

# IndyCar Media Conference

Saturday July 9, 2016

**Jimmy Small**

**Jay Frye**

**Tony Kanaan**

**Craig Floss**

Press Conference

THE MODERATOR: We are joined by Iowa Speedway president Jimmy Small; Jay Frye, president of competition and cooperations for IndyCar; Tony Kanaan, driver of the No. 10 Chip Ganassi Racing Team's Chevrolet; and Craig Floss, CEO of Iowa Corn Grower's Association.

With no further ado, we are here to make an announcement on the eve of the 10th running of the Iowa Corn 300.

JIMMY SMALL: Thanks everyone for being here. Welcome to the infield of dreams, probably a lot of you saw as you were coming in the big sign on the infield with our home grown corn here, Iowa Corn here right on the infield. Wanted to make a few comments before we make the announcement.

If you look back at only 15 years ago, Iowa Speedway was just a dream, a dream, a vision of a world-class short track with the highest profile racing series here in the middle of corn fields. You turn back just ten years, and that dream became a reality.

And so 2006, or 2007 after our 2006 inaugural season, indicate I had car decided to switch over to ethanol-grade fuel and Iowa Corn Growers stepped up and we put together a partnership to launch what is now a tradition here in the state, which was at that point the Iowa Corn 250, the fastest show on the earth meant the fastest short track on the planet, something we are super proud of at the Speedway. If you build it, they will come. That's what we're here to announce.

We are here to say, sort of edit that a little bit, adds just it: If you build it, they will keep coming. So we are here today to announce that we've extended our relationship with both IndyCar and Iowa Corn for the next two years.



So for 2017 and 2018, we have secured dates and sponsorship through IndyCar and Iowa Corn. Really excited about that and going to see a heck of a show this weekend and happy to announce this is part of our long-term strategy.

THE MODERATOR: I know that you've been involved in some big races coming from your NASCAR days. Tell me, I've heard you say several times that being part of the Iowa Corn 300 is truly one of the great motorsports events, period.

Why do you say that, and why being able to add 50 more laps to the race distance, why was that such a coup for you a couple years ago?

JIMMY SMALL: When the fastest show on earth meets the fastest short track on the planet, a few years later, you have to add a few lap. Super excited to do that back in 1014. As a NASCAR employee, I was worried about saying this to years ago, but I'm not worried about it anymore.

I feel pretty confident saying this is a show unlike anything I've ever seen before. To see those cars dive into the corner, it looks like jet fighters make a maneuver. I've never seen anything like it before at any racetrack with any style of race car. I get super excited.

It's kind of a bummer working here for this race because I don't get to see the whole race. I have to watch it on replay. That's the only bummer. Everything else is so much fun. It's so much fun to promote, be a part of. It's something we're really proud of, and not to mention, we're promoting racing done on ethanol fuel which is grown in the corn fields surrounding this racetrack, so it doesn't get much more authentic than that. That's about it.

THE MODERATOR: I want to move on down to Jay. Jay, you've already had tremendous success this year with the 100th running of the Indy 500.

Wanted to ask you briefly, now that you're in Iowa Corn country and you're committed to coming back for two more years, can you share with us what went into the decision to switch over to ethanol in the first place?

JAY FRYE: Really it was for the road car relevance and how we could use IndyCar as a platform to demonstrate how it would work, and we're very proud of that. We've been running it for ten years now. We can't thank the Iowa farmers and Iowa Corn enough for their participation. That was really the main thing was the road car relevance.

THE MODERATOR: Talk about the importance of short track racing and then what Iowa Speedway means to the Verizon IndyCar Series as a whole.

JAY FRYE: It means a ton. This place, this is grass roots racing I think. This area, there's all kind of race fans that enjoy all different forms of racing. We are very proud to be a part of that here.

To me, we talked about the cars earlier, the cars go in the corner, the speeds that these cars race through the corners here are breathtaking. This is my first IndyCar here event here like three years ago and I was overwhelmed, blown away, by how these cars perform in the stretch. We put on a really good show and we are really proud to be here and we are looking forward to coming back.

THE MODERATOR: Craig Floss, CEO of the Iowa Corn Growers Association, if you could please introduce Bob and Mark, I forgot to things them when we started.

CRAIG FLOSS: Like to recognize my bosses, first of all, Mark Heckman is the president of the Iowa Corn Promotion Board, and Bob Hemesath is the president of the Iowa Corn Growers Association.

Just briefly, we have two separation boards of directors and one is the steward of our checkoff dollars. So for every bushel of corn that's sold in the state, one cent is selected and that's where we get our dollars to do promotional work like being able to support the Iowa Corn 300.

On the Iowa Corn Growers Association side is the advocacy side, so it's the group that does the advocating and lobbying in both our state capitol as well as Washington, D.C.

THE MODERATOR: Craig, this marks the tenth Iowa Corn 300. Just talk about, this is the second longest in IndyCar racing period for a second home to Long Beach, and when you consider that's been around since 1976, just talk about the gravity of having that feather in your cap, so to speak.

CRAIG FLOSS: So one of our primary responsibilities as the Iowa Corn Promotion Board is to be good stewards of the dollars, the checkoff dollars that we

collect from that one cent per bushel. We have to do things with those dollars that pay dividends and they have to have value, and if it doesn't have value, we are not able to continue to do them. We certainly didn't ten years ago set out to think that we are going to become the second-longest sponsor of an Indy event.

