

# IndyCar Media Conference

Tuesday May 1, 2018

## Jay Frye

## Doug Boles

## Allison Melangton

### Press Conference



**DOUG BOLES:** Good afternoon, everybody. Doug Boles with the Indianapolis Motor Speedway. I think you know the people that are flanking me at the moment. To my right, Allison Melangton, vice president of the Speedway, to my left Jay Frye, the president of competition for IndyCar.

We are 10 days away from official on-track activity at the Indianapolis Motor Speedway as we move into the IndyCar Grand Prix that takes place and begins a week from Friday. Actually Thursday we'll be on track here with the Road to Indy series guys. But our real official day is 10 days next Friday. Hard to believe we are almost within a week of real on-track activity, 26 days away from the 102nd running of the Indianapolis 500.

Last night about midnight I was able to tweet out that May is finally here. We count it down 365 days a year. It starts out, seems like it's forever away, all of a sudden it's upon us.

A couple of weeks ago we had an oval track test scheduled here at the Indianapolis Motor Speedway. The man sitting to my left, Jay Frye, said, The weather doesn't look really good. Let's postpone this thing and do it a little bit later. Maybe the best thing that's happened to the Indianapolis Motor Speedway this year is the decision that Jay made, because the weather has been beautiful.

The number of people who came out yesterday for the test was unbelievable. I haven't been over to turn two today, but I expect it will be just as strong, especially with Danica running this afternoon.

But let's talk about yesterday. What a great test that we had yesterday. I stood in the corner of turn two at the end of the day yesterday and I could not believe the number of cars that were running with the same time. They seemed to be running pretty good together. The car looks good. After looking at yesterday, looks like it's going to be good.

**JAY FRYE:** It's funny, usually when you cancel something like we did, when you cancel as early as we did, usually the next week is like this, then when you come back, it's not like this. I think we got lucky.

This is really good. We ran 1,284 laps as a group. Top speed was 226 miles an hour, for a brand-new car for its first time out with a big group, where they're starting to get after it, was a really good top speed I thought yesterday.

The drivers were running together a lot. The rate of closing on each other I think is pretty spectacular. That will be something we'll keep an eye on. Really good first day.

**DOUG BOLES:** A lot of parity. The season so far has been really competitive. You might talk a little bit about leading up to that, but we saw that yesterday, you had T.K. at the top of the list, but everybody looked strong. Looks like it's going to be very competitive.

**JAY FRYE:** I think from 1st to 20th, the 21st car ran 220. Again, it's a real good group. I think this year's field will be as strong as it's been in a long time, when we come back to the 35-car field, it will be really strong.

One of the things about this car this year, we are collecting data. We're in a very data-driven society right now. The new car has almost twice as many passes as we had last year at this time. That's something throughout the field, not just for the lead. Data-wise, it's providing everything we thought it would and then some.

Also, like Doug mentioned, the aesthetics of the car, that's how the thing got started. We wanted to get our identity back, what an IndyCar is supposed to look like. A lot of input from the fans, a lot of input from the paddock, all the teams. We came up with what we did. We're really proud of where we're at with the car.

Everybody wants to check the boxes. We make fun of checking boxes. But the thing's checked the box everywhere we tested it, everywhere where the manufacture has tested it. There is still lots of work to be done, but so far so good.

**DOUG BOLES:** One of the things the Verizon IndyCar Series has become known for, particularly the last few years, is just how competitive it is. We saw from the beginning at St. Petersburg, when we had rookies leading and even a rookie almost won, that the competition is really strong. It seems like you have some significant momentum on the IndyCar Series side with getting strong teams and a significant number,

then it feels like this year you have made the most of that, getting 33 for the first time. Talk about why you think that might be.

JAY FRYE: Part of it is we've worked hard the last couple years, we have new teams this year which is great. As a whole in motorsports, there's not a lot of that happening. We actually have four new teams. The next couple years you'll see even more coming. That really helps with the field for the 500 as we expand with our regular group. That helps again, like Doug mentioned, fill the field.

It's a really good group. We're excited about the new teams we have. It's been very competitive. Right now it's tied, Chevy and Honda, 2-2. So the engine manufacturers are doing a great job. We're off to a good start.

DOUG BOLES: Yesterday you checker flagged things at 5:00. People stayed here because they knew something else was happening. Josef Newgarden took to the oval. It's May, man, we want to talk about the Verizon IndyCar Series. Josef got off with the new windscreen. Second time we tested it. A huge process that goes behind it.

