyCar Series champion Josef Newgarden.

But first we'll start with Jay. Welcome to the call.

JAY FRYE: Thank you, Arni.

MODERATOR: Jay, it was a year ago about this time at the auto show when you were showing off concept drawings for what would be the look of the future Indy car. Today that future is now. What has the roll-out of the new car been like for you and everyone here at INDYCAR?

JAY FRYE: Thank you. It's been a phenomenal team effort by our current OEM partners, Chevrolet and Honda, all the teams, everybody in the paddock, all our guys at INDYCAR and girls have done a phenomenal job to get it to this point. A very proud day. This process started early in December of '15 with I guess the direction or what could be the direction. By first quarter '16 we came up with a vision of what the car could look like and how it could possibly perform, and like you mentioned, we unveiled what it possibly could look like last January here.

It's been a long process, but it's been very rewarding and very, I guess -- it's done everything we thought it would do and then some, so we're really pleased and encouraged by where we're at.

MODERATOR: This version of an Indy car, every time you look out on social media and talk to fans they're excited about the car. It looks like the drivers are excited about the car. What does this version of an Indy car mean to the future of the sport?

JAY FRYE: Well, part of this, again, whole process we talked about, we've come up with a five-year plan, so the plan actually was activated and started in '17 by freezing the current kits and then having the universal



car starting in '18, so this car will run in '18, '19, and '20. End of '18 we'll get together with a collaboration of people and come up with what our goal or plan is for '21 and beyond, so the plan is kind of a rolling five-year plan.

So so far, so good, and I think coming from a team perspective it's important to have -- that everyone understands the direction of the series, where we're going, what we're doing, what it's going to cost. All this is locked in now for the next three years, so I think, again, this all goes back to all the people that helped make this all happen, and it was a great effort by our entire paddock, by Chevrolet, Honda, Dallara. Firestone has been at all the tests with -- this car is probably going to need a little bit different tire than the '17 version, so it's been a great team effort.

MODERATOR: What has the feedback been from the teams and the drivers to you about the testing of the car?

JAY FRYE: It's been very good. Again, what's really good about it is it's really correlated. When we did our tests with Oriol (Servia) and Juan (Montoya), there were certain things they thought and said and felt, and then once it went to the manufacturers' testing that continued on, and now with the team testing it's continued on. The car has always correlated. It's done what we thought it would do from all the data that we collected on it originally from the scale model testing to the CFD, all the work we did. This car has correlated very well.

There's been some really unique and I think, kind of cool byproducts of the car, too. The drivers all feel like it has so much more horsepower. The car has so much less drag, they've all said this feels like it's got a lot more horsepower. That's a byproduct of what we have worked on, and that was something we didn't expect them to say, but they have, and that's been something that's correlated across the board, too.

There's unique nuances to this car. We're excited about it. Good day today. A lot of people saw it for maybe the first time here, so excited to have it.

MODERATOR: Josef, I know you've had the chance to drive one of the new IndyCars already in manufacturer testing. How excited are you to get your hands on this car?

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: Very excited. You know, I thought it was a perfect way to display the car today. Obviously people have seen the car over the last six, seven months. There's been a lot of testing that's been happening, and there's been stuff in the media describing what the car is about, why it's been developed and taken the way it is. But for me, this was great to get on stage and really talk about the car in depth, where the direction has gone, what we really hoped from the car, what it feels like as a driver. I thought Mario was the best. He was the most fun for me to listen to, just describing what he thinks the fans are going to see at home next year.

It's been great. I can't wait to get going on track with more cars. We've not had a ton of cars on track together. Normally it's just been two or three, so I think once you get a whole pack together, you're really going to see what this car is capable of.

MODERATOR: What does the car drive like? Compare it to the car you won the championship with in 2017.

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: Well, I think it depends next year on the tracks, so people are going to have to pay attention throughout the whole season to really see how it develops.

I think street courses are going to be the biggest difference. Any development that you've had setup-wise on street courses I think is going to be thrown out the window. I think we're all going to have to work really hard to figure out what this car wants. Essentially the car is more lively. It slides around a lot more. You have to be comfortable with it moving underneath you, particularly on corner entry. Drivers are going to struggle to find their footing on their braking and getting into the corner. The rear is really wanting to come around on you.

And then after that, it's really going to be about managing tires over stints. I think that will be difficult, which is a good thing. It's really going to make it hard on the driver to last through the entire race stints. And then the most important thing is just the following rate. With this new car and the way the aerodynamics work, it's all about powering the underwing. We want to make the downforce of the car mainly from the underwing, not disrupt the air to the car behind you. So I think the following is going to be a lot better. You're going to be able to be just right up on someone like a Formula Ford or a go-kart even.

That's really going to play into the hands of the drivers that like to race close, and the drivers that like to do that I think are going to put on a good show for the fans.

MODERATOR: Yesterday Team Penske announced that you'll be carrying the Hitachi colors in eight races

in 2018. Two-part question: One, what will it be like carrying those colors that are very associated with Team Penske and your teammate Helio Castroneves? And carrying that No. 1 on your car and being a marked man, is there any extra pressure with the number, as well?

