

# NTT IndyCar Series News Conference

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## Tony Kanaan

A.J. Foyt Racing

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: Good morning, everybody. Welcome to our Indy 500 availability. We're joined by the driver of the No. 14 ABC Supply A.J. Foyt Chevrolet for A.J. Foyt Racing, the 2013 winner of the Indianapolis 500.

Tony, thanks for joining us this morning.

TONY KANAAN: You're welcome.

THE MODERATOR: You're starting your 19th Indianapolis 500 on Sunday. Does it feel any different than the first time?

TONY KANAAN: Not really. I mean, it's just a number. We as drivers, we don't count those. It's pretty cool obviously to be able to race at Indy this many times. That's definitely a cool number to have, it's a cool stat to have.

THE MODERATOR: I know earlier, before the season started, you announced this was going to be T.K.'s last lap. I've read some stories that said not necessarily. Because you did it for the fans, haven't had a chance to race in front of the fans. I guess we could announce now how many laps or turns is T.K.'s last lap? Like a 20-turn road course?

TONY KANAAN: It's easier said than done. When we announced that I was going to retire, not retire from INDYCAR, I was not going to do a full season in INDYCAR again. I never said I was not going to race. Some people probably got confused about that.

This year, especially with the pandemic, the 500 means so much to me. The fans made me who I am at Indy, at Indianapolis, at that track. I totally think it's unfair to them, it's unfair to myself not to come back to do it one more time in a proper way. That's my intention. By any means that's what's going to happen.

I don't have a car, a team, nothing, a sponsor. I'm going to have to go work to figure this out. But my intentions are, yes, when hopefully life will be back to normal, the

pandemic will go away, next May I'll be able to do a proper, I don't know, we can call it green-white-checked, last lap, whatever we're going to call it. As long as I'm able to come back, I don't care.

THE MODERATOR: Let's talk a little bit about Sunday. You had a chance to run in traffic with a lot of the field yesterday. How good is the No. 14 car in traffic? How do you feel about your chances on Sunday?

TONY KANAAN: It's as good as anybody else. I was really happy with the car. I made a few passes. Obviously we're starting in the back. We're going to have to be a little more conservative in the beginning of the race. I was happy.

Of course qualifying didn't go the way we wanted it to go. I think a lot of guys got really surprised what happened over the weekend. Nothing we can do about it.

But I'm happy. I'm pretty pleased with the car.

THE MODERATOR: We'll take questions for Tony.

**Q. There's so many good cars towards the back of the field after qualifying, I just wondered, every driver has given their opinion on the Aeroscreen, how difficult is it going to be to overtake? Where do you stand? Are you confident you can move through the field or it will be a long race and difficult to make your way forward?**

TONY KANAAN: If you look the past few years, it hasn't been like a lot of pass exchanging. When I won in '13, I don't know how many lead changes we had, 68, whatever the number. Arni will know the numbers for sure. Lately that's not the case. It will be more of a patience type of race.

But I still see a lot of passing, for sure. I just don't think it's the way like it used to be. You decided to say, I want to make a move now, that's what it is. You have to time it, you have to be patient.

Like you said, if you look at the grid, there are really experienced guys in the front and really experienced guys in the back. In the middle kind of like you don't know the dynamic of the race, how that's going to go.

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For me, I was like, Man, starting in the back there, usually you have more inexperienced guys, guys that don't have good cars, you can actually move up a little bit pretty quick in the beginning of the race. That's not going to be the case. You have Will Power, myself, Pagnaud, Helio. Those cars in race trim are good. We're probably not going to go anywhere in the beginning of the race.

You have to mentally prepare yourself for that and don't get frustrated because you're thinking, I have a good car, I had a bad qualifying, but I know I can run in the top 10. 20 or 30 laps into the race you're still 20th. What's going on? I think it's going to be a different dynamic of race.

As far as passing, it won't be any different than probably like last year, for example.

**Q. You drivers always have an instinct after practice of who the best people are, who the benchmark is. When you look at the times, there's tow, it's difficult to tell, you might see someone on top of the leaderboard but they might be the slowest people in the whole field. What do your instincts tell you about who is going to be the favorite or who are the kind of cars you've seen that have impressed you over practice?**

TONY KANAAN: Look, the guys in front, obviously you can't discount Marco and Dixon. Rossi is a big threat for sure. Then you talk the Penske guys. They're all back there with me, but I've seen their cars in traffic. They're going to be there at the end.

Hopefully I'll be there, too, to mix it up with them.

**Q. You know Fernando well, been racing with him quite a bit this year. Have you spoken to him after practice, how he feels about his car and chances?**

TONY KANAAN: I have not had the time. Our buses are parked right next to each other. I've been so busy. I saw Fernando opening day, but I have not talked with him.

Hopefully he's right there with us, too. Hopefully we all move to the front.

