

NTT INDYCAR SERIES

News Conference

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Press Conference

Charlie Kimball

Larry Foyt

THE MODERATOR: Welcome to today's final video news conference in advance of the Genesys 300 at Texas Motor Speedway. The race is on Saturday at 8:00 p.m. on NBC. Joining us on today's video conference are Larry Foyt and Charlie Kimball of AJ Foyt Racing. Thank you for taking the time to join us.

Larry, I'm going to ask a question to you. You're the first team principal we've had on this week on the call. How have you gotten AJ Foyt Racing ready for this Texas race, especially since you have teams based in Indy and Waller?

LARRY FOYT: Sure, from that aspect it's no different, right, because we operate the two shops anyway. Some things we did do, we sent the Houston car up to Indianapolis for the engine to be started and some final prep to happen there, just so that guys weren't having to travel. We were able to drive up and drive back, so guys weren't having to travel to start that car. That was just something we wanted to help out everybody, because most people being in Indy it was just easier for everyone.

But no, I think we're just excited to go racing. Obviously, with a one-day show, we have to make sure everything is prepared perfectly. Not that we wouldn't anyway, but you just can't lose any practice time. You want everything to be perfect. We've been doing a lot of extra time on pit stop practice because with the shorter stints in this race, we know pit stops are going to be very important. So that's it.

I think everybody is just ready to go racing. We were ready; we were in St. Pete ready to go, so it just feels like we've had a little bit of a delay here, but now we're ready to get back at it.

THE MODERATOR: Charlie, I know that last year as a non-full-time driver you had some gaps in the schedule. You were ready to go in March and then we had a gap in the schedule. Is it something that you're kind of used to, or do you still have anxiety, or are you excited about getting the season started at Texas?

CHARLIE KIMBALL: Well, I think I have a little bit more practice than I would like. I'm not sure that you ever get used to being out of the car when other cars are running. The strange thing about the last two and a half months has been that no one has been running. So I



am really excited for this weekend. I've really enjoyed working with the AJ Foyt crew digitally and virtually, and popped into the shop last week to make sure while the Houston car was up in Indiana, get in, make sure the head pads fit because we were all ready to go for St. Pete on a road course street circuit, and then going into Texas this weekend with the superspeedway we had to take care of some of those other details that we would expect to have a week and a half to sort out in Indianapolis with this being an oval. With this flipped-up schedule, one-day show like I already talked about, making sure that we take care of all the details so that when we get there Saturday we can just focus on making the car go fast and getting the best results.

THE MODERATOR: Charlie, you're the track record holder at Texas Motor Speedway, so starting the season on an oval has to be something to give you some confidence knowing that you can go around Texas fast.

CHARLIE KIMBALL: I feel like we have unfinished business there, definitely, having sat on pole in 2017 and not seeing that checkered flag that day, whatever position we finished. I do remember that feeling and what it was like to lead the field to green, and this year the goal is not to lead the field to green but lead the field to checkered.

Q. Larry, I know in talking with Jay Frye yesterday, he announced that there would be very little if any testing outside of developmental purposes for potential new drivers for the remainder of the 2020 season, and I imagine for a team like you guys that has so many drivers in the fold and with this very, very different schedule than you guys initially anticipated for 2020, I'd be curious to know just how a lack of in-season testing would potentially affect you guys moving forward and what your goals are for the remainder of the year.

LARRY FOYT: Well, I guess what I would say is yeah, it's tough, but like going into this first oval, I'm glad we've got Charlie and Tony, two guys with a lot of experience, even though we haven't had the car with the Aeroscreen, the windscreen on an oval yet. It is a lot of unknowns going into this. But what I would say is we're all living in some really difficult times right now, and as long as it's the same for everybody, I'm fine with that.

You do feel bad for a kid like Dalton (Kellett) who hasn't had a ton of time in an Indy car, and he's probably

going to have some races where it's quick weekends, and he's got to do the best he can and learn how to drive an Indy car as quickly as he can. So that's going to be tough for him. But it's tough for everybody. There are other rookies in the series.

But like I say, I feel a little bad for Dalton because I know some more testing time would have been good for him, but we're all going to have to do the best we can.

CHARLIE KIMBALL: From my side, it's nice to have the experience showing up at Texas having run there for nine years and having had some results and having had some experience. But the limited testing, it's hard, but at the same time, I'd much rather -- I'd rather be in the race car, but if I had to choose between racing or testing, I'm glad we're going racing. It's about putting on a show for the fans, especially these first few races at home, on TV -- or Texas this weekend on TV and then figuring out what the landscape looks like beyond that and figure out what it looks like for next winter and heading into 2021 and the future beyond that.

