

IndyCar Media Conference

Friday May 11, 2018

Clea Newman
CJ O'Donnell
Josef Newgarden
Graham Rahal
Blake Maher

Press Conference

THE MODERATOR: We just have a special announcement today. IndyCar is partnering with SeriousFun Children's Network to help improve the lives and showcase the work that's being done for children, many of whom are here today. Campers are visiting at Indianapolis Motor Speedway in the Verizon IndyCar Series today, so we have an assortment of special guests. We'll start with our really special guest here in the middle, Clea Newman, who is the ambassador for SeriousFun Children's Network; we have Blake Maher, who is the CEO of SeriousFun Children's Network; of course Josef Newgarden of Team Penske, who is the ambassador for the SeriousFun program; and Graham Rahal, who has great ties to the Newman family, and he'll speak here. Of course on the end is CJ O'Donnell, the chief marketing officer for the IndyCar and the Indianapolis Motor Speedway.

CJ, first let's have you speak to the natural association that this is for SeriousFun and for IndyCar and for Paul Newman, who is such a philanthropist, racer, and overall good guy. He was such a part of our family and how natural it is to have this association today.

CJ O'DONNELL: It sounds like you actually read my talking points. I think I should start by saying how proud we really are to announce this official partnership. This would be the very first time in IndyCar's history that we've had an official charity as part of our organization. While we've been committed to charities and continue to be across the paddock and throughout the series, this is a really strong first step for us in establishing a tie with an charity that we feel is very much part of us and has been part of us for a long time.

If you think about Paul Newman, the founder of the SeriousFun Children's Network, he was a racing enthusiast. He was a legendary team owner, and he's someone who cared very, very much for the community around him, and like IndyCar, wanted to serve that



community. And in that regard, children especially became part of his focus and a focus of the conversation today.

Many people remember in 1988 when the Hole in the Wall Gang was founded in Connecticut. That was the very first camp which has now grown to a worldwide organization known as the SeriousFun Children's Network and the group we're partnering with right now. The relationship, because of Paul, is very deep, and of course I've got Clea sitting here at my right. Clea grew up in the paddock. We walk around, and the hugs and smiles that she receives from people in our sport are authentic and genuine and very true, and that makes this so much, I think, more meaningful for us today, because it's like bringing family back home. It's a connection that's natural and fitting and one that we believe is deserving of this first official relationship.

THE MODERATOR: Welcome back. You're part of this family. You have seen the Verizon IndyCar Series or this generation of it. You were in St. Petersburg, you were in Phoenix, you're here today. Tell us a sense of what your father's passion, how it mixed between racing and helping children.

CLEA NEWMAN: Well, it's such a funny -- when I think back on this, my father was always this like great man's man, right, and he was known for being a movie star, but he never really felt graceful at a sport, which is funny when you're known for being such a man's man, until he did the movie "Winning," and he sat in a race car. He always loved cars and he was always a gearhead, but he never sat in a race car until he did the movie "Winning," and that literally changed his whole trajectory. I mean, he found this extraordinary sport that not only did he feel graceful in but that he also loved the community, and it was the first time that he ever -- it's hard to say like that he ever felt, like -- these were his peeps, you know? He was an actor and he was never all that comfortable in Hollywood and all that. This was this extraordinary community that he felt so comfortable, it was like his other family. And he was also very much known, right, for giving back, and certainly giving back to people that were less fortunate than him, and he also felt so lucky in his life.

So when he created Newman's Own and suddenly had this abundance of money to be able to start something special, seriously ill children were always a focus in the back of his brain. He always loved camp as a child. So he combined the two things and created, obviously,

our first camp, Hole in the Wall Gang camp and now we have 30 camps and programs all over the world and just supported our millionth experience this year for our children and our families. So it's extraordinary really.

THE MODERATOR: I would take it you felt very comfortable in that environment, as well, in terms of helping children? This has been part of your life, as well?

CLEA NEWMAN: You know, surprisingly, I thought I was going to be a lawyer, and yeah, it didn't work for me. I almost went to law school. And my dad said to me, listen, you know, why don't you go up to Hole in the Wall, we just opened our camp. Obviously it had been a big part of our family. And so I went up and volunteered as a counselor, and it truly -- I mean, as much as it changes all of the children and families that we serve, it completely changed my life, and I'm not just saying that. It really did. It changed my whole trajectory of what I wanted to do with my life. And I've never looked back.

So for me, it's an honor to be able to do whatever I can do.

THE MODERATOR: Blake, you've seen so much of what the camp has done. You've been a counselor. You've invested your life, as well. Can you give us a sense for the kind of things that are happening at these camps?

BLAKE MAHER: Absolutely. You know, I've been lucky enough to have been a part of the camps for over 25 years. Counselor, camp director, executive director, now I get to help lead the overall network of this, as Clea said, 30 camps and programs. And even to this day, I get goosebumps when I see the kids and see the impact that it has on them at camp, as well as their families, and all the people who are in contact with the children who come and have a life-changing and transformative experience.

