

IndyCar Media Conference

Friday February 26, 2016

Mark Miles

Dan Davis

Max Papis

Jay Frye

Press Conference

THE MODERATOR: We'd like to welcome to the podium on my far left, Jay Frye, the director of competition for IndyCar. Next to him, Mr. Mark Miles, the president of Hulman & Company, which is the parent of IndyCar. And then two of our new stewards: Max Papis, long time racer, and Mr. Dan Davis, motorsports executive.

Gentlemen, welcome.

Mark, I believe you'd like to start by making an opening statement.

MARK MILES: Thank you all for letting us interrupt your work. You know we're off to a good start when I see the members of the media blowing kisses to these guys over here. That's pretty strong (laughter).

We're here informally to present these guys and to talk a little about our ambitions for Race Control and the steward system this year. But I can't resist the chance, where is Brian, just to thank Brian and his colleagues again. We are so happy to be here. Looking forward to racing in early April. Can't say enough about the enthusiasm and cooperation that we're experiencing from our new promoter partner here. So delighted.

So Race Control. I think lot of things to think about. One is that there's a division of labor here. That's part of the point. Brian Barnhart will continue to be the race director. I think of that as the person who's in charge of producing the race, the producer of the race. So he's got to control the pits, the safety cars, the pace car, all the mechanics that are very important, but not officiating in the sense of deciding when there's an infraction, and if there is an infraction what the penalties would be.

Part of the rationale for going to the steward system is we want Brian to be able to focus on producing the



race and not be distracted by thinking about whether there were penalties, and if there were infractions what the penalties ought to be.

We think we have the right guy in that position. He's got so much experience.

The decisions about when there are infractions, and when there are infractions what the penalties are, rest solely with the three stewards. That's important. We thought it was really important, first of all, to get the maximum amount of continuity. We want consistency in our decision making. I think our competitors deserve that. Fans deserve that. That's as high a priority as there is, along with independence and fairness, which we know we can count on.

So with that in mind, it was really important to us that we found three very experienced, enthusiastic stewards who will be the stewards for every race. I mean, maybe there's an illness or something, but I think everybody's expectation is same three stewards all the way through from start to finish for the Verizon IndyCar Series this year. I think that has not been the case in the past, so we're looking forward to that.

I'd say candidly we're not satisfied with our performance last year. Many of these measures are aimed to make improvements around consistency.

Another value is transparency. We think the competitors and the teams ought to know what the rules are and what they can expect in advance in the way of penalties if they are breaking rules. I'll speak about that again in just a second. But I call that transparency. Those are critical values.

Jay Frye is the guy who really has made all this happen. As he put it, he 'targeted', but that's a little harsh, the three people we ended up with as stewards, those were his top three choices.

The first thing is to make sure we had a strong, credible, experienced driver mentality, racing mentality in Race Control. With Max and Arie, who ironically lives here but can't be here because he's in Holland, we have incredible credibility.

With Dan Davis as chief steward, we have somebody

who has been so important to the sport in various series for so long. His role, Max called earlier today, is like team manager. As chief steward, he is a steward. He will, along with the other two guys, participate one vote each on any decision that's being made about an infraction or a penalty.

He also has all the administrative responsibility to organize the group, to have them practice and improve, and really be the administrative leader of the team, which we think is very important.

What does that mean besides making sure everybody is at the race on time? One of the things they're committed to doing which I'm so excited about is after every race, they will meet by video conference. They'll look at every call they made and everything that could have been a call they didn't make collectively, and they'll talk. They'll look at and review whether they think they made the right decisions, because sometimes they may not.

We think this is so important. It's part of a process of continuous improvement. As the three of them do every race, and after every race they kind of go back and do the postmortem, I think it's very important.

They'll also spend time on those calls looking to the next race and any peculiarities they think there are.

These two drivers and veteran administrator of the sport we think cover all the bases in terms of the mindset in the room in Race Control.

We also thought it was important to simplify the regulations. We've been through a process, which is not entirely new, but I think it's improved. Last year we had about 45 different regulations on a laminated piece of paper. These were the rules that people in Race Control had to think about. Then there was a schedule of penalties pursuant to breaking any of these rules. You can think of small, medium and large. Not so serious, very serious, more weighty penalty issues as you move from left to right on that scale.

