

NTT IndyCar Series News Conference

Friday August 23, 2019

Press Conference

Graham Rahal

Rahal Lanigan Letterman Racing

Colton Parayko

St. Louis Blues

THE MODERATOR: We welcome to the press conference room NTT IndyCar Series driver Graham Rahal. We have a Stanley Cup champion in the house, Colton Parayko. I welcome you here. I know you're quite the car enthusiast and a race fan. Talk about your experience here and what it's like to be at the racetrack.

COLTON PARAYKO: Yeah, it's been good. I mean, ever since St. Louis got a race, it's been special. Obviously I'm from Edmonton, used to be an IndyCar race there, I used to go every year. My dad would take us every year. Cool and special when St. Louis got a race.

Kind of Graham and I have built a little bit of a relationship where whenever I get to go to the race, when you go to any sport, you kind of know a little bit, it just makes it that much better. It's more enjoyable, I guess.

THE MODERATOR: Graham, you've built this relationship with Colton. I know you spent some time together. What are some of the things you're trying to show him and allow him to see in this sport?

GRAHAM RAHAL: I mean, in all aspects of life, he's a pretty modest guy. He acts like he's a newbie around here. He's been around quite a lot. I remember the first time we met, I can't remember what year it was, it was at Indy maybe 2014, '13, something like that. Spent some time there. We were at the Toronto race. This guy just shows up. Never had asked for a ticket or anything. He kind of showed his true colors there. Obviously enjoyed coming out to the races.

It's always great to have him to join us here. We keep in touch pretty much, I don't know, couple times a week. He and Petra watch quite a lot of IndyCar racing. Obviously we were pretty locked into what they were doing last year and their comeback.

It was amazing to see these guys lift the Cup. Awfully honored and excited for it to be here tomorrow, to see it. I've seen it once before with these guys in the Winter Classic, when I came to the Winter Classic. I was here with Bridgestone and Honda. They had kind of a



showing. Both times in St. Louis, pretty awesome.

THE MODERATOR: Colton, talk about maybe some of your favorite aspects of IndyCar racing. I know the competition is pretty stiff, the machinery, the speed. What is it about the sport that attracts you?

COLTON PARAYKO: I would say the speed is probably the biggest thing. I just think everything that goes into it is cool. You get a new appreciation for it when you come to the race. Bring a couple teammates tomorrow. Every time you do bring new guys, new teammates, they're like, Wow, this is amazing, so cool. I agree.

But, yeah, I think speed is probably the biggest thing.

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

Q. Colton, Graham is a pretty big Blue Jackets fan. How often do you get in lively debates with Graham over that?

COLTON PARAYKO: Depends if we're playing each other, first. Second, sometimes we just kind of talk about the different teams and stuff. No, we always just kind of talk hockey talk, racing, how are the Blue Jackets going to be, how are the Blues going to be? Just normal hockey talk.

Q. Are you impressed by how well-versed Graham is not only in hockey by Ohio State football, college football? He has some pretty strong opinions on a lot of sports.

COLTON PARAYKO: Yeah, I mean, he's a sportsfan. I like it. He says what he thinks. That's the way it should be.

Q. Colton, talk about being in a racecar. You're going to be in the fastest seat in sports tomorrow. Graham is one of the larger IndyCar drivers. You're larger still. How is it fitting in one of those cars?

COLTON PARAYKO: I did it last year or the year before, I did a lap. I think they were doing the two seater. I got in there. He's like, Can you get lower?

I'll try.

Kind of got a little lower. It's cool. It's such a cool experience. I feel like every year I come, it's the next step up. Last year when I got to go in the two seater, it was extremely cool. Not close to any kind of appreciation to what these guys are feeling, what they're going through. Going at a little bit of speed and

going around the corners and stuff, it's cool. I enjoy it. It's something that was great.

Q. Let's talk a little bit of hockey. Obviously you played the Sharks, describe how intense that whole battle was. It was pretty intense between you and San Jose.

COLTON PARAYKO: Yeah, that was a tough series. They had a good team obviously. They had some elite goal-scorers, two elite defensemen on the back end, some guys that moved the puck well. They had a good team overall. That was one of our tougher series. I think they beat us pretty good in a couple of those games.

We just kind of stayed with it throughout the series. I think it was Game 3 or 4 where they had the hand pass. Came back, I think we won the next three. We were down 2-1 in the series, kind of flipped the page after that. Controversial hand pass. Flipped the page and kind of didn't look back.

I think we kind of took over Games 5 and 6. I think it was 5-1, 5-2, something like that. I don't know, they're obviously a really good team. Credit to them. But yeah.

Q. Colton, talk about bringing the Cup here, what this means to you and Alex to show it off to another sport, see it with IndyCar's championship trophy.

COLTON PARAYKO: I think it's cool when sports collide, be together. It's extra special for Alex and I to bring it for Graham. Kind of got to know each other well. Obviously him being a hockey fan. Like he said, he's seen it before. I think it's kind of special we won it this year, get to share it with him that way. Obviously hopefully the Blue Jackets do it one year, but for now I guess we'll show it to him first.

Q. Graham, also your commercial partners, can you give more details how the contact with you and Total came together, a French company?

GRAHAM RAHAL: Really I think the first connection came from Total. They reached out to us. At the time we had a different partnership, as everybody is aware, with a different oil company. The timing was perfect. We were up for negotiation.

Total obviously on a worldwide scale, the footprint is just massive compared to who we were with before. There was a lot more we could do from a partnership standpoint.

