

# IndyCar Media Conference

Friday April 13, 2018

## Larry Foyt James Davison David Byrd Brian Belardi Press Conference



**THE MODERATOR:** If I might have your attention, next step in the press conference schedule today, we are pleased to be joined by a group of racers who are coming together for the 102nd running of the Indianapolis 500 next month. We have with us today Larry Foyt, James Davison, Brian Belardi and David Byrd. James Davison will be competing in his fourth Indianapolis 500, this time in the 33 Chevrolet of AJ Foyt Racing, along with Jonathan Byrd's Racing, Hollinger Motorsport, and Belardi Auto Racing. Let's start first with Larry Foyt. This is an exciting day for you, a third car in the Indianapolis 500. Tell us about how this program came together.

**LARRY FOYT:** It is an exciting day, and thanks. Yes, we have a history of running multiple entries at Indy and a third car, but we had kind of decided we weren't going to do it this year and focus on the 4 and the 14, but really when I got to talking with David and found out James was available and the people that we could put together to make the program and kind of work a joint effort here, it just all really made sense, and we think it's something that will really add to our two cars and be a benefit to the team as a whole.

So that's kind of how the partnership came together, and everybody just worked really hard to put it all together. A couple different people involved, and it's been a great group. So far everything has been really smooth.

**THE MODERATOR:** James, as mentioned, this will be your fourth Indianapolis 500, but this probably feels a little bit unique in that you've got a full month, if you will, or a full schedule for the month of May. Let's talk about that and the benefits thereof.

**JAMES DAVISON:** Yeah, absolutely. It's a very unfamiliar position that I'm in, and I've got to thank the gentleman next to me in addition to Brad Hollinger for providing this opportunity. We're all very excited for it. Obviously AJ Foyt Racing has shown fantastic form so far this year, that we're really looking to capitalize on, and yeah, the month of May can't come soon enough.

What it's going to be like running the full two weeks is going to be a new experience for me, really being able to hit qualifying properly. In 2014 being a single-engine program, we had no reason to really go big and trim and those kind of things. There were 33 cars in the field. Now obviously qualifying is important. It's not just where you start the race, you've got to make it.

Yeah, really looking forward to it, and yeah, can't thank all the supporters behind the program enough.

**THE MODERATOR:** Brian, down on the end, your race team has had a lot of success at Indianapolis Motor Speedway, won a couple of freedom 100s, but I understand this is your first time to not only participate in the Indianapolis 500 but see it live in person yourself.

**BRIAN BELARDI:** It is. I've always told myself that I was never -- even though I had success in winning those two freedom 100s, I would always show up on Sunday morning to do a few press things, but I would always end up leaving because I always had told myself that if I did this, if I did see the Indy 500, I always wanted to be there live.

**THE MODERATOR:** This is going to be an exciting time in that respect then?

**BRIAN BELARDI:** Yeah, I'm looking forward to it, especially with a great group of people here.

**THE MODERATOR:** David, your family has had such the Indianapolis 500 participation history. It continues to be a motivation for you each year to get back into the 500 and carry on your father's legacy in that respect. Just talk about the excitement there and putting this deal together.

**DAVID BYRD:** Yeah, it's been a long time coming. James and I really started working on this really when the checkered flag flew last year. I was so impressed with his performance in last year's race, and just felt like after taking a step back last year, not having a program, that he was going to be the right guy to bring us back and really start a new era for us. Being able to put the program together with Larry has been a great experience, and I think it's going to be a competitive program.

My father partnered with AJ back in 1994, so 24 years

ago, my dad worked with AJ, and this year I'm able to work with Larry, so kind of a multigenerational thing happening, so it's kind of exciting and fun, and some similarities to that program. We ran No. 33 back then, going to run 33 again. It's our 33rd anniversary of our first 500 this year. '85 was the first time my dad took a driver to the Speedway.

