

NTT IndyCar Series News Conference

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Press Conference

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THE MODERATOR: Thank you everyone so much for joining us here at Indianapolis Motor Speedway this afternoon. We are pleased to be joined by a mix of gentlemen from Rahal Letterman Lanigan Racing, United Rentals and SoldierStrong. With that, I'd like to introduce Chris Hummel, senior vice president and CMO of United Rentals, to make a very special announcement.

CHRIS HUMMEL: Great, thank you very much. For those of you who have been following us for the last couple years, this is now our fourth season in partnership with the Rahal Letterman Lanigan team as well as with IndyCar, and this also happens to be our fourth season for the Turns For Troops program. United Rentals has a long history of supporting veterans in programs to help them both with their health, with jobs placement. More than 11 percent of our own staff actually are veterans, and the same sort of distribution with many of our customers.

Four years ago we started the program Turns For Troops, where for every lap that Graham Rahal completes, we donate \$50 to an organization called SoldierStrong, which Chris Meek will talk about a little bit later. But in short, SoldierStrong invests the money that they get, that they are able to raise in advanced technology and programs to help wounded veterans, help veterans find jobs, et cetera. I'll leave all the punch lines to Chris there. And so far we've raised this year already just over \$15,000 with Graham. So we're about 300 laps, I think, into the year.

But the best is yet to come, and over the last three plus now seasons, we've raised over \$600,000. So we're very proud to see that, and actually as part of our goal to reach a million dollars by the end of the season, one of the things we're announcing is that for the Indy 500



race in two weeks, United Rentals will increase that donation and not cover just Graham who's racing but the other two drivers, as well. So Takuma Sato and Jordan King will both also, for every lap that they complete, which if together, if my math is right, if all three drivers complete all laps, that will raise \$34,500 just on that weekend.

Add to that some of the activities that Graham as a great spokesperson for the program will do with his golf tournament and whatnot, we're quite excited to see what we can do over the course of the season to try and reach that 1 million goal. So encourage everybody who's interested, TurnsForTroops.com is the program, and we look forward to continuing to support it in partnership with the team.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you, Chris. Joined also next to you Bobby Rahal, co-owner of Rahal Letterman Lanigan Racing. Bobby, with the work that you've witnessed Graham doing through his golf tournaments and obviously the work that the team is putting into making sure the team completes as many laps as possible for SoldierStrong this month here in May, what are your thoughts and feelings on supporting such a generous cause?

BOBBY RAHAL: Well, all you have to do is see Sergeant Dan stand up for the Star Spangled Banner on race day by the car, which he has done for the last several years, and if you don't understand what it's all about after you've seen that, I'm not sure what would do it for you. It's an unbelievable program that has generated great results for those who were injured in service to this country, paralyzed in service to this country, and it's as simple as Sergeant Dan saying, it's just nice to be able to look at people eye-to-eye instead of having to look up, and he's a great spokesman for SoldierStrong on top of it.

We're so pleased to be associated with it. This is now, what, our fourth year, I guess, and I don't -- of course Graham's tournament raises money in excess of the lap money, and I think last year it was \$100,000 on top of what was already raised.

You know, I think this is a program that for us we clearly want to see this \$1 million threshold achieved earlier, or sooner rather than later I should say. I think it will be, and it's just a very worthy cause, and I really give a lot of credit to Chris and to the United Rentals people for embracing this charity, and we've been to

many of the events over the last several years celebrating it, and it really is something special.

We're glad to -- we're honored to be associated with it, and we look forward to having Sergeant Dan with us again this year. We're honored to do everything we can to have Chris to help the entire organization as much as we possibly can.

THE MODERATOR: RLL Racing team co-owner David Letterman also joining us today. David, your passion and love for motorsports is well documented, but did your passion even increase knowing that the team that you co-lead and are so involved with supports such a cause like SoldierStrong?

DAVID LETTERMAN: Well, thank you very much for having me here, and let me just explain thoughts that come to me as I sit here today. First of all, I don't think without racing I would be aware of this program. I don't think without racing I would be a part of this program. If you don't have a military family, I was not in the military myself, and those of my family who were, World War II, are now no longer with us. But without the immediacy of understanding what this does, it is just a good idea.