We've served -- I've worked in Connecticut, helped start a camp in Ireland, in California, and been to India and seen the impact of this all over the world, and we have studies -- of course with Gail in different places that talk about how camp experience helps build self-esteem, self-confidence, and it changes the child's outlook on their lives, but I'm lucky enough to have seen this firsthand with thousands and thousands of children who their lives -- how they interact. They're changed, and the laughter and fun comes back into their lives. I cannot tell you over the years how many parents have come up to me after camp and said -- we have many wonderful parents out here, and said, what did you do to my child? We have him back. This is what my son or daughter used to be like before the illness. It's that sense of spirit that's back inside them, and it -- when Paul began this so many years ago,

when I used to be a counselor, he would come up every week because he loved being with the kids so much.

At that time it was simply about giving back to the kids for a week, letting them be children and have fun. Now over the years, as medical advancements have progressed and we're serving children with more and more complex illnesses but they're living longer, it's not only about that week of fun at camp, it's about the future. They go back into their homes, their communities, their schools, and they think about -- they see people, other kids who are now counselors who have illnesses, and it's about the rest of their lives and providing that hope and that idea of what you can do and not about what you can't.

THE MODERATOR: Josef, you've seen some of this empowerment, and I know you've spent a lot of time over the last few months learning about this, your thoughts, your excitement for visiting more of these programs?

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: Well, I think it's wonderful. When I first heard about the partnership that was going to happen with IndyCar, it was an easy sell to get involved and be a part of it. I think everything that Clea and Blake and the entire team have done is really wonderful.

I grew up as a big fan of Paul Newman. Unfortunately I never got to spend much time with him. But he was a true racer and a great guy. You hear from people like Graham that got to know him really well and hear how great he was. Big passion for everything that he did, and certainly these camps -- I mean, it's called SeriousFun now, and they have a ton of fun. We got to do that a little bit in Long Beach, which was a real treat. We got a bunch of kids out and they got to see the race car, the steering wheel, the helmet, wear the helmet, the whole deal. We probably spent two hours together and we just had a total blast. Just getting a small snippet of what they do at these camps is really special. I look forward to going to a camp at some point.

We're trying to organize that so you can see one firsthand and be a part of it and have fun with the kids like Blake talked about it because that's what it's all about, to be able to have that great experience and really transform what you do in life, and I think it's a transformative experience for everybody that's involved. Yeah, so excited to raise awareness for it. That's kind of the big deal with partnering with IndyCar is providing awareness for the camps and what they do and why they do it, and hopefully getting more funding for the camps and just growing it and making it bigger and better. That's really the goal, and we're going to be able to do that and bring it to the racetrack, too, which is really cool. We got to do it a little bit Long Beach, like we've talked about, and we're going to do it

again at some other races in the future. It's an awesome experience, and I can't wait until we got rolling down the road a little bit more. It's going to be great.

THE MODERATOR: Graham, you were here a little bit ago with your team owner, David Letterman, who brings one style of celebrity. Talk about what Paul was like. You were around him a lot growing up as a youngster and then driving for his team.

GRAHAM RAHAL: Well, yeah, I was fortunate to get a lot of time with Paul. I remember my first -- obviously my dad drove for Paul in Can-Am in '81, so the connection went back a long ways. But I remember when I was in Formula Atlantic, every time I'd win a race, he was the first guy in Victory Lane every time. You know, of course when you're a young kid, you don't really get what it's all about. You just know Paul Newman as Paul Newman, and then you start to mature, you get older, you realize the power, the influence that a man like that can have, and then I was fortunate enough, and I really think in many ways, thanks to Paul, to get my first opportunity to drive for Newman/Haas in 2007.

It was then that I started to realize what this all was about. The concept of fundraising, the idea of a charity, of the camps that could affect and improve the lives of so many people and so many kids.

And while it improves the lives of the kids, it obviously does the counselors, as well, right, from a spirit standpoint, it helps everybody involved. And I was fortunate, I remember in Sebring we were testing in the spring of 2007 -- actually, no, when was your dad's birthday?

CLEA NEWMAN: January.

GRAHAM RAHAL: So it was January because it was his birthday, and we were eating cake and we were sitting in the back of the tent, and he told me the story of Newman's Own and how it all began, and to understand the amount of money that that has raised and then what that leads, obviously for SeriousFun, it is unbelievable.

I got to spend the next couple of years, in 2008, which -- I understand some of you guys have been to Flying Horse Farm. Yeah, you've been? So Flying Horse Farm, when Paul flew in to check out the site visit, my mom is the one who picked him up at the airport and took him to see the property, which is now Flying Horse Farm. I'm from Columbus, Ohio. So it was -- the connections run really deep, and when Paul passed away in 2008, instantly there was a huge void left, I think, in everybody that was involved in this sport. In 2009, through the early part of the year, I still drove for Newman/Haas Racing, and I just felt that I wanted to get more involved because of the spirit that Paul had

given me, and my foundation was really born out from Paul. I mean, that was the whole start of it, the inspiration that he gave me.

