

IndyCar Media Days

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Doug Boles

Media Day Presser



THE MODERATOR: We are now pleased to be joined by the president of the Indianapolis Motor Speedway, Mr. Doug Boles. Thank you so very much for coming out and joining us.

What are we seeing and where do we stand as we get ready for the 100th running?

DOUG BOLES: This has obviously been something that Mark and myself and everybody at the Indianapolis Motor Speedway has been paying an awful lot of attention to.

I think most of you know this conversation started as far back as 2011 during the hundredth anniversary of the Indianapolis 500. It started between the 2013 and '14 seasons with the new modified road course for the Grand Prix. The pylon came onboard in 2014, and then last year, folks, when they came to the Indianapolis 500, noticed the 20 new high-def video boards around the Speedway.

However starting at the checkered flag and MotoGP really, from that point on until sometime in April, about \$50 million of the \$92 million being invested in the Indianapolis Motor Speedway over that three-year period is under construction right now. The most dramatic component of that is the new roof structure over the paddock penthouses. It started in Penthouse B, then goes to B, A.

E Penthouse is going to be left alone, so the structure will remain the same as it's always been. E Penthouse will receive stadium-style seating. We were even able to add seats in E Penthouse, which are in most demand in the facility. In each section we were able to add one seat in each of those sections.

Overall when you look at the construction, the roof structure itself is about 17 feet taller than the previous roof structure. The overhang goes all the way out to the end of the seating. Before it was a smaller overhang, didn't stretch all the way out over the top of the seating.

What you see on the north end, you can see the three new rows that have been added above the old sections there. They're throughout most of paddock A and B. There's nothing in the Penthouse, although there will be places throughout where you won't have those three

rows, because of existing concession stands.

At the end of the day we're going to actually add about a thousand seats to the Indianapolis Motor Speedway through this project itself.

One of the things I'm most excited about, directly to my left, if you look at the top of the paddock penthouse decking where it used to be, you can see the metal structures overhanging the top of that area, the poles that are holding them up. Those are the ADA sections for people in wheelchairs. That's a decking area you see right there that's going to allow folks with wheelchairs and a companion seat there.

In order to do that, we had to eliminate three rows of seats in each of those sections. There were people sitting in those sections for many years that we have to relocate. That was a conversation we didn't want to have, especially if we didn't have a place to put them.

Folks were able to relocate into those new three rows, maybe some of the new three rows in B stand, which are spectacular seats. Now not only are we able to accommodate folks with disabilities, but we added a thousand seats in the highest demand in our facility.

We allowed folks to upgrade who have been on the upgrade list for a long time. Unlike Daytona, with their new stadium seats, if you saw them over the weekend, they did confetti colored seating. We talked about that, but are uncomfortable with how that will look when those seats aren't sold. We are going to put back in stadium seats but they'll be the green seats we're used to seeing at the Indianapolis Motor Speedway. Most is that industrial gray, green.

The most important thing we could do in this project is keep what is special about this racetrack. We're staying with the industrial steel color of the roofing you see up there. While it will be different, it's not going to feel like a brand-new stadium, it's going to feel like the Indianapolis Motor Speedway when they come here. That's been one of the balancing acts and one of the things that is most important things to this project, adding amenities but not changing the Indianapolis Motor Speedway that felt uncomfortable for folks.

There are 95 of those steel columns up there that

actually support the structure down. A little over 1200 tons of steel. The steel is fabricated in Indianapolis, Indiana. A little bit of it had to be shipped to Ohio for those longer beams because we didn't have a facility in Indiana to do it. We tried to use workforces and construction companies that are here in Indiana.

The track fence you can see has been replaced with a new mesh. That has a smaller filter than the fence had before. It's a coated fence. Same gauge. It's a better fence. As you look at it, you can actually see through it better.

The old fence was rusting, had the surface rust, which caused a lot of the rust you see on the backside of the walls. We didn't want to add to that rust. It's also easier to see through.

The other thing that's great about it, an accident at the Indianapolis Motor Speedway, the next day you come in, those walls are white again, the fence will be the same. If there's an issue where we have to repair the fence during race day or practice day, we can patch it. Overnight we can actually come in and replace it with a new mesh.

If you look at this fence, you can't tell where that starts right to left, or top to bottom. We'll have that uniformity as you look around the entire racetrack.

Also, when you're down, sort of that driver's view, it changes the way the track looks, a lot cleaner. A lot nicer. I'm excited for the input from some of the drivers when they get an opportunity to run the racetrack and see the new fence. It is easier to see through. We're excited about what that's been able to do for us.

Outside we all know about the roundabout that's taken out 16th and Georgetown. We're expanding Gate 1, it's going to feel more like a statement. When you walk in, it will accommodate more people through the gate, which will help reduce some of the lines that we have.