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: Well, I was just speaking with some of the folks at Hitachi actually. We're just about to have a press conference here at the auto show, and secretly I was actually a little jealous of Helio over the last couple of years. I think Hitachi is such a wonderful brand. It's really fun to see how they're integrated within the sport. These guys are all about technology, innovation, helping practically in the real engineering world, both socially and in environments like IndyCar.

For us, they partner with Chevrolet, our engine manufacturer, and they help us build a better engine. There's a really fun tie-in for them, and to be part of their team and their culture, for me it's a real treat.

Like you said, to carry the No. 1, that adds a little bit more pressure, but the thing that I tell people is when you drive for Roger Penske, there's always pressure, so whether you won a championship or not, I think that level of -- not expectation but responsibility to do your job and represent the group well and trying to get the most out of yourself, I think that's going to be there the same as it was last year.

Q. I just wanted to ask you, after testing the concept and with it being rolled out in 2018, what kind of speeds do you expect to see at the Indianapolis 500 coming up in May?

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: Well, you know, I've not actually been on the speedway yet. Dixon, Hinchcliffe has been there, Montoya has been there, so I've gotten to talk with those guys a bit. I really think you're going to see very similar speeds to what we had this year, 240, 245 miles per hour. We really worked hard to drastically change the entire car but keep the top speeds where they were the year before. The drag coefficient, everything about the car, which is a lot of what we walked through this morning, I think you're going to see very similar qualifying speeds to what we saw last year.

Q. What about safety? Do you think the car is safer this year?

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: Oh, absolutely, yeah, yeah. Really the biggest change from that is going to be the side pods. So we've moved everything forward. There's a lot more crushability from the side pod. It's more positioned in front of the driver on the side. That's probably the biggest safety advancement just from the aero kit side. Obviously we're always pushing for any development that we can have, and I keep talking to Jay about the screen that we've been working on, and it's exciting to see the level of detail that IndyCar has put into this and really the care that they've gone

through to make sure that we're developing something that's going to be only a benefit and no negatives.

We're continuously looking for that. But I think with the new kit itself, the side pod moving forward, not just from an esthetic standpoint looking to me much more like an IndyCar and really good, but it's going to provide that crash structure that the drivers have wanted for the safety cell.

Q. Jay, you talked about the process the past couple years of development of the universal kit, and while obviously something like that is never flawless, were you surprised as smoothly as the process went overall?

JAY FRYE: Yes, but I think part of it was that we had a -- it was a well-thought-out and good plan. If you go back to the whole process starting in December of '15 through coming up with a vision, kind of idealist in the first quarter of '16 to freezing the kits for '17, going through the process that summer to figure out what we wanted to do, and then even coming here last January where we unveiled some sketches and drawings of the car. I think in that time frame we also tested the '17 version car with some of the ideas we had for the '18 car, and everything came back from that. So this car is correlated throughout the whole process, whether it's scale model testing, track testing, anything we've done, and that's a huge compliment to everybody who's been a part of this, and we're really proud of where it is.

Q. What does that say for people like Bill Pappas and Tino Belli at IndyCar for the efforts that they've put in?

JAY FRYE: Yeah, Bill and Tino did a phenomenal job, and them and Andrea Toso at Dallara did a phenomenal job. Chris Beatty was part of the process. The teams are part of the process, the manufacturers are part of the process. We're just really proud of this car. This is very much IndyCar's car, where we all had a hand in getting it realized. Even the fans, think about last year when we were here at the auto show when we did the renderings, we got the fans' input. We wanted to provide them something that they were looking for. I think when you've got a car that has a great historical feel, I think we got our identity back like Josef said a minute ago. There's some other things that we're going to be looking at. This is just the first step in this process, and then there's a five-year plan that started last year. The next three years we'll run this car, but there may be some little nuances that we do to this thing over the next couple years that could even add to and enhance the car and where we're going.

Q. And Josef, you talked about entering the corner and a little bit of instability there. This is part of the process of bringing the driver more back into the equation and relying on driver skill more, and that's what the drivers wanted, right?

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: Yeah, I mean, the drivers definitely got what they asked for. We wanted a car that

was more difficult to drive, that really put it more into our control. That makes us valuable. I mean, teams pay us to drive these cars at the limit, and we want to showcase our worth to the team.

I think you're going to see that next year. You're going to see a car that just is constantly moving. You're going to have to become comfortable with that if you're not already. And at the same time, it's more fun to drive at the limit now. The car is more predictable with the weight distribution moving forward and all the other handling characteristic changes, it's actually more predictable to drive. I enjoy driving it on the limit, and I think there's a lot of good drivers in the field that are going to appreciate that aspect from the car, and like I said, it's going to be a challenge this first year figuring out how to set this thing up. That's the biggest thing that's going to change is what does it really need now to be driven at the limit.

Q. And knowing that going in, I guess in addition to your teammates, who I'm sure you mentioned, who do you think are going to be your main competition for the championship this year?

