

IndyCar Media

Conference

Friday February 9, 2018

Bobby Rahal

Dr. Susan Lana

Graham Rahal

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: Welcome, everybody, to the INDYCAR afternoon press conference. We're pleased to be joined by two very special guests, making a very exciting announcement this morning. We are pleased to be joined by Dr. Sue Lana, who is a professor of oncology at the Flint Animal Cancer Center. Thank you so much for joining us today. Also Graham Rahal, six-time IndyCar Series race winner, driving for Rahal Letterman Lanigan Racing.

Graham, I want to invite you to share the news with us.

GRAHAM RAHAL: First of all, thank you, guys, for being here. This is not only an exciting day because of this announcement, but obviously getting on track, really kicking off the 2018 season for the Verizon IndyCar Series.

On behalf of everybody at Rahal Letterman Lanigan Racing, I'm proud to announce that One Cure will be joining us as our primary sponsor right here in Phoenix, as well as Portland, as well as a major associate on our car for the entire season.

Our goal is to raise awareness for cancer research, to open people's eyes a little bit to the connection between dogs and humans, that in many ways all cancer is alike, and that the concept to find a cure for cancer could literally be walking right beside us.

As many of us know, because it's touched all of us, cancer affects each and every one of us really, whether it's a family member, whether it's a friend, a furry friend, it certain has affected all of us.

Actually recently in my family, my mom just lost one of our long-time dogs to cancer the week before. My Aunt Judy has been affected by cancer many times. So this certainly hits near and dear to all of our hearts.

To that end, one of the things we really want to mention is that this is all possible due to a really generous benefactor. We're excited to be a part of this. We're excited to raise awareness, and race for a cure.

Thanks for coming.

THE MODERATOR: Graham, I'll let Dr. Lana give us an overview of the program. It's a really interesting program. It seems like scientists and researchers have determined that the makeup of dogs, the way that you treat dogs for cancer, could ultimately lead to things that might help treat human cancer, as well. Graham, I'll ask in closing with your comments why that program is so important to you. You mentioned your family dog just passed, but some things that mean a lot to you with this program.

GRAHAM RAHAL: Well, first of all, like I said, it's affected us both personally with my aunt as well as others in our family. We've always been huge, huge, huge pet lovers. Had lots and lots of animals over the years. Like I said, Bear, we lost Bear two weeks ago. Bear was a huge part of our family for a long, long time.

But I don't think people recognize, and I didn't know this until we started talking, 85% of the genetic makeup of dogs is identical to those in humans. In many cases, the cancer cells, correct me if I'm wrong, is identical to what is found in human beings. The cures can relate to one another in many, many ways.

Dogs are more like humans than mice or many other animals may be. So perhaps together the idea here is that there is one cure and there can be one cure for all types. I'll post it up later, there's a great story, a video of Emily Brown, who was given a very short period of time to live, had kind of accepted that. A treatment that was found out of dogs has now let Emily live for 20-plus years since that time. I'll post that up on my social media later.

One Cure is a group we're very proud and excited to be associated with. This is something, we talk about raising awareness for cancer research, but this is certainly something we can all relate to. In our sport, our mission is we'll go across the entire year. It's an easy message to drive home. It's something that everybody can rally around. You can go to OneCure.com and learn a lot more about what's going on here at Colorado State University, at the Flint Animal Care Center. But it's really impressive.

We've all been affected. I guarantee everybody in here has been affected by cancer in one way or another. So this is a powerful thing for us to be associated with.

THE MODERATOR: From One Care, we're joined by



Dr. Sue Lana, professor of oncology at Flint Animal Care Center.

Graham and I are very uneducated scientifically. Could you give us more insight about the connection between dogs and humans, what One Cure is trying to do in finding one cure.

DR. SUSAN LANA: The One Cure initiative at Colorado State University, Flint Animal Cancer Center, the main mission is to raise the awareness of what we call comparative oncology. It's studying cancer across different species, so recognizing that humans and dogs and cats and other animals also get cancer, that many of the cancers that we get are very similar in dogs and in people.

