

IndyCar Media Conference

Saturday March 10, 2018

Mark Kent Rob Buckner

Press Conference

THE MODERATOR: Thank you to the Streets of St. Petersburg and the Firestone Grand Prix of St. Petersburg and the Verizon IndyCar Series for giving Chevrolet a couple moments to come and say hi, we're back, we're excited.

We have several of our Chevrolet executives here with Jim Campbell, our vice president of racing and performance vehicles. And we have Terry Dolan, who is the director of the motorsports marketing program. We have Don (indiscernible), the senior manager of propulsion performance and racing.

Then up here on the front we have Mark Kent and the soon-to-be-introduced other person. Mark is going to take the microphone in a moment, say a few words to kick off the 2018 season, then he's going to introduce the newest member of the Chevrolet racing team in the Verizon IndyCar Series.

Mark, take it away.

MARK KENT: Good morning, everybody. Thanks for the opportunity to be with you this morning. As Judy said, I have an introduction to make, but I'm going to make a few opening comments.

Many of you know that Chevrolet is in many forms of motorsport. That's because racing offers us tremendous benefits in many ways. Technology transfer, taking what we learn on the racetrack, putting it into our production cars. We take our production car technology and put it into a race car. It is a great benefit to Chevrolet.

Also on the marketing front, being able to display our products at racetracks across the world and allowing race fans to come and look at those cars, learn about those cars, hopefully put us on their shopping list, is another great benefit.

But one of the biggest benefits we get out of performance in racing is the ability to develop our employees, identifying up-and-coming engineers, and exposing them to the fast-paced motorsports arena to hopefully hone their program management skills, hone their decision-making skills, being able to make decisions quickly and effectively.



So we use motorsports to rotate up-and-coming engineers through, we rotate them for two- or three-year assignments. Many of you probably remember Chris Berube. He was on program manager for many years. Chris came from a vehicle engineering background which was instrumental during the aero kit era of IndyCar.

But as we now transition back to the universal aero kit and the engine being the main focus going forward, we wanted to identify a program manager that had more propulsion system engine background. I'm here today to introduce that individual, Rob Buckner. He is our new Chevrolet IndyCar program manager. He's a modest individual, so I'll tell you a little bit about him.

He's very well-educated. He has a bachelors in mechanical engineering, as well as a masters in engineering, and a second masters in business administration. Very educated book-wise, but he's also a very smart person with his background within the company.

I'm going to turn it over to Rob to talk a little bit further.

ROB BUCKNER: Thanks, Mark. Good morning, everyone. I'm very excited to be back in the Verizon IndyCar Series. I spent some time here from 2013 to 2015 as a track-side support engineer, integrated into Ilmor, but as a Chevrolet employee. I was on Sebastien Bourdais's timing stand, did a lot of calibration work during that era of the car, really had a great time over here and excited to be back for another year of IndyCar.

As Mark mentioned, I have a pretty extensive engine background. I've always been in propulsion. While working at Chevrolet, I started in a validation engineering role in 2010 working on the Gen-5 V8 program which powers our Corvette and performance cars. I've always loved performance cars in racing. Once I got over to the motorsports side, worked in IndyCar, NASCAR, now back here in Mark's group. Thank you to Mark and Jim Campbell. I've had a great support group to get me to this point.

As Mark mentioned, I'm hoping to continue to develop my program management skills. I'm excited to be in a new role in motorsports for me, but leaning heavily on Mark and Chris Berube, who did a great job with this program, then all of our technical partners who do a great job in our race teams are very proud to be

associated with.

Really I'm just inheriting a program that's been really successful with six straight manufacturer championships. It's a great group. I'm excited to be back.

THE MODERATOR: We'll take a few questions.

Q. Do you know how many cars you will be willing to run this coming May for the Indy 500?

MARK KENT: If history repeats itself, there's 33 cars that start. I think the last few cars have been 33 or 34 cars that have tried to start the race. Historically we've had about half the field.

I would imagine probably a 17, 17 split. If there's more cars that want to try to qualify, we're definitely in a position to support some more cars.

Q. Rob, when you look at the fact Chevrolet has won six consecutive manufacturers championships since coming back in, how important is it to keep that kind of momentum now that we're back to engines taking a priority with not the same aero differences between the two sides?

ROB BUCKNER: That's one of the things for us that's good, is we were successful since coming back to IndyCar in every formula, whether it's engine competition origin and aero kit. Working with power technical partners and race teams, we've done a great job in every formula.

We're expecting more of the same for this year. We're pretty confident we've done all of our homework and we're ready to go on the engine side.

Q. Rob, what was one and two on your get-this-done list when you were given this job, given the success this program has already had?

ROB BUCKNER: Mark did a really nice job, he handed off a packet to me. In January I kind of was able to pick up a lot of the stuff that him and Chris Berube had done. We just had some final things to take care of before going testing.

We've gone through the homologation process through this year. We've ran a lot of miles test-wise with a lot of our teams. We've been to Phoenix, Barber, Sebring. We put a fair amount of miles on our race package this year. Just starting to build that confidence, get ready for this first race.

Q. How much input do you believe you're going to have when you come to the new engine formula after the V6 era is going to change up in a couple years?

MARK KENT: We've been working hand-in-hand with both IndyCar and Honda to develop the next formula. The real goal of the next formula was to make it fair for everybody if a new manufacturer came to the series.

If you're a new manufacturer coming into the series, we didn't want to allow a new manufacturer to take what we've learned for six years now and catapult past us by watching what we've done. So we've created a new formula with IndyCar that will come out here in the future, with or without a new manufacturer. It will be one that will get us back on a level starting point so it will be a fair competition on the track when we all hit the track.

Q. I know talking to Mr. Campbell in the past, he really loved how good an aero kit Chevrolet had built from 2015 through 2017. In a lot of ways from your standpoint, was it hard to give that up in terms of how well a job it did do for the brand?

MARK KENT: As you mentioned, it was a very successful era for us. We really endorsed aero kits because it provided us two big opportunities. One, it provided us an opportunity for visual differentiation, which we got, and it also provided us an opportunity to demonstrate our engineering expertise, to out-engineer our competition. I believe, based on the results, we did that as well.

The aero kit era was very successful for us and accomplished what we were after. But in working with IndyCar, we also saw that the cost of an aero kit program was, in fact, a hurdle that was potentially keeping other engine manufacturers from entering the series.

We have aligned with IndyCar on the new universal aero kit and we hope that some more engine manufacturers come to the series because we'd love to compete with them in the showroom and on the racetrack.

Q. With the continuation of competition between Chevy and Honda maybe till 2020 or beyond, I understand on the even years you really are restricted quite a bit what you can change in the engine. Between the two manufacturers, you've kind of agreed not to do a lot of changes in the odd year because you've been with this engine for so many years, you've found everything you can find, and it would be expensive to get a little bit more performance out of it. Are the engines going to pretty much stay the same going forward? What do you anticipate the changes you can do?

ROB BUCKNER: For us, the work is never really done. If you stopped engine development because you thought there was nothing left to gain, in a pretty short period of time you wouldn't be very competitive. Our engine group does a great job of continuously searching for that last little bit of performance.

You want to be able to reuse some engine parts, get a lot of life out of them, which I think us and Honda agreed to do with limiting some changes. But we're still doing a development program and looking for all

the performance we can give our teams. We'll continue to do that throughout this engine formula.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you.