

IndyCar Media Conference

Thursday May 24, 2018

J. Douglas Boles
Dr. Geoffrey Billows
Ted Fries
Mike Bates
Press Conference



IMS.com/planahead is the best way to see all the information related about how to get in. We're encouraging folks to download the app. Gates open at 6 a.m. on race day. At that point people can come in, gift shops will be open, we'll have the Borg-Warner march we started in the 100th running, starts in the museum and makes its way around and it ends up on the frontstretch.

Red carpet will begin at 9:30, although there may be -- I think at 9:00 we're going to do a special version of the red carpet for military men and women. We have a handful of folks that will be walking the red carpet then. It's a great opportunity to thank folks on Memorial Day weekend. Be sure to see that.

We want to remind people again, when you're coming, especially if you haven't been before, don't use your GPS. Go to the IMS website to figure out how to get here. Sometimes that GPS will take you to the museum and give you routes on race day you're not able to traffic through. Watch our website to help you for that.

This year, Mike Bates, our senior director of security, will talk about this a little, we try and obviously want people to get into the race as quickly as possible, we also want people when they come in to be safe as possible. We will be checking coolers again, you need to make sure they're 14-by-14-by-18. We are going to turn folks away if your coolers are bigger than that. You can't bring glass bottles. On our website, also on the app, there's a list of some of those prohibited items. One of them is a selfie stick, which a lot of people know about. Those are just items that can get in the way, be a little bit dangerous. If you look at those, people know what is prohibited, what isn't.

Strollers are okay to bring in. We don't want people to bring in wagons. On practice days, people have wagons, pull their kids around. We don't allow them on race day when the back stands are full of people moving around.

Parking is probably the most difficult thing we have at the Indianapolis Motor Speedway. We are sold out of our parking. If you didn't buy your parking pass from the Indianapolis Motor Speedway, we have seen them online for sale, we can't guarantee what you're buying online is a legitimate parking pass.

The other thing you need to know, when you show up

J. DOUGLAS BOLES: I appreciate everybody being here. Good morning. It's hard to believe that tomorrow is the kickoff to the weekend for the 102nd running of the Indianapolis 500. Seems like just yesterday we were unveiling the logo for this year's event, checkered flagging last year's amazing winning with Takuma winning, saying we have to wait 365 days to do this again. We are within three days of starting.

One of the things we wanted to do today, we started doing these in the 100th running, was talk a little bit about operations, how traffic is going to flow, some of the things we need our customers to understand when they get here.

One of the good things that came out of the 100th running is momentum around ticket sales and passion the fans have for the Indianapolis 500. Last year's attendance was the best attendance we've had in over a decade at the Indianapolis 500 by a significant number, except for the 100th running. This year we are tracking to be significantly higher than last year. This will be another one of those amazing Indianapolis 500 crowds.

With that it's important to remember that we want folks to just be patient when they come in, plan where you're going to go, so you know where you're going to park. Most importantly, once again like we were in the 100th, it's important to start thinking about coming a little bit earlier.

We looked at our gate scans from 2016 compared to 2017. In 2016, if you remember, we talked all the time about be early, be early. Last year we sort of backed away from that. If you looked at our gate scans, we had people in the venue a lot earlier that year than we did last. We think with the crowd being even bigger this year than last year, it's important to be able to start thinking about coming a little bit earlier so they don't get caught up in that race day traffic which can be a little bit frustrating. That's why we're also asking folks to be patient.

at a parking spot at the Speedway, if you don't have a parking pass, you're going to get turned away.

The great thing about the town of Speedway, most of the homes immediately west of the Speedway, if you go through there today, they already have their signs out in their yards. They're great places to park. The walk isn't that difficult. You're make brand-new friends from the folks that own those homes, and also actually park in one of the neighbor's lots and get to know those neighbors and come back every year. So there is parking on the west side, but it is helpful if you kind of know where you're going to go. Given, you must have a parking sticker to get into the Indianapolis Motor Speedway on race day.

Our exterior parking lots will open at 5 a.m. on race day. The biggest thing I think I want people to remember is just to really be patient as you come in. We have a great partnership with law enforcement from the state to IMPD to the county sheriff and the town of Speedway. Those folks are all working together.