JAY FRYE: A lot of the times we do things randomly, that's how it works. For the windscreen, the first test was with our most decorated driver. Scott Dixon has the most championships. We wanted him in there first. That was we thought a pretty cool moment with him. We checked the box with Honda. Yesterday we did it with our new champion, Josef Newgarden. Checked the box with Chevrolet. Both manufacturers have had an opportunity.

I would say yesterday we learned a lot. We went 220 with the windscreen. Hopefully you all had a chance to look at it. It's very transparent. There are times when you actually look at the car, it was very hard to see it on the car. The Opticore product is spectacular. We put it on the ground, the sun hits it a certain way, it almost disappears. We're really encouraged about where we're at today.

Yesterday was, again, a good day. A box was checked. So next thing we'll do is get it on a car in a road course, see how that works, a street course. Think it certainly has great potential.

DOUG BOLES: This morning you got through rookie testing. Seems to have gone well there. This afternoon we get to see Danica Patrick at the Indianapolis Motor Speedway in an IndyCar for the first time since 2011. Any thoughts on that? She will be coming for a refresher test, different than a rookie test. What does she have to do this afternoon?

JAY FRYE: She has to finish Phase II and Phase III. This morning, the rookie piece, the ROP program, is

three phases. The refresher group has to be two. Phase II is 210 to 215. Phase III is plus 215 laps each. After that, they'll be able to go run. Once they get through the phases, they'll be able to run as much as they want after that.

The rookies did a phenomenal job this morning. Two of them are full-time drivers in the series right now. One is a part-time driver, but runs a lot with us. Again, it's part of the depth of where we're at. You look at the rookies out here, they're legitimate championship contenders. I think the field, we're really proud of the group that's going to be back here in a few weeks, the entire group.

DOUG BOLES: We are very excited about it.

JAY FRYE: Danica, I didn't finish that. It's obviously great to have her here. We had a drivers meeting yesterday. It was great to have her back. Excited to have her this afternoon. Again, we pieced this together so there's some things we're doing today. When we come back on the 15th, not everybody will have to go through the program. Part of that is because we have so many cars.

So on the 15th when we come back, the veterans will be out from 11 to 1, the rookie refreshers will be from 1 to 3, then 3 to 6 on the 15th will be everybody. By the time we get to the 3 to 6 piece of the program on the 15th, we're going.

DOUG BOLES: One of the things you saw there or heard there when Jay was talking, there is a process to all of this. I got a lot of questions about why some people are getting to test yesterday, today and tomorrow. Actually, if you look at it, it extends to the beginning of the week. One of the things I know is important, the whole team is making sure that everybody is sort of on an equal playing field because we love the competition, how well it played out. Congratulations on the year so far. We're pretty excited. From my standpoint yesterday from an operational piece, I'm glad that we didn't get a call from Jay on this, we did a lot of work last fall on the racetrack. We did some core samples. We found some areas on the track we are hand sealing. Last week we did a little bit of grinding and rolling on the racetrack in several years. I talked to four or five of the drivers, everybody seems to think the bumps that were there in the past are gone. I don't know if you heard, I think they're pretty pleased with the track.

I will quickly transition over to community for a minute. One of the things that has been fun about the Indianapolis 500, really since the 2016 100th running, is Allison has led an effort to reconnect the Indianapolis Motor Speedway to the community that has made us so special. It starts with you're coming from out of town, starts as soon as you land on the ground at the Indianapolis International Airport, till you get to your

hotel downtown. If you go downtown, you can't turn a corner without seeing some Indianapolis Motor Speedway branding.

You have knocked it out of the park in terms of You Are At Home. If you have seen the billboards around, this is the best billboard experience you've ever seen. You can't live in Indianapolis, central Indiana, Chicago for that matter, I've seen billboards there, and not know that the Indy 500 is coming.

Allison, you've helped us connect that brand to Indianapolis. A lot of people have a lot of pride about the Indianapolis 500. Talk about the programs we have going that got kicked off in the last week.

ALLISON MELANGTON: Yeah, all of our programs have kicked off, which is exciting, especially we're here for May 1. As you all know, there are a lot of businesses and media that use the month of May to further their business. We have a lot of entertainment opportunities happen in town, corporate businesses in town use this month and this event to bring in their top-end clients. We want to make sure that we are portraying the greatest city in racing in addition to hosting the greatest spectacle in racing. That is to make sure that while everything is operating well here at the Speedway, certainly under Doug's leadership, our management leadership, that has been going well.

We have to make sure that the community, state and region feel connected to the race, even if they can't get out here to the track.

