

NTT IndyCar Series News Conference

Wednesday February 19, 2020
Press Conference



Michael Andretti

Chairman and CEO of Andretti Motorsport

James Hinchcliffe

Driver No. 29 Genesys Honda

Keith Pearce

Senior VP of Marketing for Genesys

THE MODERATOR: Welcome, everyone, to today's IndyCar media conference call. Earlier today Andretti Autosport announced that James Hinchcliffe will race for the team in three NTT IndyCar Series races in 2020, with sponsorship from Genesys.

We're happy to be joined by Michael Andretti, the chairman and CEO of Andretti Autosport. James Hinchcliffe, driver of the No. 29 Honda sponsored by Genesys. And Keith Pearce, the senior VP of marketing for Genesys.

Congratulations on today's announcement and welcome to today's conference call.

Michael, during the formal presentation about an hour ago you said you're bringing James Hinchcliffe back home to Andretti Autosport. How important is it to add someone of James' caliber to the five drivers you already have on your team?

MICHAEL ANDRETTI: We're really excited to have James back. Like you said, it is like he's coming back home. When he left in '14, definitely left with the intent of him coming back some day. It finally happened this year, so we're really excited about that.

James fits in perfectly with our team. When you have a multi-driver team with a lot of different personalities, it's very important to have not only a talented and fast driver but a guy that's going to be able to fit in with everybody. James is perfect for that. He's friends with everybody on our team, all the drivers. They're all excited about having him back.

It's going to be fun.

THE MODERATOR: James, three races planned so far for 2020: the two races at Indianapolis and the oval at Texas Motor Speedway. I've heard you call this kind of like a gap year for yourself. How do you prepare yourself for 2020 knowing you're not going to get to race until round five of the season?

JAMES HINCHCLIFFE: For sure it's going to be a bit of a different mental situation for me heading into 2020. At the same time I'm preparing myself physically as if I was going to be racing in St. Pete.

I'm going to be doing everything I can in the buildup to the month of May to be as prepared as possible so when we hit the track we're right on speed.

There's a lot of development happening obviously with the aero screen on the car. A lot changing. A bunch of great teammates now that are going to get through that work, help get me up to speed.

Between coming back to a team I've got a ton of familiarity with, I've had success with in the past, bringing a partner like Genesys onboard, seeing their enthusiasm behind it, just how much they've embraced this program has been awesome to see from our seat.

Yeah, it's a bit of a different look going into May, knowing that the GP is your first race. I don't think we could be part of a better program to be as prepared as possible to be successful from the second we hit the track.

THE MODERATOR: Keith, I know it's pretty well-known that the partnership with James started with a direct message on Instagram. I heard you say earlier today that Genesys kind of hit the IndyCar lottery between James Hinchcliffe and Andretti Autosport.

KEITH PEARCE: We absolutely did. I don't think the stars could have aligned more perfectly for us. It started in November really, talking to James, Michael and others. Things came together very quickly. We don't have a frame of reference. We just do things fast, which is a good metaphor for IndyCar, James and Michael.

Yeah, we could not have imagined that we would be sitting in a press conference today with James and Michael Andretti talking about this. I have to pinch myself a little bit here, so...

THE MODERATOR: As an Indianapolis-based company, how much are you looking forward to supporting two neighbors in James and Andretti Autosport in a race that's basically in your backyard at the Indianapolis Motor Speedway?

KEITH PEARCE: Very much. This is serendipity. I think

James' house is a half mile or mile from the office. Michael has a view of Genesys right outside of his window. This had to happen at some point. Kevin Bacon referenced it (laughter).

Seriously, 850 employees here in Indianapolis. They're all super pumped about what we're doing. We're going to leverage this as an awareness platform for the company, not just in Indianapolis, but nationwide and globally. We're very excited.

Our first-ever sports sponsorship program. Couldn't have picked a better team, class act guys in Michael and James. Can't wait to get started.

THE MODERATOR: We'll open it up for questions for any of our guests.

Q. I'm pretty sure Genesys has customers in Canada. The obvious question is, besides the GP and the 500 and Texas, Hinch, you'd love to run Toronto again. What about it? If these three go well, possibility of coming up and running Toronto in that backyard?

JAMES HINCHCLIFFE: Obviously we want as many races on the schedule as possible, be up there as much as possible. Toronto definitely has a place in my heart. I think everybody would love to see that, as well.

The truth is logistically it's a very tough one to make for a lot of the teams. Andretti Autosport is no different. Never say never. We're always looking at opportunities to get the car on the track.

But that one is actually uniquely challenging in a lot of ways unfortunately. I mean, I'll be there in one capacity or another. I'll be helping support the event, promote the event.

The trajectory that race has been on the last few years is growing and growing. We have every intention of being there in 2021.

Even if we don't make it this year, please come support the race. Dalton Kellett, a Canadian, will be in the race anyway. Hopefully we'll keep the event growing and come back strong in '21.

Q. What prompted the choice of Texas the third race? When will you get a chance to test for the first time? Will that be on the speedway or will it be at Barber or something to get yourself prepared for the road course race?

JAMES HINCHCLIFFE: The Texas race makes a lot of sense both commercially and logistically. When you have an extra crew running a car for the month of May, Texas is only two weeks later. If you're pulling a (indiscernible) program like Texas, you can keep the momentum of the month of May going, keep that program for two weeks longer.

On top of that, for a lot of our partners, not just Genesys, but others as well, it's an event that is important. It was always high on the hit list. When it sort of made sense logistically that sort of made it pretty easy.

Yeah, in terms of being in the car, the open test late April, that's going to be my first time back in an Andretti Motorsport car in Genesys colors and a new windscreen. It's going to be a big day.

Q. Any idea who your race engineer will be?

MICHAEL ANDRETTI: Looks like it's going to be Eric Bretzman.

THE MODERATOR: Seeing as we have no further questions from the media, we will thank our guests for their time this morning and wrap-up today's IndyCar media conference call.