

IndyCar Media Conference

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Pietro Fittipaldi Dale Coyne

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: We are joined now by two special guests from Dale Coyne Racing, team owner Dale Coyne and driver Pietro Fittipaldi.

We know, Pietro, you were here under different circumstances. How are you feeling? How does it feel to be around the environment of the Indianapolis 500?

PIETRO FITTIPALDI: I'm a lot better. I got here on Friday. I've been working with all the IndyCar doctors. Dr. Trammell has been helping me a lot. It's good to be in the racing environment because it keeps me active. They got me training every single day doing physical therapy and everything. Also to be close to the team, a lot of drivers came by the motorhome to come and talk to me, see how everything's going. That's really cool.

It's good to be in this environment. Obviously I would like to be in different circumstances. I'd like to be racing. But it is what it is. Working hard to get back racing soon.

THE MODERATOR: Still completely part of the team, you just mentioned, you're still living here at the Speedway in your motorhome. You couldn't get much closer.

PIETRO FITTIPALDI: No, I couldn't really get much closer than that. We decided with all the doctors to stay at the track, at the motorhome, because Dr. Trammell is at the medical center here every day, with all the nurses there. Denise also works with IndyCar. They've been helping me out a lot. I've been training at Pit Fit doing the physical therapy here, and at the same time trying to stay up to speed with the team.

The team gave me a radio. When I'm at the motorhome not doing anything, I'm just listening, trying to stay along with everything.

THE MODERATOR: Dale, when are you hoping to see this young man back in a racecar?

DALE COYNE: Initially you think a broken bone, six to eight weeks. The right ankle is probably going to be a little bit longer for him than his left leg. Putting weight on his left leg already. Realistically, his original schedule was to do the GP, this race, Texas, then not come back till Mid-Ohio. I think the plan is we've

moved some races around with Zach, so he'll do this race, probably Texas. But that frees the whole rest of the season up so he can come back at Mid-Ohio and finish up the season.

THE MODERATOR: From the standpoint of having him here and having him around the team, how will that help when he gets back in the car?

DALE COYNE: He's a racer. This is the environment he lives in. These are the people that support him. You always learn. You've got to be here to learn. Every day there's something to learn, whether he's in the pits or just a radio away, people talking to him at night or in the morning. He's going to learn every day. It's great to have him here.

THE MODERATOR: Pietro, you mentioned you've been working out at Pit Fit, in other ways, as much as you can. How has that working out been going? Do you feel strong and healthy?

PIETRO FITTIPALDI: My upper body feels normal, feels very strong. That's what we're trying to keep so when I get back in the racecar I'm really fit on the upper body. They're already working on the lower body, as well, doing a lot of quad and hamstring stuff.

Like Dale said, I'm already weight bearing on the left leg, which is quite early, but the doctor has been pushing me quite hard. We're already doing that here. Then getting the mobility back on the right ankle is going to be important, which we already are. The plan is to be back at Mid-Ohio.

Obviously Indianapolis, would have loved to be racing at the 500, at the Indy Grand Prix. We ran well at the test here at the GP. I was really looking forward to it. Obviously the team had a very good car. I knew before coming here we were going to have a good weekend. Unfortunately the accident happened. Now it's fully focused on getting back recovered as soon as possible and get back to racing.

THE MODERATOR: Questions for the group.

Q. Pietro, I'm sure you know all about what Sebastien was able to do last year, how quick he was able to come back. Does that inspire you in some ways, to be able to know you can come back maybe a little bit earlier than hoped?

PIETRO FITTIPALDI: Yeah, of course. Sebastien

came to my motorhome yesterday. I was speaking to him for an hour or so. He was telling me all about his recovery, his rehab, how he got back in around eight to ten weeks, something like that. It's obviously very inspiring.

Even with my cousin, Christian Fittipaldi, when he got injured, he came back, he had one of his best races. He had the same injury that I had on my left leg. I'm getting a lot of input from a lot of friends and family, which is always good. It's putting me on the right path to getting back.

Q. Pietro, you talked about it's good to be out here, have the support system around you. We can see your physical injuries. What about emotionally, that disappointment? Obviously has to be huge, your first chance to come out here, so close but so far away from being out there?

PIETRO FITTIPALDI: Of course I'd love to be racing. Racing is like this. Things happen that sometimes are out of your control. We had an electrical issue. I lost power steering, went straight into the wall in qualifying. We all know the risks and dangers in auto racing.

It's like this. Now it's my other race. Now I'm focused on getting back as fast as possible, you know, getting back to be able to do a good job.

