

NTT INDYCAR SERIES

News Conference

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Press Conference

Conor Daly

Carlin

THE MODERATOR: Welcome. This is the latest in a series of video conferences we're having with drivers from Saturday night's Genesys 300 at Texas Motor Speedway. The race is at 8 p.m. on your local NBC affiliate.

We are pleased to be joined by the driver of the No. 59 Gallagher Chevrolet for Carlin, Conor Daly. Welcome to the call.

CONOR DALY: Thank you so much. Appreciate it.

THE MODERATOR: What are the emotions going through this week? Eagerly anticipating the race, excited, anxious? What has been going through your head?

CONOR DALY: Yeah, I mean, honestly just so ready to go. It's been a long time. I think since like March 2nd or 3rd since I've been in a car. Since September on an oval, August, whenever Gateway was.

It's going to be fun. A lot of variables, a lot of new things that we're all going to have to adjust to pretty quickly. I feel bad for the rookies not having had the whole month of May getting up to speed on an oval, getting used to that style of racing.

It's tough. I know for a fact. Texas is tough. Oval racing in INDYCAR overall is tough. But it's fun. Hopefully, we can all be smart about everything and just have a great Saturday night.

THE MODERATOR: Texas last year was your debut with Carlin, if I remember correctly. In the year working with them on the ovals, what did you learn about the team that can help you jumping into a one-day show with practice, qualifying and a race?

CONOR DALY: Realistically I think we had a great run together last year. It was a lot of fun to get used to how they work, them getting used to what I need out of the car.

At Texas, we were thrown into the deep end. For me, I struggled a little bit with it at first. We actually had a pretty good race, were actually pretty happy with it come the end of the day.

By the end of the season together, or the oval season



that we did together, we were fighting quite a lot at the sharp end in Gateway. I love that track, but I also really enjoy driving the car there, too.

It's great to have the support of Gallagher still, have a great-looking car to drive on the ovals this year, albeit an interesting new schedule with the doubleheader at Iowa will be interesting and everything in general about this year will be different, but it will be cool.

I'm excited to get it going with these guys on Saturday night.

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

Q. I wanted to ask you as a competitor embracing these challenges. Obviously, everybody is in the same boat going in. I'm sure you're giving proper due to everything you have to that's kind of unusual for this race. Is there part of you that is excited for these new changes, challenges, to test yourself and the team, see where you come out on the other end?

CONOR DALY: Absolutely. Oddly enough I've been in a lot of crazy and strange situations in my career so far. I really enjoy situations where there's not a lot of information known about certain conditions. Like if it's raining, I love rain races. I like showing up to new tracks. Gateway, when that was added to the schedule, loved that immediately. It was a lot of fun.

There's just a lot, though, that we don't know with what the Aeroscreen is going to do. There's only three, four, five guys maybe that have driven with an Aeroscreen on an oval. We were obviously hoping to have most of the month of May to figure out what that's going to look like, but we don't. It's going to be interesting.

I think the series has done a great job on trying to obviously understand what we're all going to have to deal with on Saturday night. I think having the tire stints reduced a little bit, I don't know if I necessarily like that, but obviously it's done for a reason for us.

I was watching the race last year from my own onboard perspective. I was like, Wow, 55, 60 laps before we pitted or something. It's going to change the race drastically when it comes to strategy.

Again, I think those types of things, you just want to be the guy who makes the least mistakes. I think when everyone comes together after having not run anything

for a very long time, you just got to be the guy to make the least mistakes.

I think that's our goal, for sure, is to start the season with a good, positive experience for everyone, then see what happens.

Q. I know Carlin wanted to have two cars, but they announced the other day it's just going to be you. To have their full focus, does that help you in any way or does it hinder because you don't have teammate feedback?

CONOR DALY: I think having information and more data, especially when the day is so condensed, that's super important. And it is a shame to be missing a wing man, per se.

But the team is prepared for that. We're all ready to give it our best effort no matter what. It's an unprecedented situation, for sure. Everyone says that so often. But racing is a business. We got to do the best job that we can no matter what for the partners that the team has with Gallagher Insurance and everyone else that supports this.