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: Well, I still think you'll find the guys that were towards the top last year. I think they're still going to be around, poking around for the championship and for an Indianapolis 500 win.

But someone asked me this question earlier. I think it's hard to discount anybody. I mean, the top teams if you want to consider the Penske, the Ganassi, the Andretti organizations as the really large organizations, they really struggle to find separation now. You don't get that like you got 10 years ago where there was big performance gaps. Sort of the mid-sized teams such as an Ed Carpenter Racing or Schmidt Peterson or the Rahal organization, it's very difficult to find big performance gaps, and with that just comes extreme competition.

A guy like Graham Rahal, he can very easily win the championship. He can win an Indianapolis 500. The Schmidt Peterson boys like James Hinchcliffe and Robert Wickens now, they're going to be very difficult to beat.

I don't know if I can really call out one or two people. I think you're going to have, absolutely, Power, Pagnaud, Dixon, those are going to be very tough guys to beat, but it's really the whole field you're going against, and that's sort of been the motto with IndyCar racing over the last five, six years, is our competition is pretty much as tight as you can make it.

Q. Jay, it appears the new car is going to race very well with the closeness, and by taking and making universal aero kit you wanted to open it up for more engine manufacturers to look at it. Is that making any progress? Have you got some engine manufacturers that do want to come on board?

JAY FRYE: Well, first of all, thank you, and I appreciate that. It's been, again, a great team effort. There's been great collaboration on this whole process and project. Again, when we started it in December of '15, we did, and we continue to talk to other OEM's about our direction where we're going. We've made them part of the process. We thought about who best to -- we didn't want to come out with a five-year plan that no other OEM wanted to be part of, either, so we actually had them be part of the process, so they're aware of what we're doing. They seem to be enthused about what we're doing. Does that mean they're coming for sure? Obviously there's still a lot of work to do, but I think we've removed some hurdles going forward.

Again, this is just coming from a team perspective. I think it's great that we have a plan that the teams know where we're going the next three to four years. Everybody has been part of the process to get us where we're at today.

The end of '18 we'll start talking about what we're doing to do in '21, so it'll be a rolling five-year plan. I think this paddock is full of brilliant people. Our manufacturers Chevrolet and Honda are great partners, Firestone has been with us every step of the process, so the future feels really bright, and we've just got to now go execute and keep doing what we're doing.

Q. I understand that there's also a windscreen that's going to be tested to try and eliminate the driver getting hit with anything, to avoid that. When do you start that testing to see how that works, and will you use it in the coming season?

JAY FRYE: We've been testing different applications over the last year, and whether it's the CFD, the simulation work, different materials, we've even quietly had little strips of products on the front of the side pods on a few cars just to see what it does abrasion wise. So we've been very thoughtful and going through a process.

We hope to have something possibly on a car at the Phoenix open test. This will be the first time we actually put it on a car on a racetrack. Again, it's truly to tell what would be next and when it would happen. We just want to make sure we do the right thing and we get it done correctly, and if that takes -- again, the car as it sits right now has a much more robust safety feature with the side impact piece, with the Coke bottle shape and with the side pods moving forward. We just want to keep going. We're not done. We'll hopefully have something to look at here in a couple of weeks.

Q. One of the things that I wondered about was the abrasion which obviously you're testing, and I understand that the product or the material being used there's no distortion with wrapping around, so that's apparently not an issue, and I certainly think you guys are on the right track using that as opposed to the halo system which to me doesn't

look that great.

JAY FRYE: This piece -- one of the things we always talk about is data doesn't drive, so so far we've had all this stuff, some of what the data says this and the simulator says this. The day we actually get it on a car, an actual race car and a race car driver driving the thing, that's the ultimate final test. That ultimately tells where we're at in the process and where we've got to go next.

That's something that we're looking forward to getting done here very soon.

Q. Josef, as a driver, mentioning about less downforce coming from the wings now and more on the floor and the corner entry, thinking about street courses such as Detroit, such as St. Petersburg, first race of the car with the bumps and all of you screaming down into that first turn, the first lap for the first race of 2018. Could you talk a little bit about from your point of view as a driver will you be reminding yourself at that point that you'll be in that brand new car with the new characteristics or will that be something that will be minute by minute?

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: Well, that's a good point. We probably should have that speech with the field before we go out there. I'm sure we'll be reminded by race control that we need to watch as it's a new car and it's going to be our first time running it in race situations. You can't predict all that stuff. I think there will be some guys that get caught out. Heck, it could be me even. I could get caught out in the first race. It's going to be different. The brake zone is going to be slightly different, the characteristics of the car, the way it attacks corner entry, the way it feels on corner entry, the way we're going to drive side by side, how close we can race each other, those are all going to be new things that we're going to have to figure out. In a way, that's exciting. The driver has got to learn something new. The fans get to watch that process. But it can also bring some risks. There might be some accidents to start the year, and that's all part of it. It's all part of racing and figuring out how we've got to race this car. To me it's an exciting thing. It's an exciting thing to go through as a driver, and as a fan I think it's an exciting thing to watch.