But now my nephew had an ROTC scholarship with Ball State University, and he is a lieutenant and he is stationed in Kansas and waiting to be deployed, so now this is no longer for me and for my family an abstract concept that you say that's admirable, I'm glad to be a part of it, to now it is fully dimensional part of our lives, because as we all know, we just don't know, and to think that people care in every respect of the maintenance after the duty is remarkable. It goes from a regular movie to an IMAX movie when you have a kid mid-20s waiting to be deployed. Don't know where, just waiting.

It makes me feel on his behalf and on behalf of everybody that is his equal in the service to this country that in some small way I feel good about being part of this. I wish this had been my idea. I wish I was the sole reason that we're all here today. But I am here today because I am lucky for this association and lucky to be around people who are smart enough and have the foresight to develop this program, and I couldn't be more proud.

THE MODERATOR: Joined also by team co-owner Mike Lanigan. Mike, I'm told that you and your work with the team was instrumental in the relationship with United Rentals and that has evolved over a number of years in its relationship with the team. Can you speak a little bit about how it has evolved and how it's grown in the past three to four years?

MIKE LANIGAN: Well, we got together, one of our companies owns a crane manufacturing company, and United has always been one of our top customers in

that field. When Chris came up to us and talked about this idea about helping these soldiers that had been injured and the amputees, it just seemed like a phenomenal idea. I mean, in my younger days when I was involved with the Vietnam War, we didn't treat the soldiers with the respect and we didn't take care of the soldiers when they came back, and in actuality we did the opposite.

What United Rentals is doing is just a spectacular thing. It makes me proud of being an American, it makes me proud to thank these young men that have taken a chance on their lives and lost their limbs, and for us it's just to put a little piece of joy in their life is well worth everything we're doing here. I'd like to thank the United Rentals people for that, and like David, I wish it was my idea, but it wasn't my idea.

THE MODERATOR: With that, I'd like to introduce a very special guest. We're joined by the chairman of SoldierStrong, Mr. Chris Meek, who is going to tell us about a very important program that SoldierStrong is working on, but first of all, Chris, before we get to that, can you share with us your thoughts and your feelings about how your relationship with Rahal Letterman Lanigan Racing and United Rentals has grown with SoldierStrong and the fact that both Takuma and Jordan King's laps will also be contributing to SoldierStrong this year?

CHRIS MEEK: Sure. We're very fortunate and honored to be working both with United Rentals and Rahal Letterman Lanigan Racing. They've been an instrumental partner in our organization's success in helping the veterans that have been injured while they've been deployed. But not just the organizations embracing the program, it's the individuals. The guys in the garage will take -- you hear about Sergeant Dan; they'll put him in the car and take him for a ride. Bobby did something with his dealerships for us last year. Having David and Mike involved with us really just speaks volumes for their personal commitment to the program, and so we thank you and are appreciative of that.

THE MODERATOR: What can you tell us about the Strong Mind technology? I know there was a little bit about it in the press release that everybody received before this announcement, but it seems like a very innovative and forward-thinking technology.

CHRIS MEEK: So we have really been focused on advanced rehabilitative medical devices specifically exoskeletons for paralyzed veterans. A few years ago, one of the devices we donated to the VA in Denver, they were also going to use the device for a mental health study, and I thought that was interesting what they were going to do, and the study was really to show the benefits of what it's like to stand and be eye level with the world again, something that we all take for granted every day.

So I thought, this is a great opportunity for SoldierStrong to get into the mental health space but I wasn't really sure how, so did some Googling and some research and came across bridge reality program developed at the University of Southern California called Brave Mind, and so a team of us went out in February to visit Dr. Skip Rizzo and to try the technology, and what we are doing now, what you'll see in the release, is we are going to be funding both the software and hardware as well as clinical training and working with the VA's innovator network and donating that to VA medical centers across the country. It's really going to be focused on helping veterans suffering from posttraumatic stress.

THE MODERATOR: That's wonderful. Thank you so much for your work on that technology. Would you be able to walk us through a little bit -- I hear you may have a demonstration for us.

CHRIS MEEK: Right now?

THE MODERATOR: Absolutely.

CHRIS MEEK: We're going to do two demos. The first one is going to be in theater in a Humvee, and the idea of the therapy is it's called immersion therapy, so the concept is really to desensitize the individual from the situation so that it's not as scary for them going forward.