Q. Charlie, when you guys come to Texas this weekend for the season opener on a track that is very exciting but oftentimes has the potential to lead to pretty large accidents when you combine just that lack of testing these last several months, this being the first race of the year, getting several rookies and some first-time drivers at Texas used to that track, how do you approach just the totality of this race in terms of wanting to probably be aggressive and being excited at the start but maybe at the same time wanting to be a little bit cautious given the surroundings and circumstances?

CHARLIE KIMBALL: I think there is a healthy balance between taking care of the car, the equipment and my team. But also making sure to maximize the opportunity, and when it's time to be cautious in the race, I hope I know and understand the situation to be cautious and make sure that I pick my way through those incidents, and then when it's time to wake up and be aggressive and go for that result. Part of that comes down to the help I get from the timing stand, the voice of Larry in my ear, my spotter from the top, but also that experience. I think that's one of the places where experience really bodes well is you can read what's happening and read the character of the race.

I was rewatching last year's Indy 500, I think as a lot of people were on Memorial Day, and I remembered how because of the threat of rain being around, instead of the last 50 laps that wick turning all the way up, the aggression turning up in the race, it felt like that knob was at 10 from lap 75 through to 200. But you feel that in the car. You feel that with the other drivers, so understanding that, having that experience, it leads to that balance to maximize but also not overextend.

Q. Larry, as a businessman, team owner, this is going to be a challenging season anyway. It's your first in quite a while without ABC Supply as a sponsor. How challenging and difficult has this time been with the shutdown to kind of keep everything rolling?

LARRY FOYT: Yeah, perfect storm for us, obviously, ABC having been with us for 15 years. They're still with us, they're still going to do the Indy 500 with us, but yeah, as a primary for the whole year, certainly it was tough. But being able to bring on a company like Novo Nordisk was huge for us. It was great. They've been great to get to know and a great partner so far. We're looking forward to getting on track with them. And that's just what we do in racing.

A lot of teams have to do this every year. We had a long run, and I think it shows well of the type of team we are to work with, and we want to keep making more -- we hope we're with Novo Nordisk for many, many years. It's tough. I think everyone in this business, everyone in the world is facing a lot of uncertainty right now, so we're just trying to be smart with our business, take care of our people, take care of our sponsors, and I'm glad we're finally getting racing because this is what we need to be doing.

Q. And for Charlie, the iRacing experience was valuable for a lot of reasons. One is a lot of people now are used to the view of what the Aeroscreens look like, but one of the things that it didn't replicate necessarily is what that's going to be like with sun glare. How big of an issue do you see that being Saturday night?

CHARLIE KIMBALL: I can probably better answer that come Sunday morning, but I don't know that it'll be a huge issue. I think we're going to pay attention to it in the afternoon and in qualifying, and then be ready for whatever we need to do adjustment-wise on the Aeroscreen to make sure that the blanking around the top is blanking out as needed. I've got multiple different visor options.

Like Larry and I talked about at the beginning of the call, we're just trying to answer as many questions and think about as many scenarios as possible before we get to the racetrack so we're just ready to go to work and if needed put those in. So we'll see what it looks like, and I think I'll tell you after 200 laps Saturday night.

Q. How much hydration will you do because it is going to be a pretty hot night.

CHARLIE KIMBALL: Yeah, I mean, it's Texas in June. It's not going to be cool. Larry knows that better than I do, I think, living down there. But the hydration is something that I started a couple of weeks ago and I will make sure that I've got my drink mixes ready to go and the drink bottles prepared. I'm actually bringing down ice cubes on the plane with me of my drink mix and water so that the drink bottles are ready and the

mechanics don't have to worry about rushing when they need to be taking care of the race car.

Q. You guys are both new fathers. Has it been kind of nice the last couple months to be able to spend some time at home and get to know your young ones?

LARRY FOYT: It really has. I mean, that's been, I guess, a blessing to come out of this, getting to watch a lot of his first year that I would have missed if we were racing all the time. But I'm also looking up at my calendar and what we're going to have in July, August and September so we're going to be gone a lot, so going to probably shock him a little bit. It's part of what we do, and I'm sure Charlie, all of us, you guys, as well, who travel a lot following the series and things, you kind of know it going in, but it's been super nice to have some time at home with him.