We've worked very hard with our community team and staff, and the 500 Festival, to get lots of our programs kicked off. I'm going to highlight just a couple of them for you that we have started up here.

The first one is our Welcome Race Fans Art Council partnership, Arts Downtown. We kicked that off this weekend. You see one of the pictures up there. If any of you want posters, we have them all. We have five artists that did original pieces of artwork for the program. This year they're incredibly colorful and bright. We'll start seeing those all over town. We appreciate our Arts Council partnership with that.

We also put a sticker on your chair called Indy Wings. This is something we launched last year, a takeoff on the wing and wheel logo, where people can go around town and get their pictures taken with the wings. It was a hit last year. This year we added two smaller wings because last year it was popular to have pets and children in the picture. They had to lift them up. We have a place for the small people and pets in there. We have those in five locations around town. I'm encouraging people to go out and post their pictures.

(Indiscernible), Monument Square, One Downtown Speedway, then Hamilton County has a few. We are

looking to add a few more. That's what that sticker is in your chair.

This Friday we kick off 500 Fashion Friday, which is very similar to what the Colts do on Blue Friday and the Pacers do on their Blue and Gold Days. We want everyone here to participate in that. We left you a wristband in your chair. Make sure you're wearing that on the four Fridays in May. We partnered with Pattern Magazine to do that this year. I will be kicking that off on Friday. There are many restaurants in town that do discounts for having on any 500 Fashion Friday attire, so we got a list on our website for that.

Kicking off this Friday, we have a partnership with the Harrison Center to really focus on getting people to celebrate in May by coming out of their homes, inviting their neighbors over, and while the race is the excuse to get together, it's really to get people to meet each other. We already have about a hundred signups for Porch Party kickoff. We did that a week ago. We're excited about that. People are reaching out and registering on that. We encourage people that want to have a Porch Party to register them on our website. I'll tell you how to do that in a minute. There's a lot of surprise drop-ins and lots of opportunities. If we know you're having a Porch Party, we can help you celebrate that in lots of different ways. That's why we ask you to sign up.

As Doug said, we have all of our This is May up. Our downtown decor and airport decor are fully kicked off. I think the airport is ready to go. If we have visitors that come to Indianapolis in the next 30 days, there's no question when they get off the airplane they'll know where they are, that this is the racing capital of the world. We have a great graphic up on the window.

Then the J.W. Classic was put up last Thursday. That is one of the pictures each year that is shared more on social media around the world that's not on property. That was a good thing for us to get that up and going.

Our drivers street signs, our partner is DTW on drivers street signs. DTW workers that put up the drivers street signs and Charlie Kimball was there. He had just put up his street signs. He was beaming with pride that he had his own street sign. It reminded me how important it is to the drivers that they love that tradition, which is now in the second year of renaming the street signs for them. Those are all up except for just a couple. We're finishing those up today. We will have a map on our website if there's a particular driver street that you want to take a picture of, those will be posted tomorrow so you can look that up.

Back to the 500. We will have people biking to the 500 again this year. Looking for more people to sign up. Last year we had about a thousand. If you haven't started riding your bike this season, go ahead and start doing that. You can sign up for the Bike to the 500.

The 500 Festival, we have the mini marathon on Saturday, kicking off all of the festival events that will be encapsulating the month. They are great partners for us. They do an important part of community engagement to reach out to all the residents to participate in something.

The way you can get detail on all these programs if you go on IMS.com and go to the community tab at the top, all the programs are listed, it's under 500 Forward, all these partnerships with the various community organizations, under umbrella of what we call 500 Forward. You can go to that tab, look up that particular program you're interested in, you can register for Porch Parties there, you can put information there on your own party, things like that. Any of the community programs, please go to IMS.com on the community page. They showcase Indianapolis to the rest of the world when people are visiting.

DOUG BOLES: So when we combine all of the things that Allison is talking about that relate to the community and the successes that the Verizon IndyCar Series has had on the track and the great test we had yesterday, and people like Danica Patrick coming here, what that does for the Indianapolis 500, it continues the momentum that really came back in 2016, that we carried forward in 2017. Our ticket sales for 2018, again ahead of 2017. As you recall our 2017 number was ahead of 2016. We're excited about all this momentum. It's a combination of this community continuing to embrace the Indianapolis 500, and all the work that Jay and his team and the drivers and the participants in the Verizon IndyCar Series have brought to us.

Real excited about that. The storylines of Danica, the storylines of bumping not just for the Fast Nine but to get into the entire field, gives us an opportunity to talk about what we love so much, that's the activity on the racetrack as we lead into the Indianapolis 500.