But no person has had an influence on my life like Paul Newman and the amount of time that I got with him. So it's great to continue to see this. Obviously when I heard that SeriousFun was going to be back involved and work directly with IndyCar, it was -- for me, it was a tremendous day, and I'm excited to see what Josef and what everybody at SeriousFun can do together. We're always here to support, to help, to make it happen, raise some money, and most importantly have some fun. You know, it's great to be here today, and trust me, Paul Newman, the name, the influence and all the thoughts and the time that I got with him over those couple of years, it runs through me every single day. You guys who may not know him and may not fully understand who he is, he's a tremendous man who had such a great influence on so many people around here.

THE MODERATOR: Tough to follow that, as well. Do we have questions?

Q. Do you still own a couple of race cars of your father?

CLEA NEWMAN: Do we?

Q. Yes, do you have a collection?

CLEA NEWMAN: Well, I don't -- I wish. No, actually I would love to drive a race car. But no, my mother won't let me. (Laughter.) I only do show jumping.

We actually do have my dad's final race car, yes.

Q. So you don't have the most famous one from the 24 Hours of LeMans, the 975 Porsche from 1983?

GRAHAM RAHAL: Adam Carolla owns that.

Q. Have you ever raced yourself?

CLEA NEWMAN: No, my mother wouldn't let me. She said I wasn't allowed to do two of the most dangerous sports at the same time.

Q. Can you explain what camp means? Is it a vacation place for young kids, poor kids? What is a camp?

CLEA NEWMAN: What is the translation of camp?

THE MODERATOR: Give a description of what happens at the camp.

CLEA NEWMAN: Well, camps in the U.S. are places where children usually go during the summer to do all types of outdoor and indoor activities. Our camps are specifically for children with serious illnesses, and all of our programs are actually customized for all of the children so that every child can participate. There's nothing like seeing a child in a wheelchair go down a zip line.

CJ O'DONNELL: Wolfgang, you talked about the cars. We had a little fun this past week, so I'm going to share a quick story. I think it was Graham that said Adam Carolla, so we determined that Adam Carolla actually owned I think 10 total race cars that were driven by Paul Newman. So we called him up and he loaned us a car for the weekend, so one of Paul's cars is down on the ground level just outside the media center with some SeriousFun signage next to it to help drive the text-to-give program, which we'll probably be talking about very soon, and you should stop down and take a look at it. It's a car that I remember from my SCCA days, and I can't top Graham's stories, but had a chance to meet Paul at the same time, and it was kind of fun to find that car and bring it back.

CLEA NEWMAN: And I actually got to drive around on the floor on the other side of that, when dad drove me around the track in that car. It's not something you should do on a regular basis, but it was really fun.

THE MODERATOR: Blake, can you tell people how they get involved with SeriousFun and the various ways of moral support, so forth?

BLAKE MAHER: Well, there's so many ways you can support the camps and the kids and the families who come, and what IndyCar is doing for SeriousFun, I want to extend such a big thanks to IndyCar for helping raise awareness about all the children across the world, and as Clea said earlier, over a million kids and families have had experiences at camp over the past 30 years. Last year we served over 167,000 children and their families.

There's so many different ways IndyCar is helping through the awareness, PSAs. People can text to give this weekend and at all of the races. We have a tee shirt that's going to be available at IndyCar, a Paul Newman-inspired shirt, leave your legacy. And then there's -- you can let children in your communities be aware of these camps, that they exist all across the United States, in Europe, across Africa and Asia and in the Caribbean, and you can donate money, you can run an event, you can raise money at your lemonade stands, or there's no end to the ways you can get involved.

But what's so important is this is -- it takes a village to do all this. So many people across the world, and you can volunteer, also, to be a part of this. You can go in as a volunteer and be a counselor for a full week or for a family weekend. We run hospital programs. There's so many ways for people to get involved and give to SeriousFun to make sure that children are having these opportunities that really change their lives.

THE MODERATOR: Clea, any final thoughts? I know the excitement must be there for this weekend, and I know you'll be back on race weekend, as well.

CLEA NEWMAN: I'm just so grateful for this partnership. You know, it started 10 years ago, and unfortunately when my father passed away, it didn't come to total fruition. So for it to 10 years later now be coming back into the forefront, I'm just so grateful to see CJ and everybody in the Indy community, it's really -- I mean, Graham and Josef and everybody who has reached out and said how can we help. It really does a heart good. I know that my father is looking down and saying, finally, honey, why didn't you do this sooner.

THE MODERATOR: That's excellent. There will be a public service announcement you'll see on the big boards in the coming hours. In fact, it just played just recently here. You'll have that and the website and so forth, so thank you very much. We're going to bring the children up for a photo op and they'll be available for questions.