

# NTT IndyCar Series News Conference

Friday April 5, 2019

**Gene Hallman, CEO - Zoom Motorsports**

**Jay Frye, President - INDYCAR**

**Mario Andretti - Racing Legend**

**Simon Pagenaud - Team Penske**

Honda Indy Grand Prix of Alabama - Barber Motorsports Park - 10th Anniversary News Conference

Note: Below is a transcript of the Barber Motorsports Park 10th Anniversary News Conference which took place at the NTT IndyCar Series Honda Indy Grand Prix of Alabama.

**GENE HALLMAN:** I want to thank everybody for coming today. We just wanted to have a very brief press conference highlighting a very special moment in this facility's history, in the event's history. If you would have told me a decade ago to place odds on whether the INDYCAR event in Birmingham would make it a decade or Auburn would make the Final Four, I'm not sure which would have higher odds.

There were many skeptics when we first started. I think this community, this facility, has proved them wrong. This event has been very successful and has a very, very bright future.

When we started, we literally chased INDYCAR around the country for two years. We would show up at events unannounced, we would say, We're here, we want to talk. I distinctly the first time I met Tony George, he literally turned around and walked off.

We kept at it. We kept at it. It culminated in a meeting over in the museum with Mr. Barber, the governor and Tony George. The governor put on this beautiful prep, it's true, about the automobile industry in the state, how this race would help support that and vice versa, how it really spoke to Alabama's future in so many ways with Honda in particular being in Lincoln.



When he summed it up, that's all that needed to be said. We were all here for 10 years now, our 10th year. This year we sold tickets in 42 states and in eight countries around the world. The economic impact of this event is \$30 million, according to the Greater Birmingham Convention and Visitors Bureau. We have great sponsors in Honda, T.E. McHale in the back, AmFirst, our presenting sponsor.

The star of this show is undoubtedly this facility, Barber Motorsports Park. Every chance I get I briefly tell people the story. Think the largest philanthropic project by an individual in this state. George Barber doesn't own anything here. He donated a vast, vast sum of money, nine figures, to make this happen. He donated to a foundation. The foundation owns everything here, including the museum. It's his gift back to our community.

This will continue for generations to come. This gift will keep giving back in terms of tourism and economic development. He hates when I do this. Please give Mr. Barber a round of applause.

To see this legend right here sitting in between his Formula 1 car and his '69 Indy 500 car was phenomenal yesterday. That type of history could not have occurred without his vision. I'll say it for him. No good deed goes unpunished. He had to work to give that money away. It wasn't always easy with red tape, but he persevered and it's going to continue to grow and get better.

This year we're excited. We have lots of different things going on. Our strategy has been always to have different ancillary events, bring non-race fans out here and get them hooked on INDYCAR.

This year for the first time at 5:30 we're going to have a 5K on the track. I think some of the drivers are going to run. We have over 300 people who signed up to run the 5K, the Indy 5K on track this evening.

For the first time ever we have an arts festival, more than 40 Birmingham artists displaying their artwork. The wine festival where you can go and sample, if you're of age, all kinds of different wine and buy the wine on-site. Last year we sold over a hundred cases of wine at the race. We have the Kids Zone with the Ferris wheel and the Coca-Cola Family EXPO with music, a cornhole, kids inflatable.

Something that Honda really pushed us on with a workforce development effort. The state of Alabama, as is the state of Indiana and others, are really proud to find quality workers to work the assembly line or work in their manufacturing facility. So, we turned this into a job fair. Honda is leading the charge.

If you get a chance, please go to the workforce development area, directly across from us here. Honda is actually going to be building a car from scratch, a Honda Passport, from the first nut and bolt all the way up to the entire automobile to demonstrate the technology involved in building a Passport in Lincoln.

We have 1,100 Birmingham city school children coming this morning to take a tour and learn more about a career in automobile manufacturing or any number of sort of industries and to give them a path for their future. That's another beautiful part of this race that we're so proud of.

For our 10th anniversary, we wanted to bring together all the drivers who have won here. We do a lot of golf tournaments around the world. There's an old saying in golf about different forces for different courses. In other words, if you win at a place, you consistently win at a place.

Our first champion couldn't make it, Helio Castroneves, he retired. We have repeats all across the board.

I'd like to bring forward our 2011, 2012 champion, defending champion of the Indy 500, Mr. Will Power.

Quick story about Will. He came to my son's school; I don't know if he even remembers this. Marshall was seven years old. He didn't have anything for him to sign, so he signed his arm. We went to baseball practice that night, Marshall is climbing the chain link fence, fell and broke his arm right where Will signed it. Will won the race that year. I think it was a good omen. Break a leg, he broke an arm. I just came up with that.

The 2013 and 2014 champion, Ryan Hunter-Reay.

This gentleman loves this facility. We like to call him our own, even though it's Nashville that was originally his home.

The 2015, the 2017, and our defending champion, Mr. Josef Newgarden.