I'm disappointed, I'm hurt that I'm not being able to race here in the 500. But it is what it is. It's toughen up and get back as soon as possible.

Q. Pietro, obviously we admire people like Alonso and yourself who like to do different disciplines of racing. Obviously this has cost you a big chance at the 500. Will that inhibit you from wanting to do so many different types of racing from now on?

PIETRO FITTIPALDI: No. I think it depends. Obviously I'm going to be focused on my IndyCar schedule. Doing those last five races are going to be very important. But, you know, I'm a racer. I always want to race as many things as possible, be competitive. I think in a way it was unfortunate because we were competitive. In practice one, practice two, we were running third and fourth behind the Toyotas.

Let's see how this goes. But my focus right now is to get back as soon as possible. Like the plan is already in a week to get back in a go-kart. That's what we want to do, then get back in Mid-Ohio. That's going to be my first race.

Q. Pietro, you've had one start in IndyCar on an oval, had testing. Kind of a late arrival. How has the community welcomed you to the championship? How much have you enjoyed racing here as opposed to other series in different countries?

PIETRO FITTIPALDI: It's amazing. The environment,

it's great. I think from all the drivers, it's a much closer community than what we're used to in Europe. You're very friendly. Obviously when you're racing on track, it's everyone for themselves. When you're out, especially how it is at the motorhomes, I can't experience that now, but usually you would have barbecues and stuff outside with other drivers after practice day, after a race day.

Then obviously working with the team, since my first test at Sebring with the Dale Coyne team, the environment's been great, with my engineer, Michael Cannon, and even from the other side, Craig Hansen, as well. They're two very experienced engineers that I've been able to feed off and learn.

I was really confident that this year we were going to be able to show some really good results. It was unfortunate what happened, but we'll be back.

Q. Dale, obviously we're hoping we're going to see Pietro back at Mid-Ohio, if not sooner. You have Zach as a solution for some races. Are you going to be looking possibly to introduce a third driver where Zach might not be available?

DALE COYNE: There's a possibility of that. We're still working through the whole rest of the season. There's a small possibility of that, but yes.

Q. How much have you talked to Emerson?

PIETRO FITTIPALDI: Yeah, you know, quite a lot. He was actually supposed to come visit me today, but he's going to be coming next week. He has been following me throughout the whole process, when I got injured, when I had the surgery there in Belgium, then I got transferred here to Indianapolis last Friday.

Another person that's been helping me a lot is my uncle, Max Papis. He was actually in Belgium. He was going to arrive for my qualifying. I actually met him at the hospital. He helped me to connect me with all the IndyCar doctors here who have been doing a fantastic job. I really can't thank them enough. The program they put together for me it's top of the line. I'm really happy to be here.

Yeah, just my whole family, my mom who has been with me, I feel bad for her because she's been doing most of the work, getting me in and out of the wheelchair, doing everything for me. So thank you.

I just want to take this opportunity also to thank all the fans and all my friends and family who have been sending me messages through social media, through my phone, just thank you so much. We'll be back very soon.

Q. Dale, looking ahead to this weekend, also next week at the race, you have one of the best engineering staffs out in Gasoline Alley. What are they learning about the new package, some of the

surprises they've seen here so far?

DALE COYNE: There's a lot of surprises. I think everybody is a bit confused. This car is not what we thought it would be in traffic. By itself it's kind of predictable. In traffic it's a bit of a handful for everybody. We're learning more. We have been gone for 15 minutes. I'm sure they learned something in the last 15 minutes. Things change fast here. But they're working hard at it.

Q. Dale, you're a former driver. Obviously Sebastien had his situation last year. Are you ever surprised about these guys getting back into cars? Did you ever see any hesitation in Sebastien at all, any change in him at all?

DALE COYNE: No, none. From the night of the surgery, leaving the hospital, he had tears in his eyes, I know I broke my hip, I knew he'd be back. He was already trying to figure out how to do Le Mans last year, let alone being back for the test we did at Mid-Ohio.

These guys are racers. Racers race. I have tremendous respect for these guys. Motorcycle guys in Europe, he'd be back racing again by now if he was a motorcycle racer. Needle him up, he'd be gone. They're racers, they get after that. Great spirit.

PIETRO FITTIPALDI: Adding to that, as racers, if you love the sport, as soon as you know you have an injury, first thing you ask the doctors, When can I be back racing? You don't even know what you have, When can I be back in the racecar? That's the mentality we have most of the time.

DALE COYNE: They never believe them. They want to cut that number in half.

THE MODERATOR: Gentlemen, thank you very much.