

# IndyCar Media Conference

Tuesday September 4, 2018

## Mark Miles

## Bobby Epstein

### Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: Welcome to today's IndyCar teleconference. As you all know earlier today IndyCar released the 2019 IndyCar Series race schedule which includes 17 races at 16 tracks across North America. Among the venues announced was Circuit of the Americas in Austin, Texas.

We're pleased to welcome to the call today Mark Miles, the president and CEO of Hulman & Company, which is the owner of IndyCar, and Indianapolis Motor Speedway, as well as Bobby Epstein, the founder and chairman of the Circuit of the Americas.

Welcome, gentlemen.

Mark, we'll start with you quickly. Obviously a very exciting day here if for IndyCar with the announcement of the schedule. What are your initial thoughts?

MARK MILES: Well, the first one is I'm glad Bobby is on the call. It portends well for part of the news today. It's been a pleasure working with him to get to this point.

One of my thoughts is here we are, we're not yet to Sonoma and the finale for '18, and we have a schedule out. It's great that the championship is coming down to the wire with Scott 'the Phoenix' Dixon coming back and being in the lead for the last race.

We're really delighted with the schedule in so many ways. At the top level, obviously it starts again for the ninth consecutive year with St. Petersburg, March 10th, and ends on the West Coast about the same day with Laguna Seca.

We are delighted to have two new events. I mentioned Laguna Seca and I mentioned COTA. COTA will be in the spring, March 24th. We think that's a great time there. Helps us get more momentum earlier. There's so much to say about Circuit of the Americas and Bobby and his team. We could not be more delighted. That's a new feature in the calendar.

We're stoked about Laguna Seca. Hard to improve on Sonoma as a destination event, but if it could be done, Monterey and Laguna Seca helps us do that.

The feedback from all of our stakeholders, sponsors,

media, broadcasters and the teams is really favorable. People want to be in Monterey. They love that track.

We're glad that this schedule allows us to get back to three Saturday night ovals, which we think is a great element, kind of part of what we are and have been. We can't wait for the 103rd running of the Indianapolis 500 race. It was building before the 100th, and it's continuing to build, and it will continue and stretch the standards.

There's good balance between the types of events with seven road courses, five ovals, five street races. We shouldn't forget that next year will be our first year where NBC, NBCSN, will have all of it. I know from the enormous amount of work that's already been going into this in planning, they're committed, focused, they're creative and expect good things from the way they cover us from St. Pete through Laguna Seca.

THE MODERATOR: We'll turn it over to Bobby here. Second race of the season coming up in 2019 for the IndyCar Series. How much excitement is there around IndyCar racing coming to Circuit of the Americas?

BOBBY EPSTEIN: I think the response has been overwhelming. It's been building for years. We've heard from the fans the very first year that it's something that they want to see. It's been nice that over time the drivers have I guess heard from others who have participated in racing at the track and heard good things about it. They've actually been really supportive in asking for this.

Locally the excitement is tremendous. I think we've gotten more messages today of congratulations and excitement than we ever have for anything we've done.

I'm excited. I think it is going to translate to a great event.

THE MODERATOR: Also been a tremendous outpouring of support on social media today from drivers and fans alike. Has to have you more revved up for next season.

BOBBY EPSTEIN: Absolutely. For me personally, all my family grew up in Indianapolis. I spent my summers there. I remember having the souvenir glasses as a kid with Foyt and Unser's name, Mario, some of the greats. So for me personally, this is a great thing to have happen. Got such a long, great

history and tradition.

I tell you, the effort that Mark and all of his staff put in to putting a great product together, giving the fans a great show, wanting the teams to have a great experience, is really impressive. They really listen to the fans and drivers and sponsors, and they make I think perhaps an underappreciated, under-recognized effort to put together and deliver a season of exciting racing and great venue experiences. They really wanted this to happen, and they really put together a great product. They work together as a team really well. It's been a pleasure for us.

THE MODERATOR: We'll open it up for questions.

**Q. Mr. Miles, I notice that by shifting the schedule around, you have a pretty action-packed March, and an action-packed early part of April, but then there's a month gap between the Long Beach Grand Prix and the IndyCar Grand Prix. Do you view that as a problem? Will that be time for open tests at the Speedway, ROP, things of that nature?**  
MARK MILES: Good question. First of all, Easter is in that open period, as you called it. We almost look at it as a week that is not available to us. But nevertheless, your observation is fair.