**Q. How excited are you to be back in Indy? Obviously we've got no fans this year, but that doesn't really take away from the fact we are going racing. How happy are you to have Charlie Kimball with you on the team? Obviously it's Dalton's first Indy 500. How are you going to be working together to make sure you get up to the front of the field?**

TONY KANAAN: Obviously it's nice to be back at Indy. With so many big events being canceled this year, I can't

thank the sponsors, Roger, for making this happen. That's obviously remarkable on their part.

The team dynamic, it's actually pretty good. I mean, Charlie was my teammate at Ganassi for a long time. The chemistry is there, right? There's a lot of experience. He's actually done extremely well at this track in the years past, so he has a lot of experience. That was easy.

Dalton as a rookie, obviously didn't have a lot to add. It was more like us helping him out. But he came along. Struggled the first day. I helped him out a little bit, drove his car. He's been on top of his game ever since.

One thing that really impressed me most in the kid, from being a rookie, how calm he was. I was never that calm, not even close. I said, Either you hide really well or I'm impressed with how calm you are.

The atmosphere is great. I think the team came much better prepared this year than we did last year. Obviously qualify didn't show that. We all know what happened there. We have good racecars, so let's see what's going to happen next Sunday.

**Q. In terms of the weather conditions, what are you expecting on Sunday?**

TONY KANAAN: Whatever God gives us, we're going to go race, doesn't matter (laughter). As long as it doesn't rain. It's going to be hot, that's for sure.

**Q. Do you think that will have any impact on the performance of the tires and stuff?**

TONY KANAAN: No, I mean, yesterday was hot and windy. It looks like the weather is not going to be as bad condition-wise as yesterday. No, I'm not concerned.

**Q. Regarding the no fans at the Indy 500, how does it feel going into this Sunday without the fans watching you? It's obviously going to be an emotional time. With all the people not being there watching you, I'm sure there will be thousands and thousands of fans watching you on TV. Is it going to feel strange, any different this Sunday without the fans there?**

TONY KANAAN: 100%. You can't say that you're going to walk into Gasoline Alley and not see a single person in the stands, which we used to see 400,000 of them. It's a situation we're in. It's been weird all week.

The only thing that it's keeping us with a positive vibe is actually they're going to have a chance to watch on TV. But also we're still racing. We could all actually be home

and not racing. That's what I'm trying to lift myself up with.

Look at this week. We would have been all over the place. We would have been doing community things, signing autographs, spending time with the fans. Nobody actually is enjoying any of that. Fans are not. We are not.

It's different times. I think we all understand what we're going through. So it's probably kind of a little bit easier to digest. Not in a million years if you would have told me I would race the 500 without people in the stands, I would have said, You better check yourself in a mental institution. That's not happening.

For me, I will be emotional, for sure. Probably a little less because won't be a single person screaming my name or saying, C'mon. Those kind of things actually energize you. The atmosphere, it's going to be different now.

What's going to be? I don't know. I might answer that to you on Sunday. It's making me rethink what should I do, if I should come back one more time. We'll see.

**Q. You're one of the most amazing veteran drivers here in the series. I would love to know out of the rookies who has impressed you the most? What do you think they're going to struggle with the most in terms of the Indy 500?**

TONY KANAAN: Man, we have such a good rookie class this year. I think they all have different characteristics, so it's hard for me to say I'll pick one. But I would say if I had to pick one, as you asked, I would pick Rinus right now. I know the equipment that he has, and he was the only one able to put that car in the Fast Nine. I'm really impressed with him. I think he's very aggressive, very fast.

Then you go to Palou, which never has been on an oval before, and has been very competitive, as well. Then you go to Dalton, a guy that is in a small team like ours, has been really calm. They all have their particularities.

I think they're all going to suffer from inexperience. I think they are all going to really, during the race, not think it's a big deal until it's 30 laps to go, that that race changes completely. But I think they're capable of hanging in there.

Sometimes the unknown is actually better, you don't know what to expect. I think they will definitely be in contention, but they're going to feel a different dynamic in the race towards the end if they're up there.

THE MODERATOR: Our last question will come from Asher.

**Q. Since you and Charlie on A.J. Foyt Racing are both veterans in the INDYCAR Series, do you think things look good for the A.J. Foyt Racing team this season?**

TONY KANAAN: Hey, Buddy.

Yeah, you know, we are a small team. We worked really hard in the off-season. We lost a sponsor. I would say if you look at the races that we've done so far, the team actually improved quite a bit. Charlie has been very competitive at the road courses. I've run in the top 10 every oval I did.

We're really hopeful that this year will be a better year for us, so that will help us to continue with the program for the years to come.

Charlie and I are really good friends. Charlie is a good teammate. I know Charlie for a long time. We work really well together. Hopefully we'll have a really good result at the 500 because that's the race that really matters. Then we can go through this pandemic and you can come interview me live again like we did in the past. When I win the next 500, we'll drink some milk together.

THE MODERATOR: Tony, that's all the questions we have for you. Appreciate your time. Wish you the best of luck this Sunday in the Indy 500.

TONY KANAAN: Thanks, guys. Appreciate the time. Stay safe. We miss you all at the track definitely. It's been pretty weird. Some people think you guys are a pain sometimes. Actually, I miss you guys. All the best.

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