I'm excited. There's a lot of great guys and girls at that team. It's going to be a lot of fun. We'll be the Lone Ranger out there. We do have information from last year, which is great. For me, I do have a feeling of what this car was like last year. That's the first time I really ever had that in my career, going back to the same track with the same team.

There's obviously a few new things on the car. It will be nice to get back to work with those guys because we know where we want to improve coming off of last year.

Q. It doesn't necessarily guarantee there will be a huge rating, but the potential is there, the fact this is going to be on NBC in primetime. How do you view that opportunity?

CONOR DALY: I mean, it's great. We have a great TV partner in NBC. It's going to be exciting to be able to start the season on network, NBC primetime. It's our job as drivers to let all of our fans know and all of our social media reach know that, hey, this is going to happen Saturday night. You better turn on your televisions and you better tell all your friends, their families, everybody's else's friend to turn on their televisions because it's going to be an electric show. It's going to be a lot of fun to have live racing back in action.

I appreciate that, for sure. I think all of us drivers are definitely thankful this is how we're going to get to start the season. Yeah, I think it's pretty cool.

Q. The whole iRacing, Twitch situation. I'm sure your mind is past that for now focusing on this weekend. To go back to that briefly, how important is that for the future in terms of drivers trying to

establish themselves in the likes of INDYCAR? Do you think it's something that can help guys like you trying to establish yourself, it's going to become a more important part of motorsport in the future, or we've seen a bit of a boom with everyone stuck inside? Is Twitch something that can help you establish yourself in the future?

CONOR DALY: I think eSports in general, having a Twitch channel is cool. It's fun. It's fun to be able to bring fans directly into my technology center upstairs, which is essentially a guest bedroom.

Yeah, it's pretty cool to have that out to just communicate. Communication with our fans, with people that support us, is awesome. But for professional eSports, I don't know really what it does. I hope that continues to grow because I think it's awesome that there are guys and girls out there who are doing an incredible job behind the virtual wheel. They deserve to get their time to shine, for sure. That will be really cool.

I don't know how many professional drivers will be doing much of that because we will probably get beat by the professional eSports guys. But I think for sure. Obviously right now we have so much to do with the real season now that it's resuming, it is going to sort of fall a little bit by the wayside because we have real life to focus on now again. You know what I mean?

I think in the off-season it would be really cool to think about how we could expand INDYCAR's role with eSports, that community. But obviously, for now, there's a lot on all of our tables when it comes to the real-life action. It will be nice to get back to that.

I certainly will still be playing video games in the off-season, that's for sure.

Q. How are you feeling about having no fans at the race? Will that be weird for you or will you not really notice or care about it?

CONOR DALY: You know what, it is going to be weird I think. But realistically when we line up on that grid two-by-two, we close the visor, that's all that needs to be said. We're going to be going racing. There's going to be a pace car out there that's going to be leading us around. Realistically all focus is on the job at hand.

I think it's going to be strange basically before and after the race. But during there's not a lot of time that you spend looking anywhere else other than the racetrack right in front of you. It will be interesting and it will be strange, but I think we'll be able to do a good job with it for sure.

Q. I saw what you posted Monday, the heartfelt tribute to Chris Beaty. I've seen some other drivers post some things about the social unrest, other drivers talking about how they've struggled with how much they want to weigh in. Why did you

decide to do that? Did it feel comfortable because you had a connection to Chris Beaty? What has been the reaction?

CONOR DALY: Yeah, I mean, obviously Chris was a pretty close friend of mine. Obviously what's going on now is just tough to see no matter who you are, I think. I just wanted to say something because just how good of a person he was. I didn't want to dive in to anything and create any big story about it or anything. I just felt like he deserved some words.

Obviously he was out there trying to help protect some people who were getting robbed. It's incredible to see that level of a person that he was. He definitely deserved the respect that people certainly in Indianapolis are giving him.

Yeah, it's a tough situation all across the country. But, yeah, he was a great guy and he'll definitely be riding with us this weekend. He was a big INDYCAR fan, as well. That's pretty cool.

