

IndyCar Media Conference

Sunday March 10, 2019

Mark Miles

Jon Miller

Sam Flood

Jenny Storms

Press Conference



maybe the architect of this strategy, maybe the motorsports strategy there.

JON MILLER: Thank you, Mark. I appreciate that. There are a lot of people on our team. Mike and Mike are out here who do the day-to-day lifting on the relationship with our folks at IndyCar.

As far as the strategy is concerned, having Sam and his team who really are the leaders when it comes to television production, especially the way we do motorsports, has made it very easy.

Mark and I have known each other for close to 30 years. We've had a lot of opportunities to work with each other in different capacities. When NBC had the cable portion of IndyCar, always we felt like something was missing. When the opportunity came to bring the entire package under one roof, and we knew we could bring all the assets, all of the marketing and promotion efforts that Jenny Storms and her team get to do, we knew we had a real opportunity to make something special happen here.

Nothing to take away from your prior partners who all did a good job, but we think we are the best in class, and we aim to prove that. We kind of live every day making sure we have do that.

As someone said to me earlier, when they saw the promos we ran in the divisional championship and wild card NFL games back in January, they knew something special was going to happen.

I think you all see the way we approach it, the way we produce and market, program, treat it the way we treat our most special properties. We're thrilled to have you be part of the family.

MARK MILES: To Jon's left is Sam Flood, executive producer and president of production of NBC and NBCSN. Another person we've known for a very long time. Sam was part of the team chomping at the bit to get this opportunity because he has an incredible passion for motorsports and IndyCar and a great vision for how to present our sport to viewers.

SAM FLOOD: We're very excited. We love doing IndyCar through all these years. But always felt something was missing. To be able to produce the Indy 500, the greatest spectacle in motorsports, is an honor, and it's a responsibility we don't take lightly.

MARK MILES: Thank you for joining us. This is a bit of an impromptu presentation, but an opportunity for us to talk about something near and dear to our hearts, which is this relationship we feel incredibly good about with NBC.

First, I see Margo Cooke, a senior communications person with NTT. We're glad to have you here.

We're going to talk with our friends from NBC. I just wanted to introduce the topic. We're from Indianapolis. Indianapolis and NBC have an incredibly long history. Some of us were involved with Super Bowl 46 in 2012, which they did, and they did a superb job in. We've done countless Olympic trials, Sunday Night Football. Over time there's always been a great relationship.

I think not later than the Olympics in Rio we started really thinking about what a partnership together might look like, and now here we are. It's absolutely true that NBC is magical about making big events bigger. When we think about the Indianapolis 500 race, I don't think we could be in better hands.

We think about the whole of the series, we love the fact it's one platform, and for the first time we have a partner that can look from race to race to race and think with us strategically about the series, a partner that cares a lot about its success.

That's talk. It sounds good, like sort of early dating sometimes, you make promises. But we made an agreement. Now it's been however few months since, and I can just tell you I have never worked with a broadcast partner that is so engaged, everybody part of their organization and our organization is talking every day. It's a very focused priority for us, and we have no doubt that it will benefit the series and the 500 and all that we do. We hope it will be a great success for NBC, as well.

I want to introduce a friend, Jon has been somebody we've known for a very long time. Jon Miller is president of programming at NBC Sports, really I think

We've been working on it since the day the deal was agreed to. We've been thinking about it for years before that. How would we make a big event even bigger? That's our goal and our job, is to make sure this story is told, this great day, this celebration. It's much more than a race, it's an event.

Our team has been working tirelessly putting together a plan, figuring out the stories we're going to tell, figuring out how to make sure those at home have the best seat in the house. If you can't make it to the track that day, you're going to have an incredible experience on the television and we're going to work hard to make sure that happens.

More importantly to this series for the whole year, have our team and our broadcast booth group, our pit road team in addition, having the production group do it week after week is going to create a continuity that is necessary, an ability to promote from race to race, build those storylines, build the relationship with the audience so they know there's one place to watch this incredible series with great racing week after week, and we're going to see it here in a few hours.

MARK MILES: We have the strategic scheduling, programming view, and we have how we put in front of viewers the most amazing possible experience. Then we have Jenny Storms, chief marketing officer for NBC Sports Group. Jenny, as her title implies, is the person who sorts through beyond just the folks who watch the show and continue to come back, but how do we reach out and convey what we're all about on the track, more viewers. We just could not be more excited about her work.

As part of her comments, I think we're going to tease you a little bit with some video so some of the work so far. You'll get a sense of how she's putting the ideas into practice in a more concerted way than you may have seen in the various promos.

JENNY STORMS: If I didn't bring something for you to see, I lose my annual card and membership (laughter).