The park has put together a nice memento commemorating our 10th anniversary. You can't own the track, but you can have a piece of it. There's an actual piece of the Barber Motorsports Park where you won. We hope you treasure it, because we treasure you guys. You've been great champions.

We do sport all across the country. I said this

consistently. Jay, the INDYCAR drivers are the best that we deal with in terms of dealing with the media, the sponsors, the fans. You guys are phenomenal. You're very accommodating.

SIMON PAGENAUD: 2016 race winner at Barber. I love the track, too (laughter). It's awesome to be here. Thank you. I love it.

GENE HALLMAN: Speak southern. Say thank you, y'all.

SIMON PAGENAUD: Thank you, y'all (laughter). I was wondering if I should put my suit on this morning. You saw me.

GENE HALLMAN: I did. They kept pointing. What are y'all pointing at? It was on my list. Simon, I apologize. We'll give you two of these, okay?

I didn't know this. Our next speaker, was your grandfather the mayor? Father-in-law. His father-in-law was mayor at one point. Two terms, okay.

Jay Frye, the president of INDYCAR, has deep roots here, too. I want him to come forward and bring some comments on behalf of INDYCAR. Jay Frye.

JAY FRYE: Good morning. It's great to be in the great state of Alabama. Obviously we come back here, it's great for me and my family because it's a homecoming for them.

INDYCAR is probably the most diverse racing series in the world. We race on road courses, short ovals, superspeedways, and great facilities like this, which this morning I watched the commercials about Augusta.

It's been a great 10 years. We can't thank Mr. Barber, Gene enough, George enough. Certainly, look forward to coming back 10 more years. The weather looks like it's going to be okay. We have great athletes that will do a great job this weekend.

Thank you for having us.

GENE HALLMAN: Like most races, we bring in a grand marshal every year. Over the years, we have had Bo Jackson, Bart Starr, Charles Barkley, Joe Namath and last year Channing Tatum. By far the biggest response we have received is this year's grand marshal, by far.

It's an honor to bring up the most iconic driver in history, in my mind. I have to say this. Growing up in the '60s and '70s, if you went too fast in your car, your friends would say, You're going Mario Andretti on me, aren't you? I know you've heard that all your life, but it's true. You're also a class act, someone very special.

Please welcome our 2019 grand marshal, Mr. Mario

Andretti.

MARIO ANDRETTI: Thank you. One slight correction. Jay said this series is probably one of the most diverse series on the planet. It is. There's no other series that can compare to what INDYCAR actually provides in our sport.

Here again, thank you so much. One thing I know, I know what I missed in not coming every year to this particular race. It took this official invitation. I'm so happy that it happened because I never had the opportunity to really drive on this course. I was here, like, 10 years ago. I was a bit nervous based on what Marco was telling me, how he likes it, how challenging it can be.

So yesterday I first got the opportunity to get in a two-seater. I love it. I love it. This is a place where you really can attack. It seems like there's a couple different areas where you know you can really improve, so you always got something to look forward.

This facility is just absolutely stunning. Mr. Barber, I mean, obviously you are proud, you should be very proud of what you have here. From the minute you enter, you know this is a place where you want to be.

So again, just so thrilled. I can't wait for the race to get going here. But I hope I don't screw up this part, the 'gentlemen'. I don't know. I probably said, Gentlemen. I'm not supposed to say that any more.

Other than that, thank you for all the compliments. As you know, I've been so blessed in my days, in my career, had the opportunities to actually retire on my own terms. For that I count my blessings every day. This is a sport that has been my life.

What makes it also that much more important for me is that I still have a lot of skin in the game with my son Michael and the third generation with Marco. Even on my brother's side, we have a couple of drivers there. You could see, we don't know any better. That's all we know. That's all we live for.

But here, everything is perfect. All we need is a little bit of sunshine. I think that's coming. I think we have a lot to look forward to as the weekend begins. Thank you for having me.

GENE HALLMAN: Mario, we have a gift for you. We have an artist who has done quite a number of paintings, especially for our Barber Vintage Motorcycle Festival, which is the largest vintage motorcycle festival in the country. Her name is Ann Hicks. She is tickled to present this piece of artwork to you.

Ann, fantastic. That's a great job. We will have prints of that made also. She worked very hard on that.

Jeff, I think you have something you want to give him on behalf of the museum. Jeff Ray, the executive director of the museum does a fantastic job.

JEFF RAY: Welcome, everyone. Mario, proud to have you join us. You were here 10 years ago, a whirlwind tour. Glad you had time to come over to the museum. What I want to present you with is a book that Barber signed, it's the Legends of Motorsports. Thank you for coming to Barber.

MARIO ANDRETTI: Really appreciate this very much. I'll show Marco. Say: Marco, now you do your thing (laughter).

GENE HALLMAN: That will do it. All the drivers, Mario, Mr. Barber, everyone is available for interviews. I want to thank everybody for coming. We look forward to a great weekend. Thank you very much.