Yeah, we're looking at whether or not there's an open test at IMS on the oval in that period. I think that's a real possibility. I guess in a perfect world there might be another race in there, but we think it will work, especially if we end up deciding to get to Indianapolis for a test.

**Q. I know you had negotiations with Eddie Gossage to get them with the four-year renewal. The IndyCar race will be a week before the first NASCAR race at Texas. Do you kind of look at that as two different fan bases, won't really interfere with each event?**

MARK MILES: Well, first of all, I think you said it correctly, it's the week before the first NASCAR event at TMS.

Look, I'd just say this, and what Bobby thinks is more important than what I think in a way because he's now invested in IndyCar, he's a promoter that wouldn't have signed up if he didn't think he could make it all work.

We believe to a point more is better. I said 'to a point' because I'm sure there are some practical market-driven limits, but we think having COTA, being at the Circuit of the Americas in Austin, Texas Motor Speedway, is great. It's an important state, important economies, both great markets for us to be in. I think, if anything, they can develop IndyCar racing and the fan base between them. I think they're complementary.

There's other racing going on. We could go through probably and look track by track at where there's some

NASCAR, I think they're different products. We think this will all work very well for us in that early part of the season.

**Q. If Mr. Epstein can speak on that.**

BOBBY EPSTEIN: I don't know that we see it as a negative. I think there's racing fans that follow both series. They can make a Texas two-step out of it, take a great vacation, go to both events I would hope.

I think we've learned that putting the COTA race on the same weekend at TMS upsets the apple cart a little bit, so I'm hoping that a week apart will be just fine. I do think the overlap of fans will hopefully be minimal, and they both can be great events and not cannibal eyes each other. I don't really see that to be an issue.

**Q. Bobby, what tells you or what told you that Texas is big enough to handle two IndyCar races in one calendar season?**

BOBBY EPSTEIN: I think those two events are far enough apart, if you're an IndyCar fan, you're probably excited about it. That would be the way I'd look at it. It's a real positive in trying to build the sport. IndyCar comes to my area twice, that's twice as good.

**Q. Do you see COTA working in concert with TMS to grow the sport in this area?**

BOBBY EPSTEIN: I have no doubt that we'll look at ways we can do stuff together and grow it. It's in both of our interests. They're very different products. The oval race and the road race I think are each unique. I hope that together it just builds more interest in the sport.

MARK MILES: If I could add something there. I'm not suggesting that all the markets are identical, but if you look at the Midwest, and you say Indianapolis, Detroit, Mid-Ohio and a little bit later Gateway in St. Louis, they feed on each other. They're not precisely the same distances, but we have no doubt, and we have good data, that fans want to take in as many as they can of those events. If we go to Gateway, I feel like I'm at the 500. I see more Colts jerseys than Indianapolis Motor Speedway fans there. I see a lot of St. Louis people here. We see people from Detroit at Mid-Ohio. It's a similar sort of geographic area, and I have no doubt that they build on each other.

We'll see, but it might also be that for IndyCar fans in the area to see both an oval and a road course, the different formats, could be particularly interesting.

BOBBY EPSTEIN: They are very distinct markets, San Antonio, Houston, you have 22 million people within a three and a half hour drive of Austin. I think that's a pretty big sampling. You put that against a lot of the other areas, if you take that Midwest circle that Mark is referring to, there should be more than enough people to support two events. It should make race fans all that much more excited to have two events in the same

state.

**Q. Probably the best IndyCar schedule I've seen in many, many years. Question for you, Mark. How many years is this agreement with circuit of America? One-year deal or multi-year deal?**

MARK MILES: Definitely a multi-year deal. We hope to be there for a very long time. The agreement is multi-year.

**Q. Bobby, I don't think anybody ever believed that you could have drawn the number of Formula 1 fans that you did to your circuit in Texas. I don't think Texas was ever viewed as an F1 Mecca, but you did. Was having two big concerts every year part of helping to draw those fans? If so, is something like that planned for the IndyCar race?**

BOBBY EPSTEIN: Covered a lot there.

First, when you say no one thought we could draw that many people, we would like to have drawn more. We thought we'd do better than we've done. Both sides.