Right now, hopefully you can see what I'm seeing, so I'm the driver in the Humvee, and Andrew is going to put me on rail so I don't have to drive; he can control where the Jeep is going. So they can also make it a very soft situation, they can enhance it, which we'll see different parts of it, and by enhancing it, there could be other people walking on the road, there could be a helicopter flying overhead, there could be an IED. And the idea behind this, specifically on the post 9/11 veterans, is they're a gaming generation now, and so this is something that's not quite as scary to them.

One of the biggest reasons for veteran suicide is untreated posttraumatic stress, and the reason it's untreated is because of stigma. We have these big bad warriors, men and women defending our country, and they don't want people to know that they're hurt or they're broken.

So I'm the gunner. Do you want to throw in some helicopters? So when I tried this in February the first thing they asked was you were a veteran and I said, no, so they could determine how much they could put at me or not put at me. Right now you hear jets flying overhead, there's a helicopter. And these are all trigger points for veterans. Little things like a helicopter, little things like hearing a kid maybe over here from a window, and it's just little things like that that prevent them from getting out of bed, prevent them

from doing a full day's worth of work. So we see an ambush over here on the top of that building.

This one is a little bit trickier. There is something called virtual reality sickness, and if you haven't experienced virtual reality before, you might get dizzy, you might get wobbly, you may see me get a little bit wobbly; I did it earlier today. The newer headsets, actually brand new, so this is a different one than I tried a few months ago. But I think Andrew is going to put a chair behind me in case I tumble over.

This is a market anywhere in Iraq or Afghanistan, and in a moment I'll start walking through, and we'll see what happens when you're in a market. So you can adjust the time of day. There's a sand storm scenario. The entire suite of programs is 14 different situations combined between Iraq and Afghanistan. So here you're seeing a sand storm. I'm in the same situation, just a different part of the building in the street or in the market.

One of the things they also have at USC which we'll be adding to our deployment packages is there's a fake gun to get you back in the feel, and then there will be a thumb throttle to help you walk through the village.

Also to help with the therapy is, with an explosion like we just saw there, you can either have an individual get hurt, not get hurt, different levels of severity of the injury, to really kind of ease the patient, ease the veteran through the therapy session.

THE MODERATOR: Chris, thank you so much. Thank you for all that SoldierStrong is doing. With that I will open it up for a few questions.

Q. I have a question for you. Is this system already fully in development, or is there more possibilities to improve the system?

CHRIS MEEK: More possibilities. Like any technology, it will get better in time. VR is actually about 10 years old now, and we've been working with USC over the last several months to really fine tune this so we can get it deployed out to the VA, but it will get better in time both as the software and hardware get better.

DAVID LETTERMAN: Maybe you covered this already: Who will qualify for this kind of technology? Who will be determined to be in need of this kind of usefulness?

CHRIS MEEK: So right now we're working with the VA's innovator network, and they're the ones determining which VA hospitals right now have the biggest need both from a veteran population as well as clinicians. As part of our program, we will also be training the clinicians there, too, so our initial roll-out will be with 10 specific VA sites that they have identified themselves, and then from there we'll scale up.

DAVID LETTERMAN: And the financial support comes from --

CHRIS MEEK: Folks like you and you and Chris.

BOBBY RAHAL: I think I saw something the other day that Robert Wickens was wearing one of the exoskeletons using it for his therapy. So you know, here we have -- there's some relevance for us in motorsport that Robert is benefiting from this technology, as well, which I think is very appropriate, and I just -- I was pretty interested to see that the other day.

Q. That was exactly what I was going to ask, but the fact that you could use the exoskeleton for an individual such as Robert Wickens, is that something worth pursuing to help him speed up his rehabilitation?

CHRIS MEEK: Absolutely. There are several different devices out there. There are two companies that we work with that are made here in the U.S. Each device has a different range of what it can do for different injuries, and so the primary one we do is not only for spinal cord injury but also for stroke so you can retrain the body to walk, and you can basically shut half the robot off and retrain your body to walk again.