If you think about it, if you're coming from outside of 465 and you come to the Indianapolis Motor Speedway, you cross through the state police district, IMPD's district, the sheriff's district, Speedway district, then you get to our safety patrol. Takes a lot of coordination to make sure we're getting everybody in and out safely. It only takes one incident in one of those districts to create a backup through the entire system. So that's why we want you to come early, just to make sure that you're here.

The weather obviously looks like it's going to be warm. I'll take a warm day any day over like 1992 cold or 2016 IndyCar Grand Prix when I was buying stocking hats because it was so so cold. That comes with its challenges. We have Dr. Billows to talk about some of those key issues.

I'll transition to Dr. Billows, you can talk about the importance of hydrating.

DR. GEOFFREY BILLOWS: Absolutely. Looks like it's going to be warm and humid this weekend, which is going to be problematic. This year we transitioned straight from winter into summer with not much of a spring. I worry that people haven't had a chance to acclimate yet to the warm weather.

The problem of course with hot and humid weather is heat illness. It starts off usually with pretty minor symptoms, maybe some heat cramps, headache, nausea. As it progresses, as you become more dehydrated, the blood vessels close to your skin collapse and you can't exchange heat. Your body's ability to regulate temperature is impaired but not totally shut down. As the process progresses, it can actually shut down your body's ability to regulate heat.

People can lose consciousness, have seizures, it can even be fatal.

We want to make sure that everybody here is safe. What we recommend is you make sure you hydrate. Don't wait till the day of the event. Start a day or so before. You want to keep your tank full, you don't want those blood vessels close to your skin to collapse.

When you're here, make sure you're drinking plenty of water, some type of electrolyte solution as well. When you come here, we recommend that you would wear very lightweight, light colored clothing. You want to protect your eyes because the sun is also quite damaging to your eyes. As you can hear as these cars go by, it's quite loud. We want you to protect your ears as well.

If you feel like you're becoming light-headed or overheated, there are many places you can go. Every one of the first aid stations have air-conditioning. The infield care center has air-conditioning, the gift shops and museums have air-conditioning as well.

On race day there will be five cooling buses. Two of them will be near the infield care center, around Hulman and Fifth. There will be one by the concert venues and one outside in the northwest corner as well. Don't forget about the misting stations around the property. I think there's about 75 of them. Some of them are fixed, behind and underneath the stands, then some portable ones as well.

J. DOUGLAS BOLES: We've told this story before. The dehydration thing is a problem and challenge. In 2013 I unfortunately had to go see Dr. Billows because I didn't heed his warnings. This was the NASCAR weekend, but ended up having to go and get a couple bags of fluid. I was forced to call my father at 47 years old and have him come and take me home. That was embarrassing.

The light clothing, Dr. Billows hasn't been out in turn three, sometimes clothing is optional, sun screen is also a really important thing. We have a relationship with outrun The Sun That has been very cool over the last few years, educating people on the importance of sunscreen.

Mike, talk a little bit about what folks can expect at the gates, especially with respect to vehicles coming in the Speedway this year, what folks can expect related to that.

MIKE BATES: As Doug alluded to earlier, between state, federal and local agencies, we wouldn't be successful without everyone's involvement. It's really a team effort. The fact that this event again is a Tier II event, which is designated by U.S. Department of Homeland Security, which really gives us the federal support that we can use in the way of whatever we

decide, cameras, something we typically ask for is cameras, asking for canine and air support as far as helicopters. They've always come through.

We have a federal coordinator which helps us out a lot. Obviously safety and security of the fans and facility is very, very important. Each year we try to add to that, add these additional layers.

In past years we've done random checks of vehicles coming into the facility, park a lot of vehicles inside this facility. If there's something that I think we could improve on it would be checking these vehicles. This year we're going to attempt to search vehicles that are coming in. Search, typically we're going to have a dog that will check the vehicle for any type of explosives, whatever the case may be. Again, it will be at multiple gates. I won't get into all the gates.

I guess the message is that everybody should understand that their vehicle is subject to be searched coming in is the plan right now. That's in cooperation with all of the federal, local, state agencies that are supplying dogs, which is something that I think really has been a gap, but it's something we're slowly getting to.