We got involved because it seems like a good platform for us. For us to be here ten years later tells me that it's a great program for us and that's why it's important. So again, the longevity is awesome but it was never anticipated. It's a pleasant surprise.

THE MODERATOR: Craig, also, you and I were talking the other day, and you mentioned how IndyCar approached you about switching over to ethanol. Tell that story.

CRAIG FLOSS: Initially the Iowa Speedway came to us in 2006 when the track had not been completed yet and said, hey, would you guys be interested in being a sponsor.

And our first response is: Are the cars going to run ethanol? And the answer was no.

And then over the course of that winter, 2006, 2007, Indy had been doing testing, unbeknownst to us, and we had some indication that was a possibility. And they decided to start -- indicated a 100 percent fuel grade ethanol. When the track came back, they came back and said, are you interested now in running.

We had great discussions with our farmer leaders in the decision between -- the partnership between the Iowa Speedway, Iowa's corn farmers and IndyCar has been fantastic because it has really been a tremendous platform for us to showcase the power and performance of ethanol. And of course a few years later, we went to an E85 blend with the cars, as Jay mentioned, because of the consumer relevance.

So that's actually helped us tremendously, as well, to be able to show that if the drivers are using the E85 around the track and as a consumer, you can go out and go to a flex-fuel pump and get the E85, it's a nice connection, so helps us with our platform all the way around. It's been an awesome marriage and that's why we're here ten years later.

THE MODERATOR: Moving down to our driver, Tony, keeping with the idea of consecutive streaks and things like that, you're on the verge, tomorrow, you'll start your 250th consecutive race dating all the way back to 2001 in Portland. You're also one of just four drivers who have competed in every Iowa Corn race which is really pretty cool.

Wonder what you think of being a part of the Iowa Corn 300 and why fans and drivers alike love this place?

TONY KANAAN: First of all, it's one of the most fun racetracks we go. It's a short track. It's very fast. The sensation of speed is not just what you guys can see. We are in the car; this place feels faster than the Indianapolis 500.

It's awesome. Every time I come back here, the first three laps you go, it's a good wake-up call when you're driving around, you're like, whoa, this thing is really fast.

I personally love this place. It's funny because I had not actually finished a race here until the race that I won. I was reading a bunch of them and I crashed every time on that bump on turn one. They fixed that, so we won the race.

You know, it's a great place to come. I actually am always amazed, the fan base that I have here, I think it's really eye-opening. To go to Indy, my fan base is huge there. I come here, it's I would say probably the second-biggest, and people, obviously we have a huge fan base that come to watch this race. I can see from yesterday, me and Dixon, we came to dinner, we came back around 7:00 and we always drive around on the outside just to see the attendance. And we see so many motor homes there, quite a few coming in now -- exactly.

Obviously the consistency on the schedule, I think it's very important for IndyCar, so fans can plan that next year at this date, they are going to have; and the next two years; so the consistency for me, it's important.

And one last thing. My son, my oldest, love the trophy. He lights up. He has it in his bedroom. Now the youngest is mad that he doesn't have one, which he doesn't have another warmer (ph), either, so I would say I'm working on that. But I'm really glad you guys extended. It's one of the tracks I do quite well, I should say. In the past six years I finished five times on the podium here, including the win, so I'm excited.

**Q. The relationship with Iowa Speedway, is that maybe for a future IndyCar championship a possibility, like NASCAR, maybe going twice to the same racetrack, or just carrying on just with one racetrack per year?**

JAY FRYE: No, there's not been any current talk about going to any place twice. One of the things we're working really hard, as Tony mentioned, having consistency in our schedule with starts times and dates, where people, fans, can plan. So that's our main focus right now and Steven Starks is instrumental in that doing a great job and working really hard to get

the schedule locked in for multiple years to again, create that consistency.

**Q. The Saturday night race here was very popular. How difficult of a balancing act is it, because NASCAR has got a Saturday night race, both series are televised by NBC Sports network. How difficult is the balancing act, because I'm sure that you as a promoter would have loved to be running tonight than tomorrow?**

JIMMY SMALL: Consistency is what we go for in any given year with our season. We want to make sure our fans continue to come back each summer and having a consistent schedule with similar races, similar temperatures, everything around that race, we want to keep going each and every year.

With the new broadcast partner, with NBCSN coming on board and having to work with them on the races in Kentucky this year, we worked closely with IndyCar, as well as NBCSN. We look back at how we've done in terms of attendance. We looked at our fan feedback.

We love night racing here. That's probably no surprise to anyone in this room. I hope this whole room would be unanimous in terms of supporting night racing. So as we put all that together, we collectively made our best decision possible.

I love the fact that NASCAR is racing Kentucky from Thursday to Saturday and we have the Sunday race. I think that really caps off the weekend, a great weekend of racing, and we are really proud to be the last race of the weekend.

**Q. Will the next two years, will you try and have a Saturday night races again?**

JIMMY SMALL: Right now the dates are set for Sundays the same weekend, so it will be July 9 next year and July 8 in 2018. As far as television times, to be determined. We'll announce those as we make those decisions.

One other thing to point out, with this announcement, we are basically at the point of having a full schedule for 2017. Season tickets will go back on sale here shortly. We are proud of that, like Tony said earlier, to have that schedule announced fully, is not just important for the series itself but also for our racetrack.

So having our fans be able to make their plans, whether it's booking hotels or purchasing tickets or everything in between, we're really proud to have done that quite a bit earlier than we have in previous seasons. So thank you very much.