For example, osteosarcoma, which is bone cancer, happens in kids, young adults. We see it commonly in our veterinary patients, in dogs. It looks similar under the microscope, behaves very much the same, we treat it very much the same.

What we're trying to do is by looking at and studying the disease we see in dogs, trying new treatments, hopefully translating those into better treatments for humans, as well, and extending the life of both our veterinary patients as well as the human patients affected by this.

THE MODERATOR: We're also joined by 1986 Indy 500 winner and Rahal Letterman Lanigan Racing co-owner, Bobby Rahal.

Talk from a personal perspective, having this group with your team in 2018, what does that mean to you?

BOBBY RAHAL: This is a fabulous effort. It came to our attention several months ago. I actually visited Flint. I got to tell you, the people, the facility itself, was very impressive, what they're doing. Forgetting just the normal care of dogs, there's also horses cared for there as well, and other animals. But very, very impressive, the tour we took when we were there most of the day. I mean, it's pretty amazing.

We're thrilled to be a part of it, thrilled to try to help them in their quest by raising awareness, by generating funds to the charity.

For me, as Graham said, we've all been afflicted by cancer in our families, our loved ones, whether it's dogs or what have you. People care more about dogs than they do about their kids. That's a whole 'nother subject (laughter).

But, you know, recently my wife and I had a dog that died of cancer not too long ago. We're just pleased to be a part of it. It's a fabulous effort that the doctor and others are committed to. As I said, when you go visit it, it's pretty impressive. It's amazing what's going on

there.

We're just thankful, looking forward to our year together here. Did you announce Portland?

GRAHAM RAHAL: I did that for you.

BOBBY RAHAL: Thank you (laughter).

The renewal of the Portland race, to have the One Cure car there as well, I think it's going to be great for everybody. I'm just really pleased. We welcome them to our company, our family.

THE MODERATOR: As we mentioned, One Cure is going to be the primary sponsor of the 15 car at races here in Phoenix and also Portland, associate sponsor at other races this season.

Graham, you have done a team test?

GRAHAM RAHAL: I have, only at Sebring. This will be a different place for me. I'm obviously looking forward to getting out there. I was watching video of last night, with the windscreen on the car. We're excited to get out there and give it a shot.

There's a lot going on. There's a lot of momentum. There's a lot of excitement. As you guys now know, the focus here right now is One Cure. We're excited to be a part of it.

Actually, one of the things I found interesting, we can discuss this more, this morning we were talking about the lifespan of dogs versus human beings. I asked how long does it take to see an effect, how long does it take to prove something, that a treatment works or doesn't.

One of the things that's cool in dogs you can see the results in one to three years, in humans it can take five to 10 and even more years due to their life span. It again does directly affects us. We can certainly help our dogs.

I think dad hit the nail on the head. There's no doubt that my mom loves her dogs far more than she loves any of us. She'll tell you that, too, probably (laughter).

Being an animal lover, my wife is, my little sister is the biggest animal lover I've ever met in my entire life, this is a really, really cool partnership for us.

I haven't been to CSU, to Flint yet, but I guarantee you I'm going to go, take Court, my mom, my sister, everybody out there to see what they do. It will be awesome.

BOBBY RAHAL: One thing I noticed that Mari Hulman George has donated so much. Her name was pretty big on the wall. That usually denotes the commitment you made. I thought it was interesting.

INDYCAR, the Hulman-George family, has had an involvement with the Flint hospital as well, and now this. It's nice to see it all come back around again.

THE MODERATOR: Absolutely. We'll take questions.

Q. Speaking of dog years, it was probably seven years ago or so where things weren't really looking too good as far as your INDYCAR efforts. You were a part-time Indy 500 only team. Now thanks to the rejuvenation of your son beginning in 2015, there's victories, championships to contend for. You have the defending Indy 500 winning driver joining the operation. When you think of where you've been, where you're at now, how remarkable is that comeback for you?