It's worked out great. I mean, they're definitely very committed. We kind of have a new regime coming into Total right now. But they even seem more excited than what we were doing before. I would say life is good on that front.

From a commercial standpoint as a team in general, things have definitely improved a lot, a lot over the last

few years. We're looking forward to what's ahead.

Q. (No microphone.)

GRAHAM RAHAL: We work on some, for sure, just developing more. As you guys know, in this sport there's a very fine line between getting an edge over others. Oil right now, at least with the gearbox and everything else, oil lubricants are pretty big. We can't do anything with engine oil right now. Honda kind of specifies with what we do there. I bet there's a lot of teams up and down here that are running different gearbox oils, so it's definitely an advantage.

Q. Talk about doubling the amount of data with a two-car team. How much would a three-car team help?

GRAHAM RAHAL: It would help. I don't think we've been good enough as maximizing the two cars, to be honest. Something from even practice today, we were emphasizing, we need to divide and conquer. We show up to a racetrack every weekend, we have 20 different things to try. There's no way that one car can get that done. We weren't good enough before at just splitting that task up and staying committed to it, making it happen.

This morning was definitely a really good improvement with that. So for sure three cars would be better. Trust me, every available driver in this pit lane has called me as if, like, I'm a decision maker. The door of my motorhome was like a round-robin coming in last week. What is going on here?

Yeah, that's not my department. It would be good if we can figure it out. As you guys know, what has worked well and will continue to work well, these partnerships, as long as IndyCar allows it, doesn't crack down on it, these partnerships like a Harding and Andretti, which is really just Andretti all the way around, what it's allowed them to do is like Colton could come here and test last week because he's not considered Andretti, while the Andretti cars were out in Portland testing. They can double up on their data and testing, which we cannot do. We weren't able to test at either place because of the way our testing rules are. We need to look at partnerships like that, too, because that's a big benefit. Until they crack down on it, that's a big benefit.

Q. Colton, how would you compare the respective hand-eye coordination of the two of you? Who has more of it?

GRAHAM RAHAL: He has more.

COLTON PARAYKO: I don't know about that. We're not skating at over 200 miles an hour. I'm definitely going to have to go with these guys.

GRAHAM RAHAL: We played golf together in Tahoe two weeks ago, a mini vacation for a couple days. I had him on the tee box, I was throwing balls at him, he could hit them. I certainly could not do it. It was like a

pass on ice. One-timer. What if I lobbed this at you, could you get it? He got it, so... I couldn't do that.

COLTON PARAYKO: That's kind of cheating. I've been doing that for how many years now, though?

Q. Did he hit it straight?

GRAHAM RAHAL: It was straight but it was a little fat, a little thick. There was a lot of earth that moved with that golf ball.

Q. Graham, you released a video from Takuma's car, legislated the thing as far as it could possibly go. When you think about everything that took place on the first lap...

GRAHAM RAHAL: I'm not commenting on it. I think we wasted way too much time on this. It's been a week. We're at Gateway. We need to get beyond it. Things happen. Here we are. That's my personal opinion. I see stuff out on social media still today. There's a million ways you can look at it. At this point who cares. Just move forward.

Q. Colton, what can you take when you come to an event like this, tips on the organization, how they do things? Take anything from racing, apply it to your mindset in hockey?

COLTON PARAYKO: Yeah, I guess so. I mean, racing is a team. Obviously everybody has to work together, everybody has to be on the same page. Transfers over to hockey. We all kind of have to come together. We all have to work together. We all have to obviously try new things, doing new things all the time.

I just think the team dynamic is huge for both of us. Just being on the same page, come to the rink, we were in last place in the middle of the season, we didn't fall apart, we stayed together as a team. I just think that's kind of the biggest thing.

You watch these guys work on the cars, watch Graham talk about the car, all the team members are working on it, kind of coming together. I think that's the biggest thing.

Q. Graham, this celebration weekend for SeriousFun Children's Network, you've been connected to the Paul Newman family, the efforts they've done with the children's camps, what kind of message would you like to send about why the support is so important?

GRAHAM RAHAL: It's key. I think this guy right here with Leila here in town has shown his true character with giving back, helping kids, bringing awareness to diseases and issues that they may face. To be honest, it isn't right in front of our eyes typically.

SeriousFun, my greatest opportunity was still in 2007 as a junior in high school when Paul Newman called and gave me an opportunity to go racing.

It stuck with me, as you guys all know, for my entire life. We're very fortunate. I think it's great, absolutely awesome, to see first of all that SeriousFun is really back at the forefront of our sport. Kind of disappeared there for a while, which is a little disheartening. It's great to see (indiscernible), the entire family rally around this, get us all together again.

What those camps do, what those camps provide, the happiness that it provides to kids around the world, talking about 30 plus camps now, there's very few things, and if you read some of the letters I have, that Paul showed me, just other letters that have been sent to me at our foundation, very few things in life that will ever provide happiness for those kids, a little bit of fun and laughter, than what those camps do.

It's important, absolutely key that we all rally around it and try to help, try to give back. SeriousFun, it is what it says, it's a great time for them.

THE MODERATOR: I think Colton is going to have some serious fun with you. Put him in a two seater like you.

GRAHAM RAHAL: Two guys like us, I don't know about that. I wish him well. Hope he gets around in one piece and his knees are okay, can't get those two banged up. It's amazing to have these guys here, to have the Stanley Cup here is really cool.

But it's almost time for him to get back to work, too. Looking forward to see what they have in store next year.

THE MODERATOR: Thanks a lot, guys.