But I think what we try to do, whether it's the music acts or anyone else, for anyone who has been to one of the events at COTA is we've really tried to design the circuit around just not the driver but the fan, trying to give a weekend of entertainment. I think whether that's a lot of stages, a lot of great Austin music along with some big headliners, a lot of other engaging fan activities and activations, then you combine that with unparalleled views of a road course where you can from one seat see eight to 10 turns. I think all that adds to bringing the crowd in.

One thing that 100,000 people allows you to do is bring in the bigger headliner. That didn't really happen for the first several years of F1. As we see the business build, we see the crowds, we'll be better able to determine that.

**Q. Mark, you mentioned in the release that consistency is a key theme. With that being said, do you see for 2020 the schedule expanding beyond 17 races?**

MARK MILES: That's not our objective. It would have to be pretty compelling for us to expand the total number.

As to consistency, it's not just whether it's 16 or 17 races, it's all in the same ballpark, although we do feel that 17 is a good number for us now. That comment is more about the number of events that you can go through and know have been tent poles or with us for a very long time, including the Texas Motor Speedway. I mentioned this is their ninth year to start the series calendar in St. Petersburg, Long Beach, it goes on. We're really proud of those long-term relationships. Those events are getting better, growing. That's more what we mean.

I think consistency is also some level of balance between the different formats of our racing. So it isn't going to be the same. I think it's really exciting there's a couple new venues added for next year, but it's familiar to our fans. I think people will be delighted by the changes that are part of this and the things that are familiar.

**Q. Mark, when you originally announced Laguna Seca, the drivers were absolutely unanimous in their excitement to go back there. Did you talk to some of the drivers about their thoughts about going to COTA? How excited are they to go, as well?**

MARK MILES: Off the charts, whether it's drivers who want to be there on that great stage, in that great market, a world class track, or the team owners who want to bring their sponsors, everybody is thrilled about it. Haven't heard a peep out of anything except enthusiastic support.

**Q. There's still a lot of talk out there that Fernando Alonso may be in the IndyCar Series next year. Mark, how big would that be for IndyCar if that were to happen? Bobby, how important will that be to your ticket sales?**

BOBBY EPSTEIN: I'm glad you asked the question. I was going to ask Mark also, is Fernando going to be in the series (laughter)?

MARK MILES: I don't have any new news other than the calendar. I know it's something that all the interested parties are working together on. I'm hopeful that he'll be able to join the series full-time next year.

There isn't a deadline that I know of that's concrete. Even tomorrow I guess people know that he's going to be in an IndyCar getting comfortable with it on a road course at Barber. So we sure hope it happens. We're trying to be helpful to that. If it happens, I think it will be another affirming step for IndyCar in its trajectory and growth. We're hearing that right now in terms of additional interested parties, prospective international broadcasters. It might be bigger news than it might be in the States, his joining IndyCar.

There are prospects for one or more Mexican drivers in the series next year. Frankly, in Texas, that could have even more impact, and other places like Long Beach. We got a lot of Mexican-Americans, Hispanics in this country. I think to the extent any of that happens, it's all good news.

BOBBY EPSTEIN: I think from our standpoint, having Alonso would be terrific. I think it speaks to the excitement the drivers have towards being a part of the IndyCar Series, the excitement of the racing, just their desire -- he's very experienced in his career, and where he decides, what I'd like to do at this point is race in IndyCar because it's going to be something I really want to do, I think it speaks to the quality of the

show and of the competition.

A little known fact that Alexander Rossi was actually the first driver of any sort to drive on COTA. We had nine of the turns finished. We have 20 turns. We had nine of the turns finished, and he came out very early in his career and just checked it out, took a car around. I think he and Mario were the first guys to come and visit COTA and check out the track. That would be great.

**Q. You talked about how the drivers in Indy are looking forward to coming to this iconic circuit. There's talk about doing a shortened version. Do you feel that's irrelevant, the IndyCar fans and drivers, including Alonso, will want to do the full Formula 1 circuit so that the circuit can show off the full 3.14 miles?**

BOBBY EPSTEIN: There's no plans to do a shortened course. I think part of the beauty of what the guys want to drive is I think we have a winning formula in the track as it is. I don't think it needs any changes. We've always tinkered with other ideas in terms of what changes could we make that would make the racing even more exciting.

