

NTT IndyCar Series News Conference

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Mike Shank

Meyer Shank Racing

Jack Harvey

Meyer Shank Racing

Press Conference

THE MODERATOR: We have the co-owners of Meyer Shank Racing, Michael Shank, and the driver of the No. 60 Sirius XM AutoNation car, Jack Harvey.

Mike, we just had Bob and Graham with us, two guys from the Columbus area. You yourself are from the Columbus area. How important would it be for Meyer Shank Racing to get a win this weekend at Mid-Ohio?

MIKE SHANK: It's the top line priority, right? We've had what we feel is a pretty decent year this year, but we haven't been able to finish like we think we deserve. Mid-Ohio would be my premium place to do it. It's where I grew up.

I can literally remember 1980 with my dad watching Johnny Rutherford run, I think they called it the Yellow Submarine Chaparral around the track and win the race. That's my first memory of the of Mid-Ohio INDYCAR race.

From the first day I ever was around a race car, INDYCAR at Mid-Ohio is what I strive for. It took a long time to get there. Super grateful to Jack. Obviously Jack and I worked on this for three or four years now. A lot of people that supported he and I, I think he would agree, to get us to this opportunity where we think we can actually put a podium effort together, which is where we're at today.

It's a great story. I'm just super proud to be a part of it.

THE MODERATOR: Jack, I know you've run well at road courses this year, you just don't have the results to show how well you've run at the races. How important is it for you to get a good finish at a road course, especially Mike's home track?

JACK HARVEY: As Michael said, a few races at the start of the year you look at, if we could choose to have a good

result at them, what they would be. Actually Mid-Ohio is always the top of the list, especially when it's the home race for the team.

As you mentioned, it's a track I have run pretty well at in the past. We had a good race last year. Although we haven't had every great result I feel like we have speed to go and get, there's a real positive and encouraging atmosphere within the team at the moment to keep trying till we get it. I think that's all we can keep doing, is putting ourselves in a good position to try and have a great race.

Even at the end of the race in Texas I thought we looked pretty good. There's nowhere we've been this year where we really have struggled, lacked pace. Naturally you're optimistic this will be the weekend we really get the result that the potential has been.

THE MODERATOR: With five races in a row since the last road course race at Road America, does it feel like it was almost like last season that you were on a road course?

JACK HARVEY: No, mate, no. My whole bread and butter is road course racing. Might feel some of that way on the ovals. On the whole, I was really happy with that stretch of races there Indy, Iowa, even Gateway where we qualified, where we raced. The potential of all that was great.

That being said, I do love the road courses. I love Mid-Ohio. It's where I got my first win. I was in Michael's home race. I think honestly, I only speak for myself, certainly it feels like a high positivity around the team. Just want to get on track again, mate, really. This year has been super busy when we've been on track. I like it, I like the format of the weekends.

THE MODERATOR: Mike, talk a little bit about the evolution of your team. You started off as an Indy 500 entry, worked your way up to full-time. You have goals now as a full-time team.

MIKE SHANK: Yeah, I think our story really is built around very pointed moments in time, very deliberate plan to make sure we don't fail. What I mean by that, it's just that we did what we were capable of doing every year financially. That's ultimately what it means.

In 2017 we did one race with Jack. 2018 we did six. 2019

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10. Now we're doing the full season for this season and next season. I think ours has been very calculated. I think we've been very smart about how we have chosen technical partnerships instead of trying to go out on our own and prove ourselves it is independent of everybody else. I think that's worked really well for us.

This year more than any, the Andretti partnership has been really good for us. We operate pretty much as an independent team except we get the benefit of four, five, six other cars' data, information, input, strategy thoughts. It's just this enormous amount of information that I believe Andretti do a good job of disseminating, getting out to all of us, to make us all competitive.

Andretti I know doesn't have great results this year, but I can tell you they do a hell of a job of preparation. I'm happy with it.

THE MODERATOR: Do you think it's fair that people call you the sixth Andretti car? Kind of discredits the work your employees are doing in your shop.

MIKE SHANK: I've not been asked that before. Do I think it's a discredit? No, I don't feel like it's a negative comment, to be honest. I just feel lucky to be here, first off. No, I don't.

We really run the thing as an independent unit. All the people, equipment, every little thing from a per diem every day to hotels at night, it's all on MSR. I don't know how that's a negative thing. I mean Michael and J.F. and Rob Edwards just do a hell of a job. They look after us. Even though they're having tough years, their tough years haven't reached us really.

Listen, we haven't reached all of our goals yet this year, but we've had more speed than we've ever had. They own some of that credit.

THE MODERATOR: We'll open it up for questions.

Q. Jack, what is kind of the key from the end of the race on Saturday until you strap back in at 1 p.m. on Sunday of rejuvenating? What will be your strategy?