To echo James, May can't get here soon enough because every year -- and my wife probably complains about this a little bit, but my life kind of revolves around the Indy 500, so being part of it is kind of -- puts the cap on the year. And to be able to do it with James is going to be great. To be able to bring Brian along with the program, we couldn't have put this together without his involvement. I want him to experience his first 500 live on the ground by being a participant on the pit box and calling the race. It'll be exciting for him, and it's going to be a great experience for everybody.

**Q. David, your family has been doing this for a long time, and I've never really asked you this question. Do you do it because to help your business, advertising for your family business, or do you do it because you love racing and you just want to give back something you love?**

DAVID BYRD: Yes, both. You know, it's like all of us would say, it's a bit of a sickness. Once it's in the bloodstream you can't get it out. There's no cure for it. So it's good for our business. It always has been. So that's one reason to carry it on. But absolutely love it. Like I said, my life -- my year, my calendar revolves around Indy, but not just Indy, but we are in other motorsports programs, as well. We're running Chris Windom with Brian and the Freedom 100 to kind of take a step we haven't done before.

**Q. Who owns the car, whose are the engines, who's going to be the engineer, who's going to be the strategist? Just fill out all those blanks, please.**

LARRY FOYT: Well, we're all in it together. The equipment would be ours. Basically what we've done is Steve Moore is a big part of the program. He's helping all the -- I guess he's filling the team manager role, so he's helped secure the crew and all the people. As well, Kyle Brannan will be engineering the car, so James has a little bit of history with him, so we're excited to have him on board, and it's a really strong group that those key players have put in. That's one of the reasons why when we all put our heads together and decided to do this, it was a big deal. Like David said, it's been work from everybody, but yeah, Steve Moore and Kyle Brannan are kind of the team principals on that side.

**Q. (No microphone.)**

LARRY FOYT: Well, I think even when you look around the IndyCar paddock, there's only so many people and mechanics to go around, so when you take the 24-car field and grow it to 33, it just always can be difficult to find the people you really want. And we've had good

people in the past, but also we've had to take some of our people to help that program, and that was one thing we didn't want to do this year. So really for him it was just knowing that we had the right people involved to make it a good program, and we were able to do that.

**Q. Larry, with the car count now at 35, is there any hesitation to take on a one-off program because two people are going to go home?**

LARRY FOYT: Well, I was going to say, it's really -- there's been a lot of talk, and that's great for the strength of the sport right now and the speedway that we're back to having some bumping. I just hope we're not a part of it or having to deal with the stress. I remember a few years ago that's a very stressful situation, but when you look at the history, that's a big part of Indianapolis, that pure emotion that you see on bump day from people is unbelievable. We're just doing everything we can. This entry will definitely be working engineering-wise with our other cars, and so that's something that we think will help both sides to give us competitive cars all the way around. At the end of the day, you never know what's going to happen, and when that day comes, you just hope you've done everything to not be a part of it.

It's something in the back of your mind, of course, but we're just trying to do everything on the competition side to make sure we don't have to worry about that and we're thinking about Fast Nine and not bumping?

**Q. James, I guess you would say you've had day jobs, but you keep coming back to Indianapolis. It's been your one race a year in this series, but you keep fighting back for more at Indianapolis. What drives that?**

JAMES DAVISON: Well, I guess it really started growing up going to the IndyCar race at Surfers Paradise in the late '90s with my father and got a feel for IndyCar and the Americana and just loved it. I remember growing up also having the history of the Indianapolis 500 from 1911 to '94 book with Carl Fisher on the front cover of it sitting on the coffee table in front of the TV as a kid. So yeah, the Indy 500 has always been my passion. I think a number of drivers in the series have focused on Formula 1 and then things haven't worked out, and then, all right, we'll become an IndyCar driver now. But for me, no, I've always dedicated my entire career to the United States and being an IndyCar driver. Obviously it's very difficult to become a full-time driver. There's only so many opportunities. You've got to catch the right break. I didn't quite catch those. When you look at my year that I did Indy Lights who moved up and so on, and so the Indy 500 is that one race that you're able to gain supporters much easier than the others. I think that's a known fact. The Indy 500 is, what, two thirds of the series' real exposure just in that one event.

