

# IndyCar Media Conference

Wednesday February 6, 2019

**Mark Miles**

**Lisa Boggs**

**Jay Frye**

**Mario Andretti**

**Ed Carpenter**

Press Conference



through 2025.

We are committed to stay as a partner. We'll be on those cars for at least the next seven years. To support that, in addition not only to that commitment, we are going to be building a new state-of-the-art facility in Akron, Ohio, less than a mile away from where the current tires are built. This is really important to us as it continues our legacy, the legacy started by Harvey Firestone back in 1900, to build the world's best race tires in Akron and today the world's best, most dependable and trusted race tires.

Over the next four years we'll be making that transition. We expect that the first tires coming out of that new facility to be tested on the track in 2020.

We feel that INDYCAR, as the rest of you do, under the leadership of Mark and Jay, have done a tremendous job building the momentum. We see that momentum continuing. For us as a tire brand, there is no greater challenge than the NTT IndyCar Series, with the mix of tracks, the world's best drivers, short ovals, road courses, street courses, it takes a tire that can meet those tremendous demands.

We feel that we can meet that challenge and we look forward to continuing to do so. It also helps with technology and development for our passenger tires. Being part of the family that is INDYCAR with the leaders of INDYCAR, our relationship with Mario, and really importantly the current teams and drivers that work with us, provide feedback, help us to really engage fans, engage customers, tell the Firestone story. We really could not be more proud to be part of this family.

We've been at this for almost 100 years, and we look forward to maybe 100 more, if all goes well. We just want to thank you all. I really want to thank the folks here, Mark, Jay, Mario and Ed, for being part of this this morning.

THE MODERATOR: We'll go down the line here and talk to each of these folks. Mark, as Lisa mentioned, a long-standing relationship between Firestone and INDYCAR. What has the brand, kind of iconic tire brand, meant for the sport and INDYCAR?

MARK MILES: Can't wait to answer that. Let me first thank everybody for being here, Keith, Lisa, your whole team.

THE MODERATOR: Good morning, everybody. Thanks for joining us today here in Indianapolis. This is an exciting day for the Firestone brand and I hope for our friends at INDYCAR. We have a list of special guests to join us in celebrating some exciting news around the relationship between Firestone and INDYCAR. Really excited to count down to the 2019 season. Before we do that, we've got some exciting things to talk about in regards to our role in the series for the future.

Champions really have relied on Firestone tires in open-wheel racing now for more than a century, going back to 1911 and the first Indianapolis 500 with Ray Harroun winning on Firestone tires.

It means a lot to us to be here in Indianapolis today kind of in the shadows of Indianapolis Motor Speedway at the Dallara IndyCar factory to share the announcement that we have.

We'll go down the line and hear from all of these folks in just a minute. We'll start with Lisa Boggs, our director of motorsports for Bridgestone America. Mark Miles and Jay Frye representing INDYCAR and Indianapolis Motor Speedway. A man who needs no introduction, Mario Andretti, 1969 Indy 500 winner, a racing legend and long time friend of the Firestone brand. Couldn't appreciate more the support that he gives us. On the end representing not just the drivers but also a team owner, Ed Carpenter. We appreciate a little bit of time from you today as well.

As I said, we have some exciting news to share. To help do that we're going to turn it over to Lisa Boggs.

LISA BOGGS: Thank you everyone for taking time out to spend a little of your morning with us. This is a big morning for us as you can imagine for Firestone, INDYCAR and the Speedway. What we are here to share with you, I am honored and proud to represent Bridgestone America in this announcement that we are extending our partnership with the NTT IndyCar Series



This didn't happen last night. This is the culmination, the next step in this long, historic relationship. But these discussions from I'm sure capital planning with respect to the production facility that was mentioned, all the thinking, it's been going on and developing. It's an offshoot, the product of a fabulous relationship which we value deeply.

I want to thank our racers down here, Mario and Ed, for being with us. They can speak so much more articulately about what the Firestone tire really means to drivers. It's just so compelling.

But the relationship means a lot of things for us. We care a lot about our history. You have been at it from the beginning as champions. This official tire relationship gives our drivers and our teams an enormous sense of confidence. I'll let them talk about that.

When I hear Mario Andretti talk about what it means to be on Firestone tires under the conditions that Lisa mentioned, it's everything. It's hard to imagine any other official tire supplier.

We think you're a great partner, Firestone is a great partner, in all the other respects beyond being the tire supplier. So whether it's your signage at all the tracks, whether it's your engagement with all forms of media, announcements about your title sponsorship and support of the first event of the year, now the last event in the championship as the Firestone Grand Prix, St. Pete, Monterey, it's fantastic.

Folks in Indianapolis, in Indiana, who get to the 500 appreciate your huge focus on the 500. One bit of evidence of that is the incredible number of people you bring in to help celebrate the event. Also your ongoing support for the Legends Day event the day before the race. I think we've announced that Zach Brown is going to be the headliner for this year's event, which will be spectacular.

We can't say enough. This is a huge day. I guess you've been the exclusive supplier for 20 years. This means we'll get at least to '26 before somebody has another meeting like this about the next era.

THE MODERATOR: Jay, to you. We talk a lot about the paddock five-year plan, the competition of the series. How does having Firestone kind of locked in, how have we historically been a part of helping you develop and plan that support?

JAY FRYE: When we did the five-year plan in '16, it was actually four years, my University of Missouri education says four or five years, one of the two. We worked hard as a paddock to come up with the plan in '16. Implemented it in '17. The stop was in '20. Great news today. This plan has taken a life of its own. We're

really proud of that, proud of the relationship.