Most of them started with a warning, the threshold level of a penalty. What we've done, these guys have worked first of all with the drivers, to give them the opportunity to give some input into those regulations and those penalties. Team owners will have a shot at that. Quickly we'll take all that input and finalize this set of regulations and penalties.

The first thing that's going to happen is more than half of them will not start with a warning. I think it's really interesting. The drivers came to us and said, What's a warning? It's an opportunity for inconsistency. So let's just get rid of it where we can and where it makes

sense. More than half of the rules will no longer start with that. I think that's a good move.

In the past, the drivers didn't receive this table. It was top secret up in Race Control. How would they know if we were being consistent, if we followed our own plan? Of course, this year the stewards will have it and they'll be expert in it with the drivers and the team personnel, and the public and media can have this table. The people can hold us accountable as to whether we're all following how we view how it all ought to work, and we will.

Another value for us is timeliness. Over the time of the series last year, it felt like more and more calls were getting made on Tuesday and announced on Wednesday. We hope to stop that to the maximum possible extent.

So our expectation is that the stewards will make the calls during the race, the penalty will be determined, we won't be having that conversation on Wednesday. The incidental exception will be when we learn something after the race, like a tech inspection. I think you can expect that from us, finishing a race and knowing what happened to the greatest possible extent. I think the drivers, the participants, the fans deserve that.

Those are a few of our objectives and some of the thinking behind the approach we're taking.

I want to thank Jay for having the conviction about this approach and the rapport and experience in the sport to know who to go to and successfully recruit what we think is an outstanding team of stewards.

You will hold us all accountable for this. This is the way we're going to do it. It's not going to change in a week or two. We don't see this as a democracy. We'll get good inputs to the rules and regs now, but these guys will make those determinations and not by vote.

We know they will have the best interest of IndyCar in mind as they do that and they'll be as well-prepared as possibly anybody can be.

It's time for me to shut up. Happy to have you guys say hello, make any comment.

Max, do you want to start?

MAX PAPIS: First of all, it's an honor to be here. You guys know well the love I have for the sport. It's been the number one reason why I came here. When Jay called me, I asked him exactly what he meant, what he wanted out of me. When he told me about the word 'consistency, transparency', I was sold.

I feel that obviously I've always been on the other side. I'm still on the other side. I'm still a racecar driver. But it's a set of eyes that really can determine if things are done -- for which reasons things are happening on the track is going to make a really big difference.

I feel obviously we know each other. Dan has been a tremendous supporter of my career and the sport in general. We won together my first-ever IndyCar race back in the days. Arie Luyendyk, the guy, he's a legend. I really feel that the consistency of having the three same people at the track, it's basically what is going to make a lot of difference.

Are we going to make everything right all the time? No, because there is only one guy that makes everything right, and belongs up in the sky with my dad. Everybody here is human being. But I can promise you guys, everything that I will do, everything we will do, will be for the love of the sport and nothing else.

DAN DAVIS: I just wanted to say a couple things. I'm really happy to be here. You all know I was with Ford forever and ever. I learned a lot about the sport, but I wasn't an official.

I will tell you things that are so important to me, so important, are honesty, integrity, and fairness. It's led my entire career since I started in the business at 18 years old. I started in the auto business at 18. It's 40 years later. If you don't have integrity, you don't have anything. That's what we're going to write. I mean, that is what we're going to bring to the stewardship. I think it's important and that's what we're going to do.

As many of you know, I am passionate for motorsports and I am passionate for open-wheel, and that's why I'm here.

JAY FRYE: In general, the league had a pretty good week this week. We made some additions with four new people, Bill Pappas, our new vice president of competition and race engineering, then the three new stewards. We had an opportunity to make the league better, stronger, and we are really excited about what we have been able to accomplish this week.

THE MODERATOR: Questions.

Q. How surprised were you when you got the call to take this position, Dan, because a lot of us do remember when you ran Ford's North American operation, you were the guy in charge of the CART program? How surprised when you got the call?