There's one feature we've looked at that would allow an additional I think great passing opportunity kind of in the turn six, seven area. It wouldn't be hard to do. I don't know if we'll do it. If we do anything, it will be minor.

**Q. Mark, you mentioned a multi-year deal. Reporting here in Austin that it's a five-year deal. Is your hope it would be a long-term thing?**

MARK MILES: That report is erroneous. As I said, it's multi-year, and I hope we're there for a very long time. You've heard us say even on this call that we value successful relationships which give our fans kind of a habitual sense of what our circuit looks like, what our championship points race looks like. We love the Austin market. I think it's going to love IndyCar. The Circuit of the Americas and Bobby and his team I think are compelling ingredients to long-term success, so I hope that IndyCar is there for many, many years to come.

BOBBY EPSTEIN: We do want to do some things to make this race a little bit unique and special as we think the experience of driving is going to be. One of the things we're going to offer is we're looking at doing special nice cash bonus. If a guy qualifies on the pole and then wins the race on Sunday, if you have the polesitter who qualifies first also wins the race, we're going to have a special probably \$100,000 bonus.

MARK MILES: If you do that, Will Power will be really grateful.

BOBBY EPSTEIN: We're going to do some things to make it interesting and fun. If we can make this the

second richest purse in IndyCar to the 500, that's something we're looking at doing. It all of course goes to the fans. I think the response will allow us to do some unique things, some things that distinguish it from other events.

**Q. Mr. Miles, talking about the Mexican, Hispanic fan base. It so happens we're going to have a Mexican American Indy Lights champion entering the series next year. Does this move with COTA negate the further opportunities that were talked about previously, going to Mexico for a race?**

MARK MILES: No, it doesn't. We think it has momentum. The right circumstances can be put together in Mexico, which is a lot of needles to thread, but if that's possible, we remain interested in the possibility of developing a race and being in Mexico.

**Q. Mark, a lot of owners have mentioned this in the past, about consistency and placement on the schedule. I feel like you kind of achieved that. Aside from the two new tracks, there is not much movement in terms of the calendar. Can you expand on that a little bit.**

MARK MILES: One of the toughest things for sanctioning bodies to do, folks who run the leagues in any sport, is to make the schedule. There's so many different considerations. It starts with the league's desire to have the strongest possible events, where events are compelling and dominant in the market where you compete, and capable of making national news and achieving television, media ratings.

You quickly get all the considerations from the promoter, what works most years in a place might not work in a given year because they host a major event they get from time to time, or there's another local event to comes in that folks have to sort out. You have to marry those considerations with the optimal television schedule, the concerns of your broadcasters, all that. We will always be looking on the margins to improve the reach and strength of our series through its schedule while taking care of all those other considerations at the same time.

It's kind of an alchemy, it takes a lot of communication. You almost never can deal with a track on a bilateral basis between just you and them. If they need to make a change, it has a domino effect on others.

Our Stephen Starks is on point for us to do that. I think he's doing a great job. I think we're getting better at it. You know our philosophy: we're not looking to grow the number at this point. As our economics improve that would be great, but for now I think this is about the right race, we think it's about the right length, although we're still of a view that if we could find one or two really strong international races that add value for the series and the competitors in February, that's something we would look at. That would be an exception to the idea that we're big enough as we're

sized right now. That would give us a reason to look at growing the number of events.

Generally we don't want to go too long in September. We'd like to start earlier in February if it was out of the U.S. I want to see more people in seats and more impact in the markets where we race. I think that's generally happening and we'll continue to look for ways to improve on that.

**Q. Mark, your TV schedule is going to be announced soon. Is that true? Is there a good chance COTA might get an NBC Sports Network slot?**

MARK MILES: Yes to the first part of the question. We expect to announce the full broadcast schedule in the next couple weeks or so. One of the attributes of the new relationship with NBC is there will be three additional events on NBC broadcast or free to air. Saying that, I'm not going to announce the schedule today. But I don't think it looks like it will be NBC for COTA, at least in year one. It's more likely to be NBCSN.

They're going to do a great job with all the events. To finally have the opportunity to promote from race to race to race across one media conglomerate platform we think will help not just because of the additional free to air coverage but also because of the continuity and ability to promote.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you.