JACK HARVEY: It's going to be pretty simple, mate. It's going to be hydrate, replenish, stretch, go again.

In that regard, I do think Mid-Ohio is a pretty physical circuit. There's no doubt about it. Especially the way the strategy has played out there recently, it doesn't seem too much of a fuel saving race. At least that's what the last few years have played out to be. Actually, when it's so intense, you feel it. That being said, we've had that plenty of times

this year. I feel like everybody is ready for that now.

Not looking for any magic anything, just going to finish the race, going to hydrate well, get good food onboard again, going to try and sleep. I'll probably stretch. Honestly, no matter how good we do on Saturday, we're going to want to go and replicate or do better on Sunday.

In that regard, if this was the first time we were doing a doubleheader on a weekend, you might be a little bit nervous. I feel like everybody is pretty prepped and ready for this now.

Q. You feel like you're extremely competitive going into this weekend from the standpoint of you could be among the favorites? Do you feel that way?

JACK HARVEY: I mean, naturally I would hope so. One of the favorites? I guess one of the favorites to do what? As a team this year, I think we've shown that we can be consistently in the top 10. We've shown we can qualify at the front.

As a team, we still feel like there's a lot of -- perhaps not a lot, but some low-hanging fruit for us to go and do the best we can. I certainly don't feel like we need to go with any expectation other than we just need to execute the best weekend we can do. I feel like if we do that, yeah, I do feel like we can achieve podiums and race at Mid-Ohio for top fives, podiums.

Frankly, if you're in that battle, a win is only the right call going your way. Like I said to the guys, we've had a ton of speed this year. I can promise you there's no complacency in this team. We haven't gone to any track expecting to be fast. I think we've worked really hard. I think we deserve the speed that we've had and think we deserve because we've worked really hard. We're going to keep working hard till we get the end result.

Go as a favorite if it makes us feel good, that's fine. All I want the guys to do is worry about what they have to do, execute to the best of their ability. This is a fantastic group of guys with extremely high potential.

Q. Mike, what is the secret for the turnaround from a crew standpoint? Will that be a late night for you guys?

MIKE SHANK: The plan is that we did all that preparation work this week. We just loaded up about 10 minutes ago here actually. The key is the stuff that we've done here this week.

That means anything that needs replaced is already built



and ready to go, just directly on the car. They close the garage Saturday night at 10:00, so I think you'll see a lot of lights burning late till 10 just because we have to.

What we've tried to focus on is organization. What can we expect? What's the worst case? Are we prepared for that? Yeah, we are, and here is where these parts are, we can go right to it if we have to.

We're going up to Mid-Ohio with two and a half cars in the trailers. We're hoping we don't use but one of them. In a perfect world, the guys are out of there by 9. In a complicated world they're out of there by 10.

Q. Mike, what have you learnt this season that you can take forward into next year? You have your other business interests, but in terms of INDYCAR, what can you bring forward to next year?

MIKE SHANK: The one thing I've done, I always looked at it as a good series, a tough series, but this series I underestimated how ridiculously at today's age competitive it is. I have never been a part of something that tiny little mistakes magnify themselves three times. Jack loses two or three positions for something he had zero to do with, right?

When you see it, a great example St. Louis last week, I told these guys, every 3/10ths of one second, there's a car on the track at St. Louis. Every little mistake, Jack, the team, whatever, just keeps moving us back in the queue. I've never been part of something that's so tough.

I'll take that one step further. What's particularly tough is the strategy part of it. It used to be that Penske had great cars, shocks, they always had a car that could drive away from people. That's just not the case any more, it's just not. They still have good cars.

The strategy is what started to turn the races into something positive or negative. I think probably we undershot on what it took to make sure we stayed competitive in that. We're fixing that, right? I don't think it's a matter of not having the right person or anything. I think it's a matter of preparing more than I thought we'd have to.

I'm telling you, there's no other championship in the world, as far as I'm concerned, if there's 24 cars running, 22 could legitimately win with the right strategy. It just makes it so stressful.

Q. In terms of your expectations for this weekend, do you have any kind of high expectations, it being a home race?

MIKE SHANK: If the car is balanced for the track, we're fully capable of being in the top five. If we give him the right decisions on the track, we can be there. We've got the speed. We got all the bits. There's nothing I can buy. We're not missing anything, right? It's a combination of a couple good decisions, not panicking if it doesn't go our way.

By the way, if you're looking at the weather right now, we might have some challenges with the weather on Saturday. Trying to be ready for that also. There's variables we haven't been used to with rain. Straight up, we can be in the top five.

Q. Given the chaos of the kind of year that has been presented, having the two race weekends has allowed people to be fully engaged in INDYCAR that maybe wouldn't be there if we didn't have the two races. As a team, Michael Shank Racing has really built up a nice brand. What is it going to take to get the best attention ever by getting on the podium?