CHARLIE KIMBALL: Yeah, I've called it a bit of an unexpected paternity leave, the chance to spend these last 10 weeks, 11 weeks at home with our daughter and then our new son. It's been really, really cool, honestly, a really, really nice silver lining to this whole situation. I think I'm going to look back on this time, and no matter how strange or challenging it was, the fact that I got that time at home with those kids is something that I will always appreciate, and as Larry says, I know that come the beginning of July through the end of September I'm not going to have nearly as much time, so I'm trying to soak it in as much as I can.

Q. Charlie, you spent a couple years in Indy Lights and the announcement yesterday that the series will be taking hiatus for a couple years and the plan is to bring it back stronger. Do you have any ideas that would help with that?

CHARLIE KIMBALL: I've been thinking about it, and nothing has really come to mind that I would say this was a silver bullet, and I don't think it takes a silver bullet. I think it's going to take some incremental changes in a few ways. I know costs had elevated. I liked the fact that the seat made in Indy Lights transfers directly into an INDYCAR chassis. Things like that are really important, especially for a ladder series like the Indy Lights championship. But coming back next year, if we as racing can find a way to make that Indy Lights field bigger and more competitive, a little deeper -- obviously the cream of the crop has been great. You see that with Colton Herta, Oliver Askew, Pato O'Ward coming out of Indy Lights and into INDYCAR recently, but if we can make that a little bit deeper so there's a little bit more chomping at our heels in INDYCAR, I think it would be better for the whole series.

Q. I had a question for Larry first. We've heard from some of the other teams that in order to minimize risk, they are going to fly the team in on the morning of the race, do the practice and qualifying, do the race and then fly the teams back home late that same night. Is that going to be the case with

your team, as well, and if so, are you taking any extra steps to mitigate mental errors that are going to happen by the time the race takes place in the evening?

LARRY FOYT: Right, so we were unable to secure enough seats on a charter for the Indy guys to get down. We met as a team from -- so they are going to fly commercial. They're going to come on in the night before and get a good night's rest because it's going to be a very long day on Saturday, sure. The Houston guys, we talked about driving up and trying to do it in one trip, and the more I just thought about it, I thought it was much less risky to get there Friday evening, have a night in a hotel, be well-rested, and we are going to drive back Saturday night after the race, but I felt like driving in Saturday morning, doing the race and coming home was just way too much. So definitely going to get up, get a good night's sleep. I think they'll be fine. Obviously, INDYCAR has plenty of protective measures in place, and I think everybody will be very safe.

Q. For you, Charlie, you're going to go to the track this Saturday, have a full day of racing behind the wheel and then it's going to be a month again before you're back behind the wheel in Indianapolis. Is it almost going to feel like you got a taste of it and then you're back sitting and waiting some more?

CHARLIE KIMBALL: A little bit. I think that the month of June is going to be hard, but the fact that we get to come back to the Indianapolis Motor Speedway for the GMR Grand Prix on that 4th of July Brickyard weekend is something to really look forward to. So to have those three weekends off in June -- we're still going to be plenty busy. I mean, like I said, two kids keeps us running ragged no matter what. Between that and the fact that June 1st I was able to get back into the pits at the training facility starting yesterday and move out of my interim garage gym for my fitness and training over the last three months, it's nice to be back in the facility, so I'm sure I'll be spending plenty of time in pit fit during the month of June getting ready for July and August, September, as fast and furious as that's going to be.

Q. Charlie, after Texas, since no spectators are allowed, is it going to feel weird having no spectators, or is it going to not really bother you?

CHARLIE KIMBALL: That's a great question. I think the perspective for us as drivers and for me as a driver, the fans are really what drives the energy on race day. You see that at Indianapolis for the 500. You see that at places like Long Beach with hundreds of thousands of people, 100,000 people on race day, and that energy, you can just feel the buzz in the racetrack building up to the green flag, and so it's going to be very different, and I think as a driver, I've already been thinking about how to ignore what's happening in the grandstand or in this case not happening in the grandstand and know that driver introductions and the parade lap and those sorts of things, the anthem are going to be very, very

different than what I've experienced in the past, and really focus on what the competition is going to look like and know that there are going to be millions of people watching on primetime, on NBC, at home on TV but not there at the grandstand.

It was really interesting, I watched the first NASCAR race back, and when he got out of the car and was talking about how quiet Victory Lane was, I think getting out of the car at the end of the race and not hearing that buzz from the grandstand is really where I'm going to notice it because that's when I'm not focusing on the race ahead, I can get a chance to soak in the atmosphere a little more.

