

NTT IndyCar Series News Conference

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Mark Miles

President and CEO of Penske Entertainment

Michael Montri

President of the Iowa INDYCAR 250s

Bobby Rahal

Rahal Lanigan Letterman Racing
Press Conference

THE MODERATOR: Good afternoon, everyone. Welcome to the NTT INDYCAR Series video conference. I'm Kate Davis.

Today we were joined by Mark Miles, president and CEO of Penske Entertainment; Michael Montri, president of the INDYCAR 250s; and Bobby Rahal, co-owner of Rahal Lanigan Letterman Racing.

Gentlemen, thank you for joining us.

Mark, let's begin with you. Could you give us your thoughts about how weekend's first event back with fans at Road America went from the series' perspective and looking ahead to Iowa.

MARK MILES: Sure. Thanks, everybody, for joining us.

We're looking forward to getting over there tomorrow ourselves. Hopefully a great doubleheader weekend at the Iowa INDYCAR 250s.

Last week from my perspective was a treat. It's such a great place. The fans are so knowledgeable and so enthusiastic. Racing is part of their life. The Elkhart Lake community really tuned out for the event.

I think it went really well off the track. We just keep doing more and getting better at these COVID precautions or procedures.

As you probably know, everybody that came inside the track, whether they were fans in mobile homes or vehicles, or people in the paddock, our competitors and our

participants we generally think of them now, everybody was screened with questions and with the contact-less I call it a gun, but I'm sure that's not the medically correct term. Everybody knows what it means. It went really well.

We had no resistance that I'm aware of from the fans as they entered. The paddock now has really got it down. This may have been the first race back with fans, but obviously in Texas and Indianapolis prior, we'd gone through this before. It's a very thorough process. I can elaborate if people want.

Before the paddock folks leave home till their arrival, and again on arrival each day, then follow-up after a race, we're in touch with all the competitors, all the folks in the paddock, to see if anybody has developed any symptoms that could be concerning.

Then there we separated the paddock from the public. We don't love to do. We'd rather have the fans in a more normal setting, be able to really get their fill of up-close access to the teams and the drivers and the cars. Under these circumstances, that doesn't make sense. But that went well.

I thought the fans were very understanding and onboard really with the procedures that we felt were necessary there.

So love the fact that they were there. We thought the turnout was great. Obviously with the acreage there, 640 acres, a perfect place to reintroduce racing with fans. I thought it came off very well.

We loved the racing. What happened on track was outstanding. Seems like Chip is trying to run away with the year. Scott is a central actor in that plot. But the young guys stepped up, add a whole other long anticipated dimension to the stories on track, which is exciting for us. NBC was pleased.

I just think we give it a solid A for the weekend.

Looking forward, understand it's going to be hot. It's Iowa. Probably will be hot and humid. That's better than cold and wet, right? We're looking forward to that.

The team there has done a great job. They've worked very



closely with the regulators and all the right precautions will be in place. As I say, each week we're sort of more rehearsed, more practiced. I think we expect to execute more flawlessly every time we get on track. We're looking forward to being there and having a couple really cool evenings of INDYCAR racing.

THE MODERATOR: Michael, you've been on the ground all week there in Iowa. Tell us how it's going and what fans can expect there.

MICHAEL MONTRI: Yeah, it's going well. It's been an interesting and fun week so far gearing up for Iowa's first race of the season here. We're going through a lot of the similar protocols and procedures that Mark referenced in Road America. I had the opportunity to be up in Road America, help them a little bit from the INDYCAR side with their planning there. I thought it really went well up there, like Mark said.

We're looking for similar results here as far as the screening process for when anybody sets foot on property here at Iowa Speedway. Workers, guests, partners, officials, everybody will get screened. Everyone will get a mask and hand sanitizer. They'll go through the process just like everybody else. In the grandstands, they'll be safely spaced.

We're looking for a fun weekend. We should have somewhere between 4,000 and 5,000 fans when it comes down to it, when you take the social distancing in to respect and the manifest for tickets.

As far as on track, looking forward to seeing some of those young guns go at it on the 7/8th mile oval here at Iowa. Should be some exciting races. Two night races in a row. Doubleheader. It will be interesting to see what some of the teams do from one night to another.

I know on Bobby's team, Graham is switching livery from one night to another, so his team is going to pull an all-nighter getting it done. Should be an exciting weekend.

THE MODERATOR: Bobby, if you could talk about what it's been like this month of July with three race events and two doubleheaders, what it's been like from the team owner's perspective as we head into another doubleheader weekend at Iowa Speedway.