JACK HARVEY: I think we have all the pieces of the puzzle we're looking for. We have them all now. They're hovering and floating around. A lot of weekends this year we've been able to slap them on the table pretty well. That's the question we've asked ourselves a lot I would say in the last week, just to try and identify what we could do better, try to find a solution, obviously try to implement it at Mid-Ohio.

I don't think there's anything radical that needs to change. I don't think we need to (indiscernible) the approach or anything like that. I think it's just about making a few subtle but probably very impactful changes both in what I can do for the team, then what hopefully the team can help me do.

I can tell you that as a team we are all extremely open on what we need to improve on. It's never a finger point, me calling Michael going, Hey, you guys have to do a much better job, nothing like that. Nor has there ever been anything like that. It's very collective in the sense that we all go to the track with the same goal, the same agenda, and we are going to keep working as hard as we can until we do that. I feel like we are extremely close to making that happen.

We've had a lot of bad luck this year. That's okay. It ebbs and flows. We just need to keep doing what we're doing, a few small changes.

Q. A lot has been made about the new crop of rookies this year. The spotlight gets on them with additional chaos. How has it been working on the track and seeing how they match up there on the track? Has

that changed in the way you approach what's going on?

JACK HARVEY: No, not really, mate. This year one of the nice things we all have had, me as much as anybody else, I'm not worried about what any other team or driver is doing. I remember just at Indy, we had past champions, world champions, starting behind us. People were like, How do you feel about that? I was like, I'm not worried about it because the direction we're going is forward. We don't want to drive looking in our mirrors. We're not worrying about what other people are doing.

If we see someone doing something really good, it naturally becomes a talking point, look and see if it's something that benefits our program. I think the rookies have been doing really well. Some of these tracks that we've been to this year I'm a rookie at. We've done a bunch of races in INDYCAR now, still a lot of new tracks for me.

I feel like this year more than ever as a team we worry about what we are doing. I think the potential of what we're doing is really high that we don't have to look at anybody else and think that we should try this, do that. If it's really good, naturally we want to be better, so we talk about it. I don't feel like there's been any worry or admiration other than respect really to other people. I feel like we're all pretty content with where we're headed and what we're doing.

Q. Michael, you say given the two race weekend, there may be some weather on Saturday. As an owner, how does that have you prepare to try to take advantage of those strategies you were talking about?

MIKE SHANK: We just try to talk about it, like we have all day today actually. The race engineer is here in the office today with the assistants. We go over from a chassis standpoint, setup standpoint, what we want to do. We want to look and talk about strategies involving downforce, how that changes our fuel windows, that kind of thing. The race is 15 laps shorter this year, which changes it anyway.

Rain could push it to make it real interesting, or a mix of rain. That's where an INDYCAR race is going to become really interesting, if we have brackish conditions and have to go between them in making those calls. That gets really tough. We call it a crossover. When does a track get dry enough to put slicks on? When can Jack stand it? Whoever gets on first is going to win or come close, right? It becomes very interactive on the radio. It's probably a great time to scan radios during that crossover period.

By the way, I tuned in here when Bobby was talking about

he didn't care for the double race weekends. I feel opposite of that. Probably completely opposite of that. I like them for the fans a lot. I like them for the fact that it puts us in front of people more during the whole course of a weekend on TV, social channels. I like the efficiency that we run at.

But he's right in one respect: everyone has to work a little harder. I think it's our new world we're in right now. I believe you're going to see a lot more of that going forward. I'm for it. I don't have any problem with it at all.

Q. Michael, are you at this moment thinking about expansion of your INDYCAR operation at all?

MIKE SHANK: Yes.

Q. Are you just focusing on getting better with the current operation with the current economic environment?

MIKE SHANK: We are thinking about a small expansion, only if it's the right timing, yes.

We're a team that eventually will be a two-car team. I don't know when that will be, but I can guarantee you this, it won't be until we're ready. I made that promise to Jack a long time ago, to Jim Meyer, my wife, that are part of this ownership group. Someday, too, whenever that someday can be, it will be when everything aligns.

If it happens at any time, we thought through all the pros and cons, ultimately does it help Jack, does it benefit the 60 car at all.

Q. What would make you feel that you're ready to take the next step?

MIKE SHANK: The easy low-hanging fruit answer is money, to have the proper funding. The more complicated one is who can we bring in to add to the program overall, whether it's the team and engineering or with Jack as driving. Who do we think is going to add to this group, with our set of personalities, the people we have here, which are very handpicked.

Everyone says that, but I promise you I've spent 26 years building a business relying on people. I've got many people that have worked for me for 20 years, and Jack knows a lot of them.

If we can afford it, yes. What does it do to the whole program, help or hurt. Does it give a greater potential for the whole group. Does the tide rise.



THE MODERATOR: That is all the questions we have.

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