Q. Is it difficult sometimes for drivers to figure out how to toe the line, weigh in on things that could potentially be controversial but important for them to speak out on?

CONOR DALY: I think so, yeah. There's a lot of business aspects to this sport, for sure, that we have to be aware of. There are companies that support us, support our team, stuff like that.

But realistically you got to say what comes from the heart as well. I think it's been great to see a lot of drivers saying what they have. I think it's a pretty unified message between all the stuff that we've seen put on the Internet, for sure.

It's good to see us as a community doing what we are doing. Hopefully we can continue to get some positivity going with our race this weekend as well.

Q. Obviously this year you're driving for two teams. How beneficial is that to you as a driver in terms of your development going forward during the season?

CONOR DALY: Well, I mean, it's strange obviously. It's not how you'd like to do things ideally. But it's a great opportunity to be a full-time INDYCAR driver again. So I'm going to look at it like that.

I got this shirt out of a pile of 16 shirts that I had upstairs from all the teams that I drove for last year (laughter). It was really interesting to go through that.

But, yeah, I mean, the Carlin guys are a great team that believed in me in 2011, and they still do now. It's cool to be driving for them and hopefully continuing to get some great results together.

Would love to be able to hoist some trophies up for them this year because they deserve it. They're putting

in a lot of work. Trevor is an incredible owner. Chili's is a great supporter of the series and the team as well.

It is going to be interesting. Obviously I was supposed to start the season with ECR, now I'm starting it with Carlin, then rotating into the ECR car after that.

I have to say the same for both teams: it's incredible to be part of both organizations. I raced with Carlin before, so I know what that situation is like. I haven't raced for ECR yet. I'm excited to start the journey with those guys because they also have done a fantastic job of welcoming me into the organization. I know they're ready to go, for sure.

Q. The Aeroscreen, how are you going to adapt to that in Texas?

CONOR DALY: I have no idea how I'm going to adapt to it (laughter).

I think publicly I've said I'm not a huge fan of it. But I understand the reasons obviously why it's been introduced. I respect what the series wants to do, the direction they're taking obviously.

But, yeah, it obviously presents a lot of interesting variables. This week I thought I was going to use the helmet that I tested with in St. Pete. Apparently it had the air induction thing on the wrong side so that had to be changed. There's so many different things now that we're going to have to get used to when it comes to driver cooling, the tear-offs.

Yeah, it's exciting because it's all new, but it's also like I don't know what's going to happen. It should be interesting.

Q. Dealing with two different teams, how hard is it to build momentum? You were starting with ECR, but now starting with Carlin. How hard has it been to build up that momentum that you would normally do before the season starts?

CONOR DALY: Well, ideally when we were looking at the regular season, it would have been quite nice. I had a couple test days with ECR, then we go to St. Pete, do the race, get the road racing going. We had two test days at Richmond with Carlin. That would have been nice to get everything flowing together. Now we're just jumping in racing.

I think no matter what, me personally, I always try to just have a positive momentum streak going. That's what we're going to do. We got one race in June. June is going to obviously be pretty quiet. You definitely don't want to sit through the weeks after Texas and think, Man, I wish that would have gone better.

We want to try to make it a great start so we can look at things as positive as possible heading into the month of July, where we have five races in 13 days or something like that, which I'll be with both teams during

that time.

I think this race in June is going to be kind of on its own, on a bit of an island because we have so much time before and after. Once we get rolling in July, I think things are just going to keep flowing together pretty well.

Q. Are there any plans of moving out?

CONOR DALY: Of what, my house?

Q. Yeah.

CONOR DALY: Not my house. This is my house. I live by myself. I don't want to move. I think this is great.

Q. I guess I was under the impression you were living with your parents.

CONOR DALY: No, no, that hasn't happened since 2014 (laughter).

THE MODERATOR: We will take the time to thank Conor for his time, wish him the best of luck this weekend at Texas Motor Speedway.

CONOR DALY: Thank you, guys. I appreciate everyone.