BOBBY RAHAL: I certainly didn't enjoy those early days, particularly given that when we were a full-time entrant in the '90s, early 2000s, we won as many races probably as Penske or Ganassi or anybody else in those days, you know, Buddy winning the 500 in 2004, to come back and have that level of performance, I really have to hand it to my partners.

We sat down, talked about it. We're either going to do this or we're not. We're not going to stay where we are. We really made a commitment to build our engineering group up. I think we've got one of the best groups out there, Eddie Jones, Tom German, many of the other assistant engineers, what have you. We really made a conscious effort to try to go out and get the best people we could. We're continuing to do that.

We have a lot of good guys, many of whom have worked with Graham before. There was some familiarity there, a comfort level, but also really good people who didn't have egos that would get in the way of working together.

I think you saw the results in 2015, in being that competitive. We're continuing to build. This year we're really starting to build up our marketing and sales group. You can see the number of announcements to date, and there's more coming. That's starting to work.

It's making it fun to go to the races again. To see him run up front, to have Takuma, I love the guy. The thing about Takuma, what you see is what you get. When you come to the race, you know he's going to give you 100%. Maybe he'll give you 110. But I love the guy. He and Graham work well together.

You can never take anything for granted. Always optimistic. I think there's real reason to feel we're going to have a pretty good year.

Q. And he's just 29 years old.

BOBBY RAHAL: I think any driver, you look at Franchitti, Dixon, a lot of these guys, probably mid to late 20s to 40s is a sweet spot in a driver's career. I'm

not looking forward to him hitting 40 years old. That will make me feel real old.

GRAHAM RAHAL: I'm not either.

BOBBY RAHAL: I think there's no reason why 10, 12 years (indiscernible).

Q. Graham, in making the announcement, you said this was thanks to a 'generous benefactor'. Who is the benefactor?

GRAHAM RAHAL: We've been asked to keep that private. In this case obviously, an individual's generosity has allowed us to go racing and to spread the message and the word and get fans to rally with us, get fans to get onboard, to go to OneCure.com to donate, to be a part of this.

So it's exciting for us to do that. Clearly from a charitable perspective, the focus for One Cure is not to be sponsoring racecars. That's why the benefactor (indiscernible) in his way. For us, we're excited to be a part of that.

Again, you know, all I ask is that all of you guys, cancer has affected all of us in one way or another, so this is a pretty easy message to write about, this is a pretty easy message to get across the wire to all of our fans, family members and friends, everybody that would want to rally around something like this.

We're excited for what's to come.

Q. Bobby, excepting the extreme market volatility this week, which is continuing today, in the last year the financial situation in America seems to be improved. As someone who is out looking all the time for sponsorship, in general, how would you characterize the INDYCAR sponsorship market right now compared to a year ago?

BOBBY RAHAL: Yeah, the economy is clearly much better. It's gotten a whole lot better just recently with the tax package that was approved, because now corporations are going to be taxed at a much lesser rate than they have been ordinarily. They're already investing in facilities, giving people bonuses.

I think the amount of money that's going to be in the system the next couple years is going to be tremendous. It's kind of been percolating out there. Now there's a chance for it to rise more to the top than it is. We're seeing that in our car dealerships. People are more confident. When you have confident consumers out there, confident companies out there about the direction of the economy, what have you, then they're ready to make long-term commitments. I think we've seen a lot of that already.

I give a lot of credit to Mark Miles, Jay Frye. I think the organization of INDYCAR, you're reading all these great things about INDYCAR right now. That's taken a

lot of work over a number of years to get to this point. I give them a lot of credit because, let's face it, companies do read the press. They talk to people. It's nothing but positive.

I think you're seeing new teams and new sponsors coming into the series, that's all great news. We haven't seen that for some time. I think right now things really couldn't be much better for IndyCar.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you for joining us today.