DAN DAVIS: Let's just say delighted. In my mind I've wanted to engage in open-wheel racing for lots of years. Was just looking for a way to get in and help. I

tried to make that known.

Then Jay got ahold of me and said, Do you have any interest? Let's chat. Off we went.

Not terribly surprised but delighted really.

Q. Mark, a lot of the decisions that Jay has made lately, how has that elevated the decision to make him a president of a technical part of the operation where he came from the chief revenue side of the company?

MARK MILES: Smartaltec answer like, It's too soon to tell. But I won't say that (laughter).

I couldn't be more thrilled to have Jay in this position. I know all of our board members and his colleagues at IndyCar feel exactly the same way.

We've known each other now and worked when he was in his other capacity for a couple years. I know how he thinks. I know his work ethic, his love for the sport, his incredible relationships with it seems like everybody in the sport. I knew that we connected on the highest level of priorities.

We're going to try our damndest to do what we say we're going to do. We'd rather under-promise and over-deliver. We are going to try to bring a level of common sense to what happens in IndyCar. He certainly brings that in spades.

He's not a bad guy to be around either. So it's early days, and I don't want you to lose it, but I think we have exactly the right guy in the position.

Q. I don't think this is a fair question to ask Max or Dan, but maybe Mark or Jay can answer this. What tools, being the digital age, will the stewards have in order to review the calls that are at their disposal? I remember one time there was supposed to be maybe a big transporter. I don't think that's in the works, but...

JAY FRYE: The transporter was going to be a remote Race Control unit. They'll have all the same tools they would have had in that. When we bring them to the racetrack, we have to put item in a tower or whatever.

We're going to do everything possible to provide them with all the tools possible. It will evolve as we go.

The training process that we'll do every week, that's not been done in the past. We'll have these video conferences every week that go over the prior week's event and talk about the upcoming week's event. So there will be something we're doing every week to make the group better.

As we said, there are going to be things, mistakes are going to be made. But as long as we're accountable for what we're doing, and we have the right people doing it, it's going to be really good.

And I did come from the competition side at one point, a little bit.

MARK MILES: A couple other things.

This year there will be new software which I think we now know works which will be a tremendous tool in setting the correct order for restarts. You can think of times last year, when if you were Brian Barnhart, your head was exploding trying to know what that order was. We think now there is technology that will allow us to do that quickly and get it right. I think that's a big improvement.

We spent a lot of money on capital investments on Race Control over last year. So I think we already have a leg up. There may be more capital investments this year. But our objective is to give them all the tools possible to do the job.

Q. Jay, how long have you known Dan and what are the qualities that made you think that he was your best candidate for chief steward?

JAY FRYE: I've known Dan or of Dan for a long time, with the NASCAR days, with him running the Ford program. We weren't ever a Ford team at the time, but I had great respect for him and the things he did.

You get to know people even when you don't know them obviously with the way we all travel together. With Ford, they had great respect for him. Integrity, great guy, wanted to do whatever it took to do to get the job done.

When we started thinking about who would be a perfect candidate to help us with this, we thought of him. It wasn't because we go way back as much as the respect I had for him for what he had done. I watched it from afar more than on a day-to-day basis.

Q. Mark, you spoke about having the drivers and team owners and other participants involved in putting together the strictures that are going to be run in the series. You're dealing with a lot of selfish people here, drivers and team owners. You know they're going to gang up on these guys. How do you separate them and make sure they do this?

MARK MILES: In their defense, I wouldn't use the word 'selfish'. You're the journalist, but... They're hard-nosed competitors, and I get that. That's just what you would expect. I respect them for it.

I think they expect IndyCar to be a great sanctioning body and to lead. Part of that is having and using authority. I think our paddock wants that from us, expects that from us. I think we have to step up our game to make that work.

But that is the model. I think that's not breaking arms; that's what they expect. So the stewards will have the responsibility and the authority. They'll be available to talk after races about why they made decisions they made. But that isn't going to be an appeal. They're going to make the decisions in Race Control, and there are other appeal processes that are more involved, but they will have our complete support and confidence. I believe they will earn that from the paddock.

While the competitors, they can argue about calls, they won't always see them the same way, but the call's the call and we think we got the right guys making them.