For me, if we can do it safely, getting fans back to the racetrack, it's a big part of what motivates us as drivers and teams is that support that we get from around the country and around the world from our fan base.

Q. Larry, down here in Houston we're always thinking about AJ; I wanted to ask you how AJ is doing?

LARRY FOYT: Thanks, he's doing really well. He stayed out on his ranch at Del Rio for about the first 45 days and stayed apart from everybody, just him and a tractor, so he's doing well out there, but I think he was ready to get back to Houston and check on my mom.

Yeah, he is back now, but he's being really smart. He's still working on some of the ranches he's got out here and he comes in the shop and says hi to us but stays back. He's doing well. He's not going to make this race, but he's planning on probably coming to the Indy GP.

Q. In all these challenging times that everybody is going through and the race team is going through, are you able to lean on any knowledge that he's given you throughout the years and just making it through trying times like that?

LARRY FOYT: Oh, sure. He's just -- he's seen about everything you can see, right, but I think even this is something that none of us -- I was looking back as we were -- the cars were leaving to go to St. Pete, and who would have thought three or four days later we still haven't turned a wheel on a racetrack. It's been unbelievable. We've been pretty blessed down here in Texas. I think our county here where the race shop is, we haven't had any deaths and the cases have been minimal, so I know some of the more populous areas are having more issues.

So far we're all safe. Our team has been safe, and that's all we can pray for, and I think he knows that we're ready to get racing, and he's ready to go racing. Yeah, just glad that we've all been safe so far and we're ready to go.

Q. Charlie, knowing that it's a one-day show but compared to NASCAR you guys will actually have the practice session before qualifying and the race,

how vital is it going to be for you guys to get as much track time in that limited amount of time?

CHARLIE KIMBALL: It's critical. We haven't run this car with an Aeroscreen on an oval yet. I haven't driven an AJ Foyt Racing car on an oval. For me, every lap we can turn in practice, as Larry said, the preparation is critical. The work I've been doing with the engineering staff and the mechanics to make sure that everything is buttoned up and ready to go, we've talked about communications, we've talked about responsibilities, we've talked about role. We had a pre-race meeting on Monday where we talked about how the day was going to flow because when we step off that plane or walk through that health screening Saturday morning at the racetrack, it's going to feel like warp speed until the checkered flag flies and then some. So we have to be ready to be -- to take advantage of that track time and every moment we have at the racetrack.

But at the same time, having said that, I have every confidence in our ability to go out and get a great result. I feel really good about the engineering staff, my lead engineer Mike, my performance engineer Dwight, my data engineer C.J. and Larry on the stand. I have no questions about that. From my crew chief Thomas through the whole crew, all of my pit stop guys, the little interaction I've had, the little time at the racetrack, the feeling I get and the atmosphere within this team is rock solid, and I can't wait to get on track and have that atmosphere turn into results.

Q. Larry, how beneficial is it to you to have two experienced drivers going into the first race at Texas in Charlie and TK?

LARRY FOYT: Well, going into this race it's huge. Like you say, especially with the one-day show everything is accelerated, and going to a big track like Texas, having a guy like Charlie sit on the pole there, knows his way around there, and obviously TK is very good there, as well. It's a little bit of peace of mind for sure. Anything can happen, but the engineering group has been working really well together. We're really hopeful we're going to unload and get these guys some good cars out of the box. That's the plan.

Q. Charlie, how excited are you to be working with TK again given your relationship from Chip Ganassi Racing?

CHARLIE KIMBALL: It's fantastic. Tony has so much experience, and I feel honored to be a part of his last lap in INDYCAR at AJ Foyt Racing. We're friends off the track. We train together. He's gotten me addicted to riding a bicycle on a computer game, but also our wives are friends, and I think our families when we can get together and the kids can play, I think they're going to interact really well. I'm excited for his daughter Nina to spend some time with our daughter. So that relationship is there. That friendship is there. And the experience -- I mean, he's taught me things and I've learned a lot from him about how to restart on ovals and what you can and what you should and shouldn't

do and what he still does. So that experience is invaluable to me to continue to learn and get better, and like I said, I just feel really honored to be his teammate during his last lap, especially when we get back to the Indianapolis Motor Speedway for the Indy 500.

THE MODERATOR: We will thank Charlie and Larry for their time this afternoon. We wish them the best of luck this weekend at Texas, so good luck, and thanks for joining us.