You also will see some security improvements, obviously as in past years you won't see others. Understand it is out here. We'll have a plethora of uniformed police officers out here during the whole weekend, Friday, Saturday and Sunday. As far as the safety and security of the venue and fans, I feel like the plan we have in place is excellent.

Again, that's a big one as far as the screening of all the vehicles, something we're going to attempt to do this year. I feel very comfortable that it will happen.

Again, the most important thing is if people see something, something suspicious, obviously say something. That's important. I know it's a saying with the federal government, it is important. If you see something that just doesn't quite seem right, we'll have uniformed officers out here, you can approach any employee, any of the safety patrol people, let them know. They have direct contact to pagoda command.

I think we're good.

J. DOUGLAS BOLES: The biggest thing again, this goes back to the patient part, especially if you have a parking pass to park inside the Indianapolis Motor Speedway, you may notice as you get here the lines might be longer to get vehicles in. That's because Mike and the team with some of the dogs are trying to make sure we're taking care of checking vehicles as they come into the facility on race morning. That's something new that we're adding this year in addition to checking coolers as folks come in the gates, then Mike and of the rest of team working hand-in-hand,

almost hourly conversations between now and race day talking through with local, federal and other agencies so we are communicating well and are prepared to keep our customers safe.

We want people to get in quickly, but more importantly we want them to get in quickly and be safe. We're going to default making sure we keep everybody safe.

If you decided you don't want to drive yourself here, there are still some seats available in our buses that will leave from downtown and from the airport. You can get information from that on our website. If you choose to take some other type of car service here, there are locations, pickup and dropoff locations on the website.

Again, most important thing, then we'll take questions, really plan to know where you're going to go, know where you're going to park, know if you don't have a parking pass for one of our lots, you need to know where else you're going to park. Plan ahead before you leave. Be patient when you travel in. It's important this year that everybody start thinking about coming a little bit earlier than they normally can.

Finally, on exit, one of the things that's important to remember, oftentimes when the race is over, people scramble from their seats, want to get in their car and go. Between the Indianapolis Speedway and local law enforcement, especially if you're parked in the infield, we don't allow vehicle traffic to leave until most of the pedestrians leave. There may be a period of time where traffic feels stopped in the Speedway, that is because we're waiting to get those on foot out. That also feels the same on several of the roads that are close here.

When you're in a parking lot or neighborhood waiting to go, law enforcement is trying to make sure we get pedestrians out of the way before we let traffic go at a rapid pace from those locations. Again, patience is needed even at the end of the day.

With that, happy to answer any questions related to this weekend or what we just talked about now.

Q. On the vehicle searches, since it's new, will that be all gates, all vehicles that have a parking pass into the Speedway? What accommodations will be made so people don't complain that they missed the start of the race?

J. DOUGLAS BOLES: I don't like the word 'all'. Everybody should have the expectation to be searched. That is the plan right now. Primarily the drive-in gates, yes, should be covered, correct. Any gate that you can drive your vehicle in will be covered, correct.

To your second point, that's why we are just harping on be early again. We want people to be early. In 2013,

those of you who remember, we were the second major event after the Boston bombing. We tried to beef up the way we were going through coolers and things as people came onto the property. We ended up having our gates back up.

Since then we have more gates open, more lanes open than they did then. We have more staff on the event. Our biggest fear wasn't that people were going to miss the start. Our biggest fear is people were going to miss the prerace, which oftentimes is the most important part of the day.

From that moment on we've really tried to think through how do we make sure we get people in. It's more gates, more lanes, more people. At the same time we can't step down on safety. We really want people to come early so we can make sure they're safe, in their seats on time, and they don't miss prerace or the beginning.

You'll here me say a lot, and Allison will be mad at me if I don't say it every other sentence, it's important this year to be early.

Q. Mike, what, if anything in particular, caused this change? What prompted you to make this change? Even with this change, given everything that's occurred in the last year at large events, what is your biggest concern?

MIKE BATES: I think you answered your question. World events is really what kind of pushed us into this. It's just a continuation. We monitor world events. For instance, we're putting up some additional concrete Jersey barriers in places we feel is important with a lot of pedestrians both inside and outside the track.

We have a large concentration of people with current events as far as vehicle incursions across the country and the world. That's something that is important to us.