Q. A procedural question with the three stewards now. Can any of the three stewards start a penalty call if they so desire? Do they all come from Dan? How does that work?

JAY FRYE: Any steward can call for review. The race director can call for review, yes.

Q. So Brian can still call for review?

JAY FRYE: Absolutely.

Q. Jay, when you were identifying candidates, how important was it for you to find somebody that wasn't too inextricably attached to one of the manufacturers or one of the teams?

JAY FRYE: When you've been in motorsports for a long time, if you're qualified to do this job, there have been certain touch points you've had with people over the years that are hard to not have. We targeted or wanted these three gentlemen, it was really building a team.

We have Dan overseeing the team. We have Max who has an approach. We have Arie who has an approach. We think all the approaches are a little bit different, but they'll complement each other very well.

It's been amazing already in just the little bit of time we've started to work on this together the enthusiasm they have to do this, the enthusiasm to do it in the right way. I mean, they care. They want to make a difference and do the right thing.

It's been great to this point. We can't wait to get started in a couple weeks. So far so good.

Q. I know we're all looking forward instead of looking backward. The predecessor to Jay's

position wanted to see a new car for IndyCar in 2018. I would think because of business considerations to might be delayed a few years. What are your thoughts on when the next generation of IndyCar will be rolled out?

MARK MILES: I think we, Jay, myself and Bill, who started, what, Monday, our first focus, although we got to walk and talk at the same time, we're first focused on the further evolution of this car, racing it well this year. That's sort of the thing right in front of us.

At the same time we will quickly be thinking about the evolution of that for next year, and then at what point can we be thinking about a new car, and how you go about that.

We don't have a timetable for you at this point. I think there's a lot to do to do the best we can for this year and these races, to think early on this year about any evolution for next year, because we don't want to put manufacturers and teams behind the eight ball by making decisions too late. In the process of all that, we'll be thinking about what's feasible for a new car.

Q. I'm sure if there's a rule infraction, you might get assistance from another team if they happened to observe something. For example, say it's a full-course yellow, everybody comes in and pits, maybe a driver runs over an air hose, which I still believe is a penalty. How do the stewards know about that if they don't personally see it? Are there pit officials? How many pit boxes have those officials? Do they relay it to the stewards, then they could review it if they have video? TV has a way of sometimes finding something, then playing it over and over and over again.

MAX PAPIS: It's actually a really good question. We were talking before about procedure and tools we have in place.

I can tell you this. There is a lot of commitment here in making sure that we get the tools to make the right calls at the right time.

Answering that question, it's exactly what we talked about 15 minutes ago. There are going to be people in pit lane referring the messages. The things I can tell you, this is what I love about this group, the thing is going to work. If it doesn't work the first time, it's going to work the second time. If it's not going to work exactly right the first time, it's going to work pretty damn close good the second time.

What I love about what we've been doing here, it's a real team. There is no ego. There is only one goal: making the sport right. I hope that by the end of the season there will be a lot less whining and a lot more

just action and good things. I think at the end of the day you have a great sport and we are all fortunate to be around and be able to do it.

DAN DAVIS: Rocket runs the pit road. There are pit techs all along pit road. If a pit tech sees something, Rocket comes, checks it out, reviews what's going around that pit, will call it up to the tower to say what happened. There's more than one eye on pit road that will monitor that.

MARK MILES: There will be a visible broadcast monitor in Race Control.

Q. Are you hoping this is the last time you have to have a press conference like this? The whole idea of Race Control is to blend into the background and everyone does what the hell they're told. Is this the last time you're going to be doing all this and having to justify why we do this, why we do that?

MARK MILES: Yeah, I think that's right. We did say when we do soon finalize the table of regulations and penalties, we will make that available. I don't know how we'll pass that out.

But the point of your question, we completely agree with. These guys, they're not looking to be the stars of the show. They're looking to do a great job for the competitors in the series. They ought to be in the background.

We don't expect them to be answering your questions about what they did going forward. I don't think that's the job of the guys in the striped shirts. If we have to, we'll figure out a way to explain things to you, but that's not their job.

THE MODERATOR: With that, we'd like to thank you, gentlemen, for your time.