There's a lot of things from a competition perspective that we think about, we worry about, we're concerned about. It's never about Firestone. They deliver, great people, everything at the track is seamless. The teams have complete confidence in everything they do, as we do. Today is a really great day. Looking forward to a long future.

THE MODERATOR: Mario, I think we can tell a lot of stories and ask a lot of questions across your career, your relationship with Firestone. We certainly are proud of being a part of the anniversary that everyone will be celebrating this year in May with the anniversary of your 1969 Indy 500 win.

What has Firestone meant to you in your career? How has it played a role? What can you say about the relationship you've had with Firestone over the last 55 years?

MARIO ANDRETTI: Thanks for asking (laughter).

Obviously I think I could go on and take up a lot of time by going from the beginning. But I started my career with Indy car luckily by being able to join one of the top three teams in the series. Happened to be the team that at the time, which was during the famous tire war between Firestone, Goodyear, they were on the Firestone side.

Somehow I seemed like I fit the bill because the first test that I did, I think I was brutally honest with what I was reporting to the engineers. They thought that was something they had not experienced because sometimes when you have more experienced veterans, sometimes they tell the engineers what they want to hear. There was another side of it.

That's how I got the job as one of the test drivers, which worked really peachy for me because, as you can imagine, it gave me the opportunity to put so many miles under my belt which helped me develop my skills, but also the full understanding of what it's all about, the technology.

As you can see, at the time I was part of the real development of the race tires as we know it today. We went from a six-inch wide tire to what we're seeing today in all the different categories, I mean, the different disciplines, not just Indy cars.

Anyway, this is why I feel that today is a perfect example of a win-win situation coming together. I mean, there's no question about the validity of having continuity in the tire sector. There's no element of a racecar that's more important than the tires. I think you can fix the aerodynamics, you can fix the suspension technology, so on and so forth, but you cannot afford to have issues with the tires.

There's no discipline on this planet that's more demanding than the Indy cars because of the speeds we're experiencing. Ed can tell you, when he sat on pole a couple years ago, going into turn one at 245 miles an hour, turning left without lifting, I guarantee you when he came back after the four laps he kissed the right front tire. As a driver, you just don't even want to think about that. It's not a given.

I mean, we have a negative example here of what happened to Formula 1. I hate to say it, but I got to say it, because you had two tire brands involved. There was only one turn really that comes close to equaling what we're experiencing today at the high speeds. The other brand, Michelin, had an issue. They were just popping tires, had a couple big crashes. You could see actually that ended pretty much the Formula 1 in Indianapolis.

From an NTT IndyCar Series standpoint, the tires are probably the only element that could actually take the series down, that could be the issue that cannot be really overcome. You got to be thinking in those terms because there were some rumblings couple years ago of another competitor coming in, so forth.

I started asking the drivers. I said, Okay, Dario Franchitti, would you be the one that would actually volunteer to be the first test driver here at Indy for the other brand?

He says, No way.

I asked Kanaan...

It's that critical. Now, the proprietary knowledge that Firestone and Bridgestone possess is not something that's just proprietary. Believe me, that's a fact. This is something that, again, because of this, the only thing that could be better than this announcement today is if the relationship would have been extended to 2050.

Again, even for me driving the two-seater, with the responsibility that I have, I have no qualms. Anything can happen in this world. You could have a puncture. But as far as the integrity of the tire, of the products, it's something that absolutely there's no question because of a proven, proven record.

Again, this is the best insurance that the series could have for not having an issue. At least you put that aside and move forward with other aspects. This is a great day. This is absolutely something that we can rejoice.

LISA BOGGS: Can I have a meeting after this with Jay and discuss 2050? Let's discuss to 3000 (laughter).

THE MODERATOR: Ed, on the end, did you kiss the right front? Was that a true story?

ED CARPENTER: I think it was more the right rear at that point (smiling).

I've been very lucky that my whole INDYCAR career and Indy Lights career, for that matter, have been on Firestones. It's not anything that I've ever really had to think about. Like Mario said, there's been a couple moments in time where there was a blip on the radar of someone else getting involved, but I've always been thankful.

I was thankful on the last extension and even more thankful this extension, with it being as long as it is, that we don't have to worry about it.

I think sometimes Firestone doing such a quality job, consistent job, we don't talk about it enough. That's why a day like today is so important for everyone to hear what Firestone means to the drivers especially and the teams because they save us a lot of money by their reliability and lack of problems. As drivers, with the speeds we're doing, how close we're racing, something we don't have to worry about. The consistency is always there.

As exciting as the extension is, I'm also excited about the new development and performance center that you're building. I've been fortunate enough, like Mario, to be one of the test drivers over the years. Being a part of the process that goes into developing a tire, whether it's for Indianapolis or Texas Motor Speedway or any of the racetracks we go to, but getting a snapshot into everything that goes into it, everything that goes into producing a tire. It's not like they're producing a tire that we use everywhere.

Lisa was talking about they love the demands of our schedule and the diversity of it. They're producing a tire for everywhere we go essentially, meeting that challenge not just for Indianapolis but all the unique venues we go to.

It's just really a privilege to be able to work alongside them and know that relationship is going to be moving forward long-term.

THE MODERATOR: To Ed's point, it will be the Bridgestone Advance Tire Production facility in Akron, Ohio, which is part of the big campus we have there with the Americas Technical Center, which is where our Firestone race engineering team are based, to help design and put together the tires, a team of more than 50 expert tire builders and manufacturing professionals. Really excited about that.

We make more than 26,000 tires a year for the series, as these guys have noted, to fit more than 60 different specifications for tracks, conditions, the placement on the car. We're really excited to be able to help continue that partnership into the future.

Thank you.