I echo as well what you said earlier about the partnership. From the minute the deal happened, the excitement between our two organizations coming together, specifically on the marketing side, I don't think there is a week, not even maybe a day that goes by, that we have not been in touch with your organization and sort of planning together. That signals an absolute partnership for us.

Like Mark just said, the important thing for us is not only reach IndyCar fans, but to go beyond that. Let's get this sport introduced and consumed even outside of those people that have the passion and are part of the racing community.

As Jon said, it was really important for us at the end of January in our wild card and divisional games to go to the 10s of millions of consumers and introduce this not only as bringing IndyCar and the excitement of the sport, but also introducing to this new consumer that may not have experienced it.

Mid February we started true topical. We were in an awareness building, that one home of NBC. Then in February we became more topical, really pushing to the launch of the season, but also pushing the fact there's one seamless destination for you to be able to find IndyCar. It was NBC, NBCSN, NBC Sports Gold, NBCSports.com, us using the NBCSports.com platform as a navigation tool to make sure you could find places.

More importantly, bringing the messaging to life through the drivers. The drivers have been very key for us. Being able to bring to life the messaging around speed, skills, bravery, versatility, driving on these different surfaces. That's been very crucial to our strategy and what we're doing because at the end of the day we really believe that people are connecting with people. We're also trying to bring sort of a humanity side as well. You'll see that when we show you a little bit of content.

We've had great support from across the company. This just hasn't been a sports endeavor, but including NASCAR America, we had Will Power come on, we had Josef Newgarden in an NHL game last week.

We continue in our history with the property of having the drivers featured in nightly shows, in our news shows in the morning such as Today, Tonight Show, et cetera. We look forward to that continuing throughout the season.

Today I did bring a couple of pieces of content. The first two are in regards to brand awareness and building around the Indy 500 and the series. Then we go into a little bit more of the topical. We have a real fun one that's social engagement only right now which has gotten a lot of traction on bringing to light the drivers and their personalities.

Let's take a look.

(Videos Shown.)

MARK MILES: Good stuff. Brilliant idea. How many sour balls can you stick in your mouth? When you're tapped out, can you hold them for a minute? Takuma really shocked all observers, I think.

One more word, then we're happy to take questions. Jon can explain the corporate background for this, but Jon has been very involved in helping us make the arrangement we made with Sky in the UK. That's really going to be a great platform for us in that part of

the world. I ask Jon to make a comment about that.

JON MILLER: Last year Comcast, who is our parent, made a strategic acquisition and acquired Sky, which is the leading premium broadcaster in the UK, Ireland, Italy, Germany. We have been trying to find ways to help grow the IndyCar footprint especially with a new sponsor like NTT.

We went to our new brothers over at Sky and posed the idea to them. They were very receptive to it. But we also needed to get approval from the folks at F1 because motorsports in the UK on Sky are on the Sky F1 channel. It's all been exclusively F1 content. We had a relationship with the F1 folks as well. We kind of went to them on behalf of IndyCar as well as Sky, they agreed to do this.

We're very excited the fact that everything that we produce will now be seen on Sky in the UK from qualifying, practices to the actual racing, et cetera. We think it's the best racing out there. No disrespect to any of the other sports properties we're in business with, whatever. But we think it's great to be able to show the best motorsports product to that audience that is already a motorsports-centric group of people.

We think it helps expand and grow the footprint of IndyCar and makes it more relevant and important on the global sports stage. We were happy to do it.

MARK MILES: It was important to us, we have Carlin, a British-owned team, British drivers. NTT is very much a global company. The depth of the reach in the UK is important. We appreciate your help.

We're happy to take any questions.

Q. Sam, you've been the executive producer of some pretty major events, Super Bowl, Wimbledon, Kentucky Derby. From your career standpoint, to be able to be the executive producer of the Indianapolis 500, how important is that to you?

SAM FLOOD: You always want to do the biggest events. This is a big one. This is one that you circle and are excited about and you want to put the NBC stamp on it. We're excited with what we can do with a huge spectacle.

There are races and then there are events. This is an event. What we're able to do with the Kentucky Derby, when we first had it, it was an hour and a half window. We're now on the air for six hours on race Saturday.

That's what we think we can do here, continue to build the energy, excitement and passion for the sport. With the team we have, I'm pretty confident we're going to have a big-time show come the 500 this year.

Q. From building an IndyCar fan base, to building the ratings, any thought about a midweek

motorsports show where you do a review of what happened the previous weekend, preview the next race?

SAM FLOOD: We're already there. Watch NBCSN from 5 to 6 on Thursdays. We touch all our key properties with IndyCar being a headliner. That's on NBCSN. Every Thursday 5 to 6, we have a motorsports hour where we touch it and we get you to review what happened, looking ahead to the next race.