BOBBY RAHAL: Let's face it, we were very pleased to get to Indy and the race. Had a good race there with Graham, and Takuma had a decent race. Of course, Elkhart is my favorite track. I've been going there since I was a kid, little kid. So pleased to see.

The weather was spectacular. The races were great. The fans were great. I was with George Bruggenthies who ran Elkhart for many years, is still involved in kind of a consulting way. He was very happy. Couldn't have been better I don't think.

Now we come to Iowa. Looks like the weather's going to be good. Cross our fingers. Usually there's rain at some point over this weekend, but it doesn't look like it this time around. Two races around here is going to be tough.

All in all, I think it's been great the way everybody has been able to work together. Mark and his staff, Roger's staff, of course Jay. Everything has been pretty smooth. Getting in and out of the tracks has been pretty easy, frankly. Everybody has been very well-prepared so that every morning when you come in, the testing, it's pretty seamless.

Obviously for me, we're hoping this is going to be a good, strong race for RLL. As I say, I think more than anything, I think everybody feels this way, it's just good to be racing again.

THE MODERATOR: We're going to open it up now to media questions.

Q. Michael, when you said four to five thousand fans this weekend, do you mean for each race, not a cumulative number over both races?

MICHAEL MONTRI: Yeah, that's correct. That's correct. Per day.

Q. Mark, I know with this race being a race with grandstands, having fans in the grandstands, how on a little bit smaller scale will you maybe use this weekend to try and test out how to have fans at a venue on a much bigger scale for the Indy 500?

MARK MILES: It helps, of course. The more experience we have, the better we get. Although I really do think we started strong even in many of these procedures with the paddock back in Texas.

There's so many ways to think about it. But first we got to take care of the competitors, the paddock, the crews, the media, the broadcast talent and production guys, everybody that's a part of making INDYCAR go.

I think they're all doing great. I think they have the right attitude. You might have thought it would wane over time, but constantly there's conversations, discussions about how important it is that we follow these procedures, that we wear masks, which is right here, I'm the only one in the

room, otherwise it would be on. We show up week after week before, during Indianapolis, and for the rest of the year with everybody able to get on track. That's important.

In terms of the fans and more kind of a grandstand environment, while there is camping, we'll learn from that, too. But the scale is different. What I think Michael is doing is working hand in glove with the officials in Iowa and the area there. Their standards are for them. What happens in Indianapolis, Indiana, is still being dialed in, but will probably be somewhat different.

But the basics are the same: we want to test everybody when they come in, meaning screen for temperature and any other symptoms; we want to make sure everybody has PPE, masks, hand sanitizer and the like; we want to make sure everybody is standing apart in lines, everything from merch sales to food concessions is done differently so it's as safe as it can possibly be. On and on and on.

The things you check off are very, very similar. There may be a little bit more in Indianapolis. I'm sure we'll be talking about that in more detail before long. But it's all learning. It's a journey.

You know what I think is happening is society is trying to define a new normal. There is probably a point in time when we thought in Indiana stage five is normal, we're back completely. Now I think nobody has a clue when stage five happens.

What we're trying to do is figure out what a new normal looks like so that we can continue to operate, continue to do that in the most responsible, safest way, and take care of our fans and communities. That's what we're all about. I think Michael and the team are doing that in Iowa. You can be sure we're all over it for Indianapolis.

Q. It's been a week and a half since you got your 500 fan survey back. What were some of the biggest takeaways you took from those responses?

MARK MILES: I'm not going to get into the detail. We didn't actually survey fans. We wrote to our ticket customers and asked them if they wanted to keep tickets and how many. We got very specific results. We now have a better handle on how many of the people who had already bought tickets wanted to keep and use those tickets, who wanted credit, and the like.

We'll be going through the details of that before long. But it was a really helpful process that informs a lot of the specifics we'll get into soon.

Q. Mark, as we go through each week with spectators,

as numbers come in on how things are in terms of whether anybody got sick, anybody didn't, if the numbers are positive, can we increase the access a little bit more, add a few more fans maybe down the road?

MARK MILES: First of all, we, like other sports, have to operate locally even if the series is national and international. What drives how we approach things is in Iowa the governor, Michael, the mayor of Newton, the local officials, they've met with them, they've talked with them, worked out a protocol that makes sense according to the situation on the ground there, which would be different in Ohio and different in Indianapolis, wherever we race.

It's not like it just builds on itself as a whole. It's really the parts, where we race, the local conditions there that determine the procedures.

