

IndyCar Media Conference

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Tony Kanaan Graham Rahal

Press Conference

THE MODERATOR: We'd like to welcome third-place finisher Graham Rahal, driver of the No. 15 Gehl / D-A Lubricant Honda for Rahal Letterman Lanigan racing. He's raced here now twice in IndyCar. Tell us about your day.

GRAHAM RAHAL: Yeah, it was a decent day for us. We had a good start, good first stint to get us up a little bit further, get by Pagenaud. Maybe we got the tire strategy a little wrong. We started on new reds, probably should have started used and kept the news for second or probably the third or fourth stint. But all in all, a solid day, good finish, good points. We needed that. I think we had a really good car, particularly on the new reds our car was really nice, and at the end there it was also pretty good.

We tried our best. We were underneath Kanaan there, but unfortunately it looks like their cars have a little more top speed than us, so we just kind of got left behind. But that happens. We're just going to have to keep our heads down, keep working hard, and try to bounce back and get a good result in Iowa, as well.

For us and our year, I think this is pretty big because we've been fast everywhere, it's just we've had a lot of stuff go against us. To get a podium felt nice.

THE MODERATOR: Seemed like there was a lot of intense competitive racing out there, especially in the closing laps.

GRAHAM RAHAL: Yeah, that's what people don't see I think from watching on TV. It's hard to see but like Pagenaud and I for like 20-some laps, I felt like he was right behind me and I was giving it every ounce I possibly had. There was sections of the track I was better than him and sections that he clearly had me. I think Canada Corner I was weak all weekend and that proved to be true again. But again, we just battled hard, and I had a good day.

I think the tire strategy hurt us there. I think that's how Pagenaud really got back around us is we just made the wrong tire call and it definitely hurt, but it is what it



is, and we still came out of here in third.

THE MODERATOR: I know you've touched on some of this throughout the weekend with your family's history here, but how great was it to race around this track and see the great atmosphere.

GRAHAM RAHAL: Yeah, it was awesome. I talked to George and he said it broke an attendance record for this racetrack. If you think about that and all the events that have been here, that's spectacular. It was a lot of fun for me to be here. I got a lot of my family here, so overall pretty special day.

Q. If you could describe even further that attempt to pass TK going into Turn 1 --

GRAHAM RAHAL: I mean, I was under him. He just had more top speed. I don't know what to tell you. It happened to me three times today against -- obviously I was around all our competitors, no other Hondas, and they've got some power, that's for sure. They've got some top speed. It is what it is. We've just got to keep our heads down, we've got what we've got, and if you look to my sector times yesterday in qualifying, I was three tenths off and every single tenth was on the straightaways. We knew this going into today. Eddie and I talked before the race on the downforce level and just determined we had to do what we had to do to take care of our tires and try to be most consistent, and we were. But I mean, at the end, we pushed as hard as we could. It's just I got next to him, and when I pulled out, he left me in my dust.

Q. And then early in the race back here on the second straightaway when you were heading into Turn 5, you made a really nice move there to take a position. If you could describe --

GRAHAM RAHAL: That was on Pagenaud, right? I think it was Pagenaud. Yeah, he didn't use Push-to-Pass there and I did. It was kind of a case, he probably knew I had a good run and earlier in the race, you've got to be smart about when you're using it and when you're not and so I used it and got around him. He was struggling on reds and I knew that I could see he was on used reds, see the rear of his car was struggling from Lap 1 on, and early in the race I was getting insane fuel numbers. In fact I could have gone two laps longer than I ended up going because I was getting such good fuel numbers, but I knew I had to

start putting pressure on him, and I did, and you know, it worked out we got by him.

But I'm not disappointed in anything today. We had a great day. Obviously I would have liked to get by TK. We would have been second. I don't know that we had enough to beat Power frankly, but that's all right.

Q. Graham, going on the pace lap here, you see campers, tents, canopies lining the entire racetrack. What was going through your mind there during some of the pace laps? And getting a podium, rough start to the weekend, only getting eight or nine laps in that first practice on Friday, just to bounce back for the weekend --

GRAHAM RAHAL: Yeah, I mean, I guess I'll answer that one first. It was a tough start, but our team is very resilient group and they're a great group. I think they're the best mechanics and I think they're the best organization out here, period. The resources we have certainly aren't what others have, but we do a phenomenal job with what we have, so I'm very proud of them, and they continue to impress me each and every day and I think impress everybody.

But yeah, I mean, when you see the crowd, I mean, for a driver we all love going to a lot of racetracks. There's a lot of great racetracks, but like even Fontana race last year, it was a thrilling race, but it lost kind of the buzz because there was only 10,000, 5,000 people or whatever it was there. When you see a crowd like this, it's electrifying, I think, for all of us, and we love it. We love it.

I couldn't thank them enough. I think that's the thing is we at IndyCar, all of us drivers, we're appreciative of them and what they do and what they bring to us because it makes it so much more fun.