We have four days a week of coverage in the motorsports world from 5 to 6. Mondays is NASCAR America which primarily looks back at the NASCAR race. Once this season begins, we'll drop IndyCar to the Monday show. Tuesday is Dale Earnhardt Jr., a download, a one-hour show. Wednesday is Motor Mouths, if you want to get in an argument or fight with anybody on our team, you're welcome to do so. That's an hour where we let people call in and have dialogue about any form of motorsports. Thursday is specifically about IndyCar and IMSA, Supercross, MotoGP, everything we have we touch in that window.

Q. Sam, would you like to talk about Indy 500 week.

SAM FLOOD: We're going to lead in with much more programming. The schedule will come out soon. We are filling multiple windows, particularly the week leading up to it with special shows from Indianapolis, special content, including a documentary movie we're releasing in early May.

JON MILLER: One of the great things about May is that's a special month for NBC, for NBC Sports. There's no month that's any bigger because we start off with the Derby on the first Saturday in May, we have the championship in the Premier League on the second weekend in May, we have the Preakness on the third week in May, then throughout the month of May we have the NHL Stanley Cup Playoffs. We have all of these more key big, live events we get to use as a platform to drive everybody to Memorial Day weekend and the 500.

MARK MILES: Offering as many ways as possible to reach fans is important to us. I want to comment on and really thank all the people who have made NBC Gold possible. It was launched this weekend. From everything I gather, the reviews have been fantastic. It's a Herculean effort to get that off the ground on the date as promised. Great work.

Also with NTT and the new app. Frankly, if there are things you lose sleep over, it's delivering on a new technology platform for fans like Gold or the app. Your folks have been fantastic. We're very proud of the result.

Q. Getting back to the Sky deal. They have a number of properties. You handled Formula 1 superbly until you lost it recently. Now that you have a common heritage, do you see a possibility

of it coming back to NBC?

JON MILLER: They currently are engaged and have a deal with another broadcaster. When that deal is up, we'll take a look at it. If they're interested in having conversations, we will.

We're happy with the territory of premium motorsports properties we have now, led by IndyCar that we have exclusively, Supercross exclusively, the NASCAR package we share with FOX. We also have IMSA exclusively.

We have a very strong lineup of premium motorsports properties. At the right time I'm sure we'll take a look at it. But we're very happy with where we are right now.

Q. Obviously since you came in charge, Mark, there's been quite a significant date shift in the calendar ending September. The NBC folks, have you been advising Mark? Is the IndyCar schedule very much in line with what you wanted at NBC?

JON MILLER: It's never ideal. The NFL is a very tough competitor. We see that in a lot of other properties. You see the PGA TOUR has moved there, their playoffs are in August. We were very mindful of that, sensitive to that. We also see the opportunity for IndyCar to finish on broadcast television as a real opportunity.

In the past when we would end on Labor Day weekend, we never had the ability to showcase that on NBC. Now we will be able to showcase that on NBC. We'll be able to use those weeks in September where we have a lot of other premium live programming, once again, to promote to it. We're very much in lockstep.

That's the good part about Mark and the team: we have the dialogue ongoing about what's best scheduling-wise.

Q. With Telemundo, any idea to include Spanish into the broadcast?

JON MILLER: As you know, we own Telemundo, they have a secondary network, NBC Universo. We are in dialogue to put some races on NBC Universo this upcoming year.

Q. Jenny or Jon, the ability to cross promote with such entities as the Today Show, NBC Nightly News, programs of that nature, how much should we see some of that programming during the week or even the weeks leading up to the Indianapolis 500?

JENNY STORMS: I think especially seven to 10 days leading up to the Indianapolis 500 you're going to see a lot of that. Looking across, we've already set a table with the company across NBC Universal, two broadcast networks, 14 channels. Our business reaches 93% of Americans every single month. We've started that dialogue.

I think what's great is we're working very close with Mark and his team. We're also trying to infuse some of the celebrities that maybe rest in our ecosystem that are outside of sport, whether music celebrities, actors, bring them into this event as well because we know the event, as Sam was saying, is beyond sports, it's culture. In the seven to 10 days leading up you're definitely going to see a combined push.

The other interesting thing about May, Jon rattled all the things going on in sports, May is a big month for NBC including programming and launches. Look for us to do cross promotions as well with series. As they're either coming to life, we'll be doing that type of collaboration.

Q. Do you feel like you have any influence over IndyCar and IMSA in terms of maybe getting more weekends where they are on the same schedule?

JON MILLER: We've had that dialogue, will continue to have that dialogue. That's a very good idea. That's something that Sam and the team have been working on a lot.

SAM FLOOD: Long Beach is a great weekend. We see it. Mark obviously looks at everything. He's made a lot of great decisions along the way and will continue to push this sport forward in a great way.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you for being available.