Q. Bobby, generally this race would be real big for you marketing-wise. You'd be entertaining clients from the north side of Chicago, Michael Lanigan from the south side. You have to scale that back because you can't really have as much hospitality, some of the things you sell for sponsorships. How different is that from a team owner's perspective?

BOBBY RAHAL: We've done a lot of Zoom calls with our sponsors, clients. We've tried to frankly enhance the value above and beyond what was promised. Obviously in our case, knock on wood, all of our sponsors have been super understanding, patient, willing to change races. As Long Beach gets canceled, they went to Elkhart last week, that wasn't on the original calendar for them, yet they were willing to do that. We've been very fortunate.

Of course, many of the sponsors that we have are under no travel or nominal travel policies, as are their customers. Even though a lot of our sponsors are B to B, where they do a lot of the entertaining of their clients, it hasn't created too much of a problem yet.

Certainly we had people at Elkhart because we could, and it was beneficial for sure. Obviously Indy, at least the plan seems to be we'll be able to have some of our tickets for hospitality and what have you. Indy, whether it's in May or August, it's still the big race, right?

As I say, in the end we've worked hard to provide more value for our sponsors. They've been understanding. We're all in this together, is kind of everybody's attitude. As I said earlier, everybody is happy to be racing.

Of course, the competitiveness of the team has been pretty strong this year even though the results... Had a good

 . . . when all is said, we're done.®

race going at Elkhart with Graham in the first race, looking good, had a problem. At least we're running up front.

I think all of that combined I'd say has softened the blow. So far, knock on wood, everybody has been great. As we continue to race more, that issue becomes less and less of one.

Q. Mark, how did the Iowa qualifying procedure kind of come into play? Bobby, what do you think about it? How is the team preparing for it?

BOBBY RAHAL: Well, I mean, yeah, this was kind of brought up a couple weeks ago, I believe. The whole deal is to try to in these compressed weekends give the teams time in between these events, whether it's practice, qualifying or the race. I think it's a good idea.

We need that extra time. We've been lucky, frankly, maybe the whole field has been pretty lucky, that nobody has lost out. Look at Elkhart, Sunday morning practice and -- Sunday morning qualifying, Sunday morning race, there wasn't much time between those two.

If this opens things up a bit to give everybody the time if you need it, you've got it, that's great. In the end, especially at a track like Iowa, I'm not saying you can start anywhere and win, but if you've got a really good-handling car on a hot racetrack, you can come from behind. Qualifying is probably not as critical as you would see at Elkhart or a road course.

It's the same for everybody, so we'll just do the best we can.

MARK MILES: I would just say Bobby's answer really answers the question from my perspective, too. We obviously needed to economize on time, give space, time to the teams as we could. From our perspective, I'd say thank you to Bobby. What he said is representative of what I think generally teams are saying, that they understand. Everybody is being cooperative, kind of pulling from the same oar.

Q. Mark, how impressed have you been with the rookie field so far this season? Particularly going into the weekend with the doubleheader in Iowa, what are you expecting from the rookie field?

MARK MILES: Yeah, if I had a crystal ball, I'd just quit and go use my meager capital in another way, I suppose (smiling).

Look, I think there are great expectations for these rookies generally. I thought last weekend we saw that they can

live up to that. It was really exciting. Some great passing, great racing. They could run in the front. That's really exciting. It's a whole 'nother plot line I think for INDYCAR racing that fans are appreciating.

At Iowa, I don't know. We'll see. I don't see anybody who's laying back and taking it easy. I think it's going to be great racing all up and down the grid. Bobby already kind of said of course it matters where you start but it kind of doesn't. They'll have every opportunity to be in the hunt.

I sure couldn't predict what the results will be.

Q. Bobby, with the condensed schedule this weekend, do you kind of change your approach to the weekend or is it business as usual?

BOBBY RAHAL: Yeah, I don't think so. I think it's business as usual. Obviously we've got to unload well out of the trailer because you have so little time. But I think we don't look at this in any different way than we would normally. Yes, you have less track time, more races, what have you. We've had reasonable setups here over the last several years. I think hopefully we'll do the same.

As I said, it's all about having a well-balanced car over the course of a long run, with the heat and everything else. I think we just have to make sure we have no issues because it's tough to recover from those issues in between the sessions.

Q. Michael, Roger Penske has expressed some interest in doubleheaders moving forward into 2021. I wonder what it would take for Iowa Speedway to be one of those? Along those lines, is there a sponsor on the horizon that could replace Iowa Corn?

MICHAEL MONTRI: A couple things. My day job is president of the Detroit Grand Prix. We're used to doubleheaders in Detroit. Certainly in Iowa for this weekend looking forward to the doubleheader.