THE MODERATOR: We'll welcome our runner-up in today's race, Tony Kanaan, driver of the No. 10 NTT DATA Chip Ganassi Racing Chevy. Tony, great rating out there.

TONY KANAAN: It was. Great battles all day. Between me and Graham and then at the end, we kind of swapped tire strategies a little bit, and me and Graham were on the reds, but I think you had to use reds, so it was a little bit of disadvantage for him on the last few laps.

We were on the right strategy. I thought we had a car to fight for the win, but in the last lap when they told me we had three Push-to-Passes and I had to use two to hold Graham up, I'm like, I'm toast.

I still used it like when we opened the last lap I used it

coming up the hill, and actually kept the gap, I'm like, oh, awesome, and as soon as we turned out of Turn 3 Will just disappeared and out of the carousel, as well. It was kind of depressing to be honest.

But he led a lot of -- the entire race, and with us battling, we were a little bit out of sequence. I was pitting a lap earlier, so having trying to like beat Graham out of the pits, he's trying to beat me, getting in the Push-to-Pass on his in laps, so we kind of gave Will a pretty big break, I think, by doing that between ourselves, but that's racing.

Q. So he owes you two dinner?

TONY KANAAN: Yeah, I think he can afford to buy dinner for sure.

Q. Talk about what it was like to race here with this great crowd today, being back on this great track and as competitive as the racing was today.

TONY KANAAN: I think we always stress that, but Graham has been coming here forever, since he was like pooping his diapers, I guess.

GRAHAM RAHAL: Definitely.

TONY KANAAN: And then we kind of knew how this place was, and when you try to describe that to some of the young guys, I don't think it makes justice. It's like telling somebody how great Indianapolis is. If you don't go there, you're never going to experience, and this place didn't let us down. I showed up here on Thursday and this place was packed. I took the scooter around the camping grounds, and it's amazing. This is the type of places we want to race. If you ask any driver about this road course, it's one of their favorites by far, and the fans, too. It's a great combination, and hopefully by putting a show like this, we can come back here for many years.

Q. IndyCar seems to draw better crowds at the road races than it does on the ovals. We're an hour and 15 minutes from Milwaukee, and there's no race there this year. Michael couldn't make a go of it. What is either missing at an oval like Milwaukee or what makes Road America so much better? You're drawing from the same group of fans here.

TONY KANAAN: It's a tough call, but I think one thing in my opinion, it's people can come here and camp all weekend long. They can see all the racetrack. They don't have to -- you don't have to go in the grandstand to watch the race if you don't want to. You can see it in your camper on the top of your camper and watch. So this becomes a family weekend. You can bring all your kids. Obviously the timing, also, I think they said that they couldn't agree on a date because you're trying to time when the kids are off school so people can bring

the kids and camp and stuff.

To me it's not about an oval or a road course. I think if you can make an oval with this type of environment, we're still going to have the same crowd showing up. I remember when you used to go to like Kansas or Kentucky, people were camping there, too, so I think that was the biggest -- it is the biggest difference in my opinion.

GRAHAM RAHAL: Yeah, I agree. For me, I lived it firsthand. For me to come here as a kid and spend time with Dad and just be here for the whole weekend, it's the same thing that makes Mid-Ohio awesome. It's the atmosphere. It's coming for an event. It's coming for a weekend with the kids or a weekend with the family as a whole, whether it's extended family or what. That's what makes it so unique.

And there's just so much action. If you watch, there's just always something on track, and that's great for the fans. They get their money's worth.

I wish -- I hope we can just continue to go to more places like this. I think this is proving that we don't need to be trying to overthink the destinations we need to race at. They're right in front of us, and we've just got to go do it.

Q. Graham, I know how much you love Mid-Ohio, but as beautiful as this course is and as massive as it is, is this almost like Mid-Ohio on steroids?

GRAHAM RAHAL: It's like a mix of Barber and Mid-Ohio a little bit because you get a lot more elevation but it's pretty quick, and Mid-Ohio -- I mean, both of those are fun events and Mid-Ohio is obviously home, so maybe I'm a little biased, but I've got to say, this has always been my favorite racetrack. It's my dad's favorite racetrack. It's probably TK's favorite racetrack. It's everybody's. For us this place is just awesome.

It was a great race today. It was hard battles. I drove as hard as I could to try to keep up with him and keep Pagenaud behind me and everything. I know it's hard to see that on TV, but it was a lot of fun battling out there.

Q. Can you talk about the weekend being an event, it's not just you guys, it's all this development series for IndyCar? Did that seem to help in terms of the attraction for the event?

GRAHAM RAHAL: I mean, the more you can have, the better, I would say from a fan perspective. For us it's kind of tough when you get that many different types of rubber down and stuff it makes the track difficult to put your thumb on it. I'm not going to lie, I like coming and watching sports cars and stuff like that. For me at the

end of the day when we're done, if you can get engineering done quick enough and go out and sit in a corner and watch, it's a lot of fun. So I would imagine the fans love it, too.