CHRIS HUMMEL: Just to give you an idea, each of those suits cost anywhere from \$150,000 to \$200,000, so they're quite expensive to do, and one of the things that we've worked with SoldierStrong is actually it was their idea, at first they sort of gave it to individuals, so somebody like Sergeant Dan Rose like we talked about, but I was honored about a month ago we actually went down to Phoenix and gave away the 20th suit from SoldierStrong to the VA hospital, and by giving it to the VA hospital, what happens is you can actually get multiple veterans who are able to use it, and so we met a number of the guys who were going to use it and who were on that program, and I think it's that kind of -- it's not just 20 suits for 20 individuals; we're reaching much more than that. So that was a great moment, too.

Q. Bobby, could you just kind of compare and contrast and talk about Graham and so many other drivers do things to give back and help, socially conscious things. Back in your day when you were racing were there things that you were doing that maybe didn't have the social media and people weren't as aware of it or is there now kind of a call to action for folks?

BOBBY RAHAL: Well, they didn't have social media when I was racing. Social media was Western Union. (Laughter.)

I don't mean to make light of it. In any event, we all -- I mean, I think a lot of drivers did a lot of things at that time to help the various charities that existed, but clearly nothing of this nature I would say that comes to

my mind immediately. But there was a lot of effort made on behalf of a lot of charities by a lot of drivers, and I think that's always been a part of racing, frankly, as far as I can remember back. It was always giving back to people. You had a platform from which to do that, and some guys did more than others, but I think there was always this feeling that there were people that needed your support and you would give it.

Now, in this case, this is much more specific I would say, and also maybe -- I don't want to say more meaningful, but obviously our needs are different today than they were 30 years ago. We didn't have real wars going on at that time. We didn't have the technology that exists today that existed then. Or vice versa, I should say. Yeah, we were all trying to do our bit, but I think that today the opportunity to embrace really specific technologies like this, they're there today that didn't exist then. It makes it -- I think for me personally, I think you get a little feeling it's a little more personal this way than maybe just giving to Easter Seals, for example. Worthy cause for sure, but the fact that Robert Wickens now is using this -- again, I said it makes it kind of appropriate, it makes it kind of relevant to us all in the motorsports world. Not only are we helping all these veterans, but there's opportunities and purposes for those within our sport and elsewhere to take advantage of these technologies.

So it just makes you, I think, a little bit more -- you feel a little bit more that you're actually -- you can kind of touch what you're doing rather than just writing a check.

Q. Question for you concerning the technology. When you talk about veterans, this system is just available in America, or you plan to market it worldwide?

CHRIS MEEK: What we'll be doing is just for the U.S., but the actual Brave Mind software that's being designed by University of Southern California, that's worldwide. So we're really just combining a combination of the software, the hardware and the clinical training, that's what we're funding, but USC and Dr. Skip Rizzo and his team will continue developing this Brave Mind software and deploying that worldwide.

Right now we've got the 14 scenarios that are in combat theater. There are also things for military sexual trauma that are being developed. There's a program for the World Trade Center for 9/11, which I actually need to use because I was there. And so while we're focused specifically on the veteran population, this concept of immersion therapy is something that can be transferred across the entire population. Think about first responders, you think about people who have had sexual trauma. Things like that can help them grow, so the technology will grow and will be very case specific.

THE MODERATOR: Gentlemen, I do want to ask Mr.

Hummel if he can give us an idea of how fans can get involved in other ways this month.

CHRIS HUMMEL: Well, certainly we need all the help we can get. There's so much that we can do as an organization from the United Rentals side, so much we can do from here, but what we're trying to do is make this much more of a grass-roots effort. The best way to do it is to go to turnsfortroops.com, and on there individuals can donate directly. During the course of the weekend of the Indy 500 we do other things to sort of raise awareness, and the other is to text Indy 25, if you text 20222 and then \$25. So again, it's Indy 25, I-n-d-y 25, text 20222, and then put \$25. That's a donation of \$25, and all of that, believe me, that helps. The first season that's something we didn't really do. We sort of took it as a corporate responsibility, but what we're trying to do is get everybody involved so they can be a part of it, and that's been a big part of why we've been able to raise \$600,000 already, and we will not get anywhere near the million without the help from all the fans out there, as well.

THE MODERATOR: Gentlemen, thank you so much for joining us today. Good luck. Have a great month of May.