Look, the schedule for next year obviously is a long way away. I think one thing about the community here, they're very, very excited to be having INDYCAR coming 14 years in a row now. A great racing community. Very supportive. I don't see any reason why certainly from a track standpoint that wouldn't work.

NASCAR is the owner of the facility here. Their team in the past has been in charge of getting sponsors, title sponsors. I'm representing INDYCAR here as the promoter. We were a little late to the game this year. Certainly if we have a similar arrangement next year, that will be the first priority.

Q. Bobby, from your perspective, would you like to see more doubleheaders next year in terms of how much of a workload it puts on your dedicated crew?

BOBBY RAHAL: I mean, I don't mind. If there was anything I would prefer to see is more time associated in terms of practice. I know the idea is to not run as much, minimize costs perhaps. Of course, I think because everything is so compressed, if you have a problem, if you got a crash in qualifying on Sunday at Elkhart Lake, you probably weren't going to make the race, even if it was repairable, because you just wouldn't have the time.

There's maybe ways you can solve that. For example, you're not allowed to have the spare car out of the trailer. You're not allowed to have the spare car with an engine in it. That could certainly offset those issues. But that obviously takes the engine manufacturer's approval for that. Obviously INDYCAR's as well.

I don't mind the two race per weekend. I only thing I would say is the teams face in a situation like that, for example, this weekend we have One Cure, which is our charitable organization with Colorado State University, the oncology program there at the veterinary hospital.

On Sunday we're introducing for the first time, to my knowledge the first time, our sponsor here, our client here is Hy-Vee, which is a large grocery store chain in 12 states here in the Midwest part of the country. That's exciting. There's a big Hy-Vee store in downtown Newton. That's exciting for us to welcome Hy-Vee to us and INDYCAR racing.

It is the One Cure car on Friday, then everybody has to work like heck to turn the livery around so it can be the Hy-Vee car on Saturday. That's a challenge for teams given the way the rules are right now. But if those rules were changed to allow that kind of thing, then it's no big deal. We'll see.

But I don't mind the concept of double races. Certainly Elkhart Lake is a track that can easily handle that. Mid-Ohio probably. I'm not sure of some of the others. I don't know if you'd want two races on a street race weekend, for example.

I mean, it does save costs, there's no question of that. Again, you have to drive value for our sponsors and opportunities for our sponsors. Somehow that would have to be all I think worked out.

MARK MILES: Let me elaborate a little bit from our perspective.

Bobby just said it's clear that it's efficient, efficient for a promoter who has a lot of costs already for just the one event. If you can do two and bring in more fans, that can make some economic sense. It's efficient for the team, even if it does create other strains for teams, along the lines that Bobby mentioned. It's efficient from a television point of view in terms of especially the production costs, again, kind of the operating and overhead for TV.

I think it's a mistake to think our objective is to see how many doubleheaders we can do. It's been a terrific way this year to fill in where we lost some races due to COVID, really didn't have an opportunity to reschedule them. But we have a lot of really great venues, a lot of great promoters. Accordingly I think we believe being in more markets where the races work is important to us.

I just don't want the idea that we're trying to see how many we can do to get misconstrued.

Q. Mark, on the logistics of a weekend like this, for the crews, are you going to have to limit when they can be in the garages? I could easily see Bobby's team might need a little more time Friday night. Are there constraints on that? How are you going to help the teams out? Say somebody crashes Friday night, they're going to need more than a couple hours to put that back together.

MARK MILES: To be honest, I'm going to see if Michael can help me with that. I know about move in, move out. As to any limitations on the hours in the garages, I frankly am not sure.

MICHAEL MONTRI: I can answer that. Obviously it's up to the INDYCAR officials, what they allow and when. I know under extenuating circumstances they have allowed a certain amount of time extra in the past. I know that is probably the case for Bobby's team like he talked about between Friday and Saturday night switching the livery around.

INDYCAR I think all the officials are really good working with all the teams. Obviously we want to make sure that every car available gets in the show, certainly every sponsor that can be represented gets to be represented.

Again, up to INDYCAR officials ultimately. I think they've been very good working with the teams on that front. Bobby might be able to comment on that a little bit more, as well.

BOBBY RAHAL: For sure, they have. They understand it. They get it. As I said in the beginning, the level of



cooperation between the teams, the tracks, the series has been very, very good. Everybody has really been I think in lockstep as far as whatever it takes.