Once you get inside, it's a lot more expansive, more activation zones, more opportunities for fans to meet folks. We left the trees that everybody is used to. The construction will build around the trees we have. We're excited about what that entry is going to mean not only on race days, but the rest of the year.

One of the things we did do, one of the first renderings we had of that actually eliminated the current Gate 1. While it is not the original Gate 1, it is the location of Gate 1. We weren't comfortable to tear that Gate 1 down. So that gate is going to remain there because it is so important to us to have that. The gate where it has the wing and wheels on top of it, that was the original location for Gate 1. The new gate will be to the

north and west of that current gate. So we're excited about the way that looks. That project is coming along really well.

The other thing for next year, the Hulman Suites, just north of the paddock penthouse there, that facility is getting entirely repurposed. It used to house 27 individual suites, so corporations or individuals would take those suites for an entire season. We've taken the southern two-thirds of that, 18 of those suites, they have become the Hulman Suite Club. People can buy individual seats in there for the entire year. You have a reserved seat out front. Inside that suite, you have amenities you might expect at someplace such as at Lucas Oil Field where you can get food, drink and do all that.

It makes it a lot easier for companies that don't want to buy an 80-person suite, but would like the ability to buy a two-, four-, six-, 10-person suite opportunity. It's open 16 or 17 of our event days. It's a way to enjoy the Indianapolis Motor Speedway at an upgraded level.

The nine suites on the north end are going to continue to be individual suites. As I said earlier, we added an elevator into those banks. We have the fourth shaft up, the new elevator is going in, a fourth elevator there. The walkway from Hulman over to the paddock will be able to be used as well for anybody with disabilities that's on the north end of those seats. That's another one of the projects.

Some of the less glamorous things going on, many of our restrooms, especially at grade level and at concession stands, paddock penthouse level, are getting much-needed upgrades.

Many of us have many stories about our first experiences with the Indianapolis Motor Speedway restrooms and the troughs and the things we're so used to. Our fans are going to notice upgraded restroom, proper restrooms. We're excited about that for them, as well as concession stands in the upper decks where it's been hard for us to deliver fresh food for Department of Health reasons and for the ability to put the right cooking equipment up there. The concession experience on the upper level is going to change.

In a nutshell, that's it.

The other project going on right now that is not Project 100, in between turns one and two, we're replacing some of the SAFER wall down there where the buses go out. We had an Indy Lights crash a number of years ago, significant hit. We're adding some SAFER barrier that will come to the west and curve itself back off to the northwest. That's the SAFER wall project we

have in place that will be ready for May of next year.

THE MODERATOR: Talk about the complexity of the Project 100 task, balancing tradition and expectations, and keeping this facility state-of-the-art.

DOUG BOLES: The biggest challenge is balancing what makes us special, which is the history and tradition of the Indianapolis Motor Speedway. I've often said if Wrigley Field decided to leave the grass and tear down the stadium and build a new stadium around it, it's no longer Wrigley Field.

We're in the same position. We could have decided to tear down the frontstretch and build new grandstands. For folks sitting in that upper deck which was built between 1950 and 1963, and believe it or not, the section that was built in 1963 is the section that had the most issues around it.

You can see the color, the gray where the traffic coating was put down, then the 1963 section where there's no traffic coating. That's allowed a lot of water issues and we've had a lot of maintenance issues as we've been adding steel.

What makes us special is our history and tradition. That's the roots of our DNA. When you get here, you don't want to feel you're someplace other than the Indianapolis Motor Speedway. That's been a difficult one for us.

The other one, frankly, has been getting into a facility that's, at the south end, 65 years old, and at the north end, 50-plus years old. You can think of all the things we've had to deal with. One of the biggest challenges for us was dealing with things like lead paint, asbestos decking, things that were put in years ago, when you take them out, how do you abate it.

A percentage of our costs is abatement. Above turn one, you can see the scaffolding. We're almost done with the demo work, but there's scaffolding up to the paddock penthouse, that's the abatement team. If we weld anything to a current structure that had the lead paint on it, we had to bring an abatement crew in, they had to seal it, then they have to completely grind it off before we could weld onto it.

That's been one of the biggest challenges, how do you manage through what 65 years ago people didn't realize was going to be an issue.

We learned a couple other things. As most of you know, I'm a student of the history of this place. In Wilbur Shaw's book about running the speedway, some of the issues he dealt with are the same issues we deal with. He outlined three issues and they're really the

same that we have, which is getting the people in, get them parked and get them out is really important. Making sure that you're upgrading the facility every year so your fans have something to look forward to when they come back here. Then that you have the 33 best competitors coming back here. That's really what it's all about.