That, along with the vehicle screening, is important to us. We just want to make sure that vehicles that are parked inside our facility are safe. That's the most important thing. We understand we're always going to park vehicles in this facility, totally understand that, and I understand we will continue to do that, but I just want to do everything we can to make sure if you pull your vehicle in here, the car on either side of you is safe.

Q. Is there any plan by the police when you're coming from 465 to media parking outside to change the traffic, to close the street?

MIKE BATES: I don't think the traffic has changed at all.

Q. Media parking outside, personally I experienced safety control, especially fans who are drunk stepped over the road. Is there safety the night before the race?

MIKE BATES: The night before the race, we have a large contingency from the Marion County sheriff's office and the state police are both out on Georgetown working 9 till 4, working until 7 a.m. basically in the morning. They are out there, absolutely.

Again, any issues like that you would just flag one of them down, explain to them the issues you're having and they will help you.

Q. At what time is the media gate open on race day?

MIKE BATES: Unfortunately, I haven't memorized all the gate times. Alex can help you on that.

J. DOUGLAS BOLES: Bigger picture, this is really directed at all the media in here, I know there's frustration with parking. If you look back at the facility over the last 30 years, there was a point in time where we parked every square inch inside the Indianapolis Motor Speedway. We parked on top of the golf course, parked in turn four, turn one. For Moto GP, we eliminated all of the turn one parking. Same with turn four. With the design of a new golf course, we don't park on the golf course any more. We moved the midway to make a better fan experience from where the museum lot was over to right outside the media center here. That has impacted not just media parking, but it's impacted parking for a lot of our customers around the facility.

Seems like we should have easy parking for all of the media, all of our customers. Just the way the event has changed, as we really focused on making sure our hundreds of thousands of customers have a great experience, it has caused to us move things around.

I'm sorry that there are frustrations on the media side. I get it. But it's one of those things that we're trying to do the best we can with the media parking for you guys.

You're not alone in the parking frustration. We're trying to make sure this event is here for the next hundred years and the customers that come are having a blast. We will do the best we can to make your experience in media parking best as possible.

Q. Have you considered opening the gates earlier for fans?

J. DOUGLAS BOLES: That's a good question. We went through this in 2016, again last year. Just looking at our gate scans, we can open it earlier, but the people don't come earlier. People start to come between that 6:30, 7, 7:30 timeframe. What we're trying to do is make sure people are coming at that point.

We can open the gates at 4 a.m., you would get the same people that were in line at 5, and the same people in line at 6. You have a dropoff in terms of

number of people, then it picks back up. It seems logical to make the gates earlier to give them more time to get in, but people don't back it up. Unfortunately people try to come as late as possible.

What we're trying to do is get ourselves to back themselves closer to that 6 a.m. time. The hardcore people, they'll come at 5, but they're the same people that will come at 5:30 or 6 whenever we're open.

Q. (No microphone.)

J. DOUGLAS BOLES: We made a pretty cool trade this year. We love the fact we have a sitting vice president that wants to come to our events. This year the vice president came on Fast Friday. He is going to be I believe at a wedding on race day this year, so we do not have the challenges this year that we had last year with respect to the turn two area, the property, getting folks in and out off of 16th Street. There is no vice presidential visit this year for the Indy 500.

Q. Doctor, we talk security. As you look at the weather forecast, being here the number of years you've been here, knowing what you know about race fans, how serious do you expect this to be a problem, the weather? How bad do you expect things are going to get in the hospital?

DR. GEOFFREY BILLOWS: That's a good question. It's always interesting to try to predict. We have prepared for the surge that we might get. I think people pay attention to our suggestions. The last two years, I think we've done very well. I think we're prepared to handle whatever might present on race day. Hopefully it won't be a huge surge of people.

J. DOUGLAS BOLES: One thing we talk about a lot that we would love to not have to talk about, we are the busiest level one trauma center in the state of Indiana. Dr. Billows is happy to give up that title. Folks make sure they're hydrating, be responsible with how they're drinking, some of the other issues that take place at the Speedway, we can get him out of that distinction of being the busiest level one trauma center on race day.

DR. GEOFFREY BILLOWS: That would be perfect.

J. DOUGLAS BOLES: Thank you very much, guys. We'll see you here over the next couple days. Appreciate you being here.