We'll have a couple of operation briefings as we've had in the past to talk to you more about how things will operate on race day. Be looking for those as they come forward. We have some exciting things around security. Our robot that you've all heard about, we'll continue to talk about that, give an opportunity to interact with that robot at some point here in the near future.

We are excited about where we are for the Indy 500. One of the things that you heard in the 100th running is we want people to plan, prepare and be patient. It's going to be another big crowd. We want to make sure we get our customers here in a safe way, help them come and enjoy the 102nd running of the Indianapolis 500. We'll have a few more announcements coming up as well as we get closer. We still need to announce who is driving the pace car, singing the national

anthem, waving the green flag, which has traveled around the world, including the space station. We will be laying out where all it's been. We're excited about doing that this year. It's been fun to engage more people than just this community in the beginning of the Indy 500.

We've got a great race weekend. Carb Day will be a lot of fun as we get cars on track, we have the Freedom 100 for the Indy Lights driver, but also Train and Blues Traveler concerts Saturday. We are going to celebrate the roadsters, maybe one of the most romantic eras of the Indianapolis 500 with our partners at Firestone. Then with our partners at Firestone we have our Legends Day concert with Sam Hunt, who had the ACM song of the year, so excited about hearing him. We'll roll into the 102nd running of the Indianapolis 500.

Snake Pit, I have people say it is the best single day lineup ever, with (indiscernible). We're excited about that. Somehow I memorized all those names, although I can't really tell you what they sing. We are pretty excited about the 102nd running. With that, I think I'll leave you with one more question for Jay.

By all accounts, by observation, what was your first thought when you saw the cars coming down the Speedway?

JAY FRYE: It was pretty cool. A great group effort. Entire paddock, manufacturing partners, the fans that helped design this car. Came actually last fall and tested it. It was the first time ever here with the two cars we ran here with Juan Montoya and Oriol Servia. That was pretty cool. Yesterday was, again, all the teams. It was a really good day. Look forward to having all the cars out here in a couple weeks.

Again, a great group effort by a lot of people. All the indicators are very good so far. Looking forward to having a great race.

DOUG BOLES: Absolutely.

**Q. Doug, I know one of the things you do a lot on your drive home is call up people, ticket buyers, get ideas and all that. How many of them have told you, Man, I can't wait to get out there to see the new car?**

DOUG BOLES: Quite a bit. When you actually have a conversation with somebody that loves the idea of the new car, seen images of it or video when it tested in the fall. More recently they've seen it on TV when they've watched the racing. For people who follow the Indianapolis 500 and the Verizon IndyCar Series for any period of time, the car looks like what an IndyCar ought to look like. By almost 100% unanimous, folks love the way it looks.

The one thing that the Verizon IndyCar Series has

become known for over the last several years is just how competitive it is. As Jay said, the season so far has been more competitive than it's ever been. I think people are looking forward to seeing a car that looks like an IndyCar competing like we've seen over the last few years.

**Q. This is going to be the last year of a 54-year relationship with ABC. Much of America discovered the Indy 500 through ABC and their telecasts. Is the Speedway working with anything for ABC, part of the broadcast, to honor that 54 years of heritage?**

DOUG BOLES: I'm 51. I've never known a day that the Indy 500 wasn't broadcast by ABC. When NBC came onboard, very invested in the Verizon IndyCar Series, they take great care of us here at the Speedway, we did want to honor ABC. In our first week, Allison and I had a great opportunity to thank them for their service, commit to them we were going to be as dedicated they put on the best show in 54 years as possible. The immediate response for them was, We are going to do the same thing. We can't wait to be here. This is in our blood. We're excited to do that.

Allison is working on a few things for us to celebrate them and thank them. The Indianapolis 500 wouldn't be today what it is without those 53 and soon to be 54 broadcasts of the 500.

At the same time I can't wait for NBC. It's going to be a lot of fun in 2019 and beyond.

**Q. Talk a little bit about the windscreen and how far out are we from using this? Might be this May, this summer?**

JAY FRYE: Still a lot of testing that has to be done. See that, it's easy, put it on the car, it's fine, right? There's a cause and effect to everything you do. A lot of times you have a cause and effect. Even though we have a lot of smart people working on it, there's things we are not completely aware of things that could happen. That's why you go through the process to test it.

The next part of the process will be to get it on a road course at some point. The manufacturing process we have we think a good plan for that. It will be a 2019 thing. It won't happen this year on our car full-time.

DOUG BOLES: Thank you guys. We'll see you here shortly when we go on track full-time beginning on Friday next weekend.