In his book he talks about 1946, after Tony Hulman bought the Speedway in November of 1945, wanting to make improvements. They were just out of World War II, he couldn't find anybody that could supply steel. An Indianapolis company came in and said, I'm sure you've had dozens of people tell you you can't supply steel.

He said, You're absolutely right.

I think I can get you some, but you're going to have to let me manage what kind of steel it is. That's all the book says about it.

As they start testing the welds here at the Speedway before they actually started building, I get a call one day from a construction guy who said, We're having trouble with some of the columns, the welds aren't holding. We're sending stuff off to the metallurgist. I'm going to send you a picture from the book.

Actually the type of steel they used was used from the early 1900s through the 1930s. In order for them to build in 1946, they kind of went back a generation in steel, which causes us to have to weld in a different manner than we're used to.

Wilbur Shaw has a lot to do with what we're doing today. Learning things like that, just because it's such an old facility, we're finding places in it that we're able to repair, that we've never had an opportunity to get up to because it's so high.

The best thing about Project 100 for Indianapolis Motor Speedway, this is going to get us to a point where we're level setting ourselves and planning out a 10-year process of proper capital, expense, maintenance every year we go forward. That's the most exciting thing for me.

Itself going to look great, but there's still a lot to do. It's a mile long, half mile wide, 230,000 seats, whatever it is, but that's what is exciting about this. This is the start to making sure that this jewel that we all love so much is maintained for the next 75 years.

THE MODERATOR: Questions.

Q. Doug, the last couple years there's been some horrendous human traffic jams, the tunnel here

going south. Anything going to be addressed about that? Three hours before the race, horrible back there.

DOUG BOLES: There has been an issue there. Part of our issue that we have had, it's something we'll get addressed as time goes on, when our facility was built, you see it on the west side, there's a public road right to the immediate west, so we have no ability to expand our fencing to allow for more traffic, more pedestrian traffic flow. I have a whole bunch of people on race day saying we have an issue on tunnel six. 300,000 people in one venue at the same time, people wanting to be in the plaza, and at the last minute moving to their seats.

We had a retail store that was just as you come up out of the tunnel to the south side that I think probably impeded some of that flow. People had to go further west before they could go south.

We're trying to figure out how could we help open that up a little bit better. One of the things we talked about is eliminating any type of traffic, even golf cart traffic. That's definitely an issue and we're trying to figure out how we can make sure we manage that.

THE MODERATOR: I can't imagine the biggest race of the year, trying to manage human traffic, how to get people in and out. That changes every year with changes to the facility.

DOUG BOLES: This year we'll have another change. That change is really the seven elevator towers that you see on the backside of the facility. There are areas where right now, if you walked out there, the fence line is within a foot of the western edge of those elevators. We're working with the town right now on how can we temporarily remove our western perimeter fencing, move it over into Georgetown Road to allow for better pedestrian traffic flow. That's going to be one of the newest things.

The plaza entryway is going to be new in a positive way, allow for more space and room to move people as they come in. Hopefully we have a little bit more parking on the southwest corner of the facility that will allow for a little bit better parking when folks come in.

It's a learning experience and you can't replicate race day. Even the Brickyard doesn't replicate what happens in May for the Indianapolis 500. We have one opportunity to do it. It doesn't take but one backup somewhere, and it's really quickly impacting the entire facility.

One of the biggest challenges we have is our parking here at the racetrack. A lot of it is because over time we've lost parking as we have developed. If you think about 20 years ago, people parked inside turn four,

turn one. We don't park inside turn one because of the road course. Every year we kind of lose that parking. We force people to park outside. People that have parked inside for their whole lives, they don't understand why we do it.

Those are some of the more difficult conversations because what's so special about the Indianapolis Motor Speedway is how personal it feels to people. There's a handful of things that are in the DNA of the Indianapolis Motor Speedway that we all can agree on are traditions that you can't change. That makes us special, 500 miles, yard of bricks, 33 cars, bottle of milk.

We use that as the flower bed to grow these flowers at our own personal experiences, that might be where I park, where I sit, where I buy my tickets. There's a whole host of those. Inevitably, as we try to change and make the experience better for the collective group of people that are here, we impact somebody's flower petals. That's really a difficult conversation because people love it so much. So parking is an example.

When we ask somebody to move, they've been in the same place forever, they don't understand, you can't explain 30 minutes with a map, hopefully people trust we're doing this for the overall good.

THE MODERATOR: We thank you so much for your time. Looking forward to the improvements and the 100th running of the Indianapolis 500.

DOUG BOLES: Remember that May starts with the Grand Prix of Indianapolis, then we convert the track for the oval, it's going to be a special May. But it really all kicks off 100 days from now.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you so much.