We have owners meetings. Everybody is in agreement. You got to do what you got to do. There's a lot of harmony I guess I would say or consistency in how everybody is approaching this thing. So everybody has been very flexible. If you need it, you got it. It's been good.

Q. Michael, what's the feeling on the ground there about the race weekend? Have you been out in the local community, I'm guessing not a lot? What is the local feeling there?

MICHAEL MONTRI: Yeah, I can tell you that when we first met with some of the local officials here on both the state and local level, the excitement for the race is palpable. They're very excited to get going again here in Iowa with the race this weekend. A lot of support from the community.

We've had a number of calls and meetings with local officials, the governor, Department of Public Health, everyone you can think of what you would want to touch in a situation like this. They've all been very, very supportive.

I think everybody remembers last year when all the fans in the stands stayed through the 2 a.m. checkered flag last year. Very passionate fans here. I know they're all excited to get going, and we're excited to be able to bring them INDYCAR this weekend.

Q. Mark, is there any new movement on an engine manufacturer coming into INDYCAR? If there is, would you be able to tell us who that may be?

MARK MILES: If there were, no (laughter). Look, my answer really hasn't changed. We continue to work on it. I think we're optimistic even under the kind of pandemic circumstances. It's proven hazardous to try to predict the course of those conversations.

We've said before, not to put any pressure on him, but if we had one person you'd like to take the reins to try to get that done, it would be Roger Penske and his team. I think we have reason to be optimistic, but I can't elaborate.

Q. Been hearing and reading a lot about Ferrari coming maybe potentially into INDYCAR. Is that something that you would like to see?

MARK MILES: Well, I think Ferrari is better than a great brand, right? It's a world class brand. It's about performance and racing. It is a global superstar as an

organization. So yes, that would be terrific. I think race fans would love it.

But again, I don't mean to get over our skis on any particular possibility.

Q. The question concerns the phrase that we've all come to know as new normal, coming full circle from the beginning of the call. Bobby, the new normal actually is different for every template of experience that people have to deal with. This season in INDYCAR we have the Aeroscreen. I wanted to better understand the new normal as it relates to the Aeroscreen and having to adjust for it and what has that meant in the superspeedway, the road course and now looking into a small bullring type of racetrack.

BOBBY RAHAL: Well, I mean, all I can say is I think the Aeroscreen and the development of that, the work that Jay Frye and his guys did, the people that developed the screen, I don't think they could have done it any better.

Vision. I've talked to not just Graham but some other drivers. Night vision is very good. In fact, Spencer Pigot at Elkhart said you wouldn't even know it's there in terms of vision, the quality of your vision. You just kind of don't see it.

Obviously there's been some heating issues. It's kind of a little unfair to the screen, because every race we've had this year so far, other than Elkhart, was very, very hot. What was it, mid 90s at Indy. Texas it was 90s. It's been very hot.

I know they've improved the venting. Probably looking at other ways. Every driver I've spoken to, when you're on the track going, it's not a big deal. The big deal is when you get under yellow or when you get in the pits, you get all the heat.

I would say, I mean, this is a major component now. The performance obviously hasn't hurt the cars because the racing is just as good, the speeds are right there. It's a heck of a lot safer.

I can tell you when I saw Graham go off at Elkhart, I was really glad he had that screen on because it was looking like it could get pretty ugly for a while.

I think we got to be very pleased with it so far, and it's just going to get better.

Q. I've noticed RLL hasn't had too much of a problem doing setups on it. Your pace seems really strong.

BOBBY RAHAL: Well, yeah, so far so good, knock on wood. Like I say, I think there's concern, for sure, initially. But I think the development of it was very, very good. All the people that contributed to the development did a great job.

Q. Michael, could you elaborate, what is the appetite for racing right now in the state of Iowa?

MICHAEL MONTRI: I mean, again, from our initial meetings with everyone locally here, certainly in the city of Newton and at state level, they're all very excited. When you think about it, it's college football here in Iowa. I'm not sure that they're sure whether that's going to happen here. We might be the biggest professional sporting event they have here this year. We're looking forward to having it.

Grandstands again, because of the social distancing aspect, we're at a reduced number. Saturday the grandstand seats are completely sold out. Friday we have just a few tickets left. We've opened up some general admission seating on what we call the hill, so there will be some socially distanced general admission seating on the hill which is selling well. Then we have a couple public suites available where folks can buy individual seats.

Ticket sales for what we're allowed to do here under the current circumstances have been very good.

THE MODERATOR: I'd like to thank Mark, Michael and Bobby for their time today. We really appreciate it. Thank you to the media that has joined us.

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