And of course it's the greatest race in the world. It's

the greatest spectacle in racing. You watch the restarts on TV, it gives you goosebumps. I mean, it's just such an amazing spectacle. The history of the event is just amazing. And yeah, I just have a massive passion for it. Trying to win the race is my life goal, so yeah, hopefully that kind of answers your question a little bit.

**Q. You brought it on last year in the 500, replacing sea bass. A lot of people were surprised by your performance. Were you surprised? How did you feel being in the seat at that point?**

JAMES DAVISON: To be honest with you, no. With this sport, if you don't catch the right breaks, you just become gone and forgotten. Again, if you look at who I ran Indy Lights with, who I beat, to be straight up, it shouldn't be a surprise. You know, I don't want to name names and so on, but look, also as a driver, you've got to try to get yourself in the right equipment and situation, and obviously the opportunity with Bourdais, filling in for him, I knew that was huge. It was a very stressful 24 hours from when he had his crash to being confirmed in the car. I knew it was going to be nearly a career-defining opportunity, and I think to date it has proven that way for sure.

Look, David approached me in the garage area after the race and just said, look, dude, that was awesome. I've seen enough now, let's do something. And immediately after the race I've got that essential support behind me that I've never had before to try and get a deal done in advance.

Look, I drive aggressively. I know that a lot of these guys with high profiles are guys that just have two arms and two legs like we all do and have caught the right breaks in their career, and so, yeah, when the opportunity came to get in equal equipment, it was on. You know, look, I went all in to try to win it. I could have just brought the car home fifth or sixth, but I went for it because I knew had things worked out, it would have changed my life. Finishing fifth or sixth it wouldn't have. Look, I became one of many drivers to come up short to try to win the 500, but it was for sure a great step in my career, and unquestionably it's put me in this position right here today with Larry, David, Brian and Brett Hollinger.

**Q. You just kind of alluded to the fact that you hadn't necessarily had this kind of support before. Having a full year roughly to prepare for this, how does that change the mindset whenever you're coming around to this month of May versus previous years?**

JAMES DAVISON: Look, I haven't known any different. You know, the three years that I've made the race, I remember Ed Carpenter when I got secure with the seat last year to fill in for Bourdais, and Ed Carpenter saw me in the garage area and started laughing and said, dude, you always just make it, and it's so true. In 2014 I was the 33rd entry with support from IndyCar,

and that's what got me into the field. In 2015 Dale had actually parked the car on Monday and Tuesday practice because I had nowhere near enough support behind me, but in the end put me in the car. And then of course last year with Bourdais.

I've always gone into the event with one, two days' practice, and just focused on what I need to do, drawing off my experience data bank from driving other cars or Indy Lights, and yeah, just focused in black and white on what I've needed to do. So now, like I touched on earlier, I think what's going to help is probably getting more out of qualifying this time, again, because you really need to make the race, not just think about your start position this year, and yeah, getting -- spending more time with an engineer to get the balance right in race trim, as well, I think is where it's really going to pay dividends.

THE MODERATOR: I might point out that IndyCar has an open test at the speedway on April 30th, and I assume the next day on May 1st you'll be part of a rookie refresher day. Would that be the plan, Larry, or not?

LARRY FOYT: No, probably won't be. I think he'll do his refreshers when they start the two weeks.

**Q. Brian, 10 years ago you were driving SCCA sprints, June sprints in Formula Continental. How do you go from that to being an Indy 500 entrant?**

BRIAN BELARDI: Well, it's all about passion for me. I have a tremendous passion for this sport. I've had some breaks along the way, making the right call as far as business models. In 2011 there was an opportunity to purchase an Indy Lights team, so again, I took advantage of that opportunity, and just kind of went with it. We've been successful. I've surrounded myself with great people, and I think that's the key. It's the key in this, and it's the key to any business in life quite honestly.