But it's just great for everybody. I'd imagine there are people here who are diehard race fans, I imagine there are people here who are first timers and those who aren't necessarily huge race fans, and I guarantee every one of them loved this weekend.

TONY KANAAN: Yeah, I think that helps, but I don't think that's the key. I think it's just the entire environment. Like Graham touched on a very good point. We just need to go find the places that people want to come and watch us. We have a great product. Some people say, well, what about your racing? Our racing is good, and we prove when we come to places like this, we go to Indy, we go to Mid-Ohio that we have places packed.

I mean, it doesn't hurt to have other series. You just always have action. But funny enough at a track this big they have so many other things to do. When it went yellow, I looked between Turn 7 and 8 and there were people on the go-kart track go-karting.

GRAHAM RAHAL: People on the zip line.

TONY KANAAN: Yeah, on the zip line. I guess some of them weren't even watching the race. But it helps. It definitely helps.

Q. Was there any point during the race or any place on the track where barring some sort of mechanical or mistake, Will looked vulnerable?

GRAHAM RAHAL: I don't think Will's pace was much better than us, it was just that we got behind on the first stint, and then we just stayed the same. I mean, we were trying to catch him. TK and I would claw up to him a little bit on a lap and then I could see both of us fell back a little bit. My guys were giving me his lap times over the radio. We were doing pretty much the same, but we lost that distance in the first stint, and it pretty much stayed right there. It's hard for me -- I mean, TK probably saw him closer than I did, but all of us have strengths and weaknesses obviously around the track, so I'm sure there was, but I didn't see it.

TONY KANAAN: I don't think he was much stronger, but obviously the advantage of being in the lead, you have clean air in that first three laps, that's when he got the gap, and we were trying to sort ourselves out with our cars. Nowadays if you have a car in front of you that is even like a two-car length, it's already taking the air out of you so you're not going as fast, and having a clean track helps a lot, and then I think you saw that on the restart. He got it, me and Graham started to fight a

little bit, he pulled away, and then I started to fight with Pagenaud, he pulled away even more. It took me an extra lap to catch him.

But I think he had a fast car, but I don't think he was like anywhere stronger -- we closed the gap any time we needed to, but he just had that little advantage every time because he was in the lead.

Q. TK, the next race coming up is at one of your favorite tracks, Iowa Speedway. Do you view this portion of the schedule a great opportunity for you to make up a lot of points?

TONY KANAAN: Of course. You know, this year I've been working really close with Dario trying to improve some of my weaknesses that maybe has been costing me a little bit, and I think we've done a lot better. We've been qualifying a lot better. That was my weaknesses in the past two years.

Yeah, but Iowa, obviously it's a track that I won a few times. I have a lot of podiums there. So for sure I'm looking forward to it.

Q. Pagenaud was a factor right before he dropped out at the end, but how do you think you stacked up against Pagenaud?

TONY KANAAN: Well, for us it's good. He's not going away with the lead. To be honest, we swapped strategies. I personally think I would have passed him, and I would have gone to chase Will because the reds were so much better there at the end and I had a brand new set. Obviously him having the problem just helps with the points because he dropped even more. Instead of being third, I don't know where he finished, but -- so that's a big -- I'm only 92 points behind now, you know, so it's -- it makes the championship very interesting. He was strong. When he passed me, he was on the Push-to-Pass on the red tires and I was on the black. We were going to swap at the end.

GRAHAM RAHAL: Honestly I think we were better than Pagenaud today, but as TK said we kind of did the same on the strategy and started on new red which we shouldn't have, but we beat those up and we got by him, we passed him in the first stint and pulled away quite a lot, but then we went to blacks, and I think he gained a little bit of time on us there, and then he did new reds I think the third stint, and that's where he got by me and that's where he got by TK. He was kind of on kill, but then he went back to blacks and I thought we'd get him, too.

But it is what it is. As TK said, I chewed up a lot of Push-to-Passes there in the first -- trying to get by him on the restarts. When I got to Pagenaud, I was pretty lucky that he had the engine deal because I was trying

to save the Push-to-Pass as long as he could, and it just kind of worked out.

But yeah, I thought like all of us were pretty evenly matched like all day. Even if you look at TK and I, he'd pull me for a little bit and then we'd catch up. Everybody was pretty similar pace, just kind of tire strategy and if you had clean air or not.

Q. We've heard aero wash and the way these cars affect each other on racetracks quite a bit this year. Is it any more or less noticeable here at Road America? Do the straits offset that at all?

TONY KANAAN: No, it's actually a little bit better. With the long straightaways, it affects us in the corner a lot, but in the straits we have a lot of places to pass. Having those long straights helps. So no, to be honest, it's actually better than some other places.