

NTT IndyCar Series News Conference

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Indianapolis, Indiana, USA



Mark Miles

Josef Newgarden

Mayor John Cooper

Butch Spyridon

Burke Nihill

Matt Crews

Press Conference

THE MODERATOR: Welcome, everyone. Thank you for coming on this exciting day for the inaugural Music City Grand Prix.

This is a very exciting day for Nashville and we are pleased to have a panel of organizers and supporters here today.

Seated starting on my left is Mayor John Cooper. Burke Nihill, president and CEO of the Tennessee Titans. Mark Miles, CEO of INDYCAR. Matt Crews, CEO of Music City Grand Prix. Josef Newgarden, Nashville resident, Team Penske INDYCAR Series driver, 2017 and 2019 champion. Butch Spyridon, president and CEO of the Nashville Convention and Visitors Corporation.

We'd like to acknowledge Roger Penske, chairman of INDYCAR, and Christian Parker, president of Music City Grand Prix, Jason Rittenberry, chief operating officer of Music City Grand Prix.

You may have read or reported on recently the excitement surrounding the potential for an INDYCAR race right here in Nashville. Today we are pleased to officially announce the Music City Grand Prix is coming to Nashville in a multi-year agreement.

Nashville will come alive with racing August 6th through 8th of 2021 as INDYCAR comes to town for the inaugural Music City Grand Prix. The streets of downtown will come alive with the sound music, food...

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THE MODERATOR: There has been and will continue to be a lot of time, planning and resources to host this. The Music City Grand Prix team is honored to have the support of the community behind it.

Welcome to Mayor Cooper who we welcome to say a few words on behalf of the city of Nashville.

MAYOR COOPER: Good morning, everybody. I am so proud to be here. INDYCAR racing is going to be another jewel in our crown. I want to thank Mark Miles and Matt Crews and Burke Nihill and Butch and Josef Newgarden, the reigning INDYCAR Series champion. I'd also like to thank Roger Penske, chairman of INDYCAR, Bud Denker, president of Penske Corp.

I'm here to thank you. This is years of hard work to make this possible. This is years of hard work to help make our city even better.

Now, we're known for world class sports and entertainment. Over the years we've hosted record-breaking crowds of fans, spectators from all over the globe as we become an international destination.

We had 200,000 fans at the 2017 Stanley Cup, we had 600,000 fans at the NFL Draft. Nashville has the energy, hospitality and infrastructure to bring world class racing to the streets of Nashville.

This three-day festival is an important private investment in our city, will serve as a catalyst for our economic recovery as a privately funded event. Music City Grand Prix will cover its own police, fire and public works costs. All costs are covered. This is 100% net positive benefit for the people of Nashville, Tennessee.

I want to thank the organizers for their hard work and skill in putting that kind of fabulous opportunity for our city before us.

The Grand Prix marks a huge step forward for our community as we look to the future. It's not just next year, but this needs to be a permanent part of our city going forward.



The three-day racing festival is going to be another international moment for our city, Nashville, and it's the latest addition to our portfolio of best-in-class tourism events that can benefit and be completely additive to all the citizens that live here today.

On behalf of Davidson County, I want to welcome INDYCAR and the Music City Grand Prix to Nashville.

THE MODERATOR: Next we welcome Tennessee Titans CEO and president Burke Nihill, who is here today on behalf of both the Titans and Nissan Stadium.

Please share with us the impact that Music City Grand Prix brings to the Nissan Stadium campus.

BURKE NIHILL: We're very proud to be hosting this event. We see Nissan Stadium as a world class sports and entertainment venue. We believe there's a next level. We're going to be working very hard to achieve that next level over the next decade or so. Music City Grand Prix is pitch perfect for what we're trying to do in activating the stadium to make Nissan Stadium a cultural and entertainment hub for Nashville.

We've had world class sporting events, concerts for years, but we've never had anything quite like the Music City Grand Prix. We're excited to watch the parking lots and the rest of the campus be activated with the festival-like atmosphere, give fans an opportunity to get up close to the cars, the racers. We're excited to be a big part of this.

THE MODERATOR: We are honored to have the Tennessee Titans and Nissan Stadium play host to this annual event.

The Music City Grand Prix will be a three-day event packed with food, music and entertainment. At the core of that will be an urban street course that whips around the streets of Nashville.

I welcome INDYCAR CEO Mark Miles to speak on behalf of INDYCAR and how the Music City Grand Prix fits into the NTT INDYCAR Series and why Nashville is a strong addition to the circuit.

MARK MILES: Thank you all for being here. Let me quickly start by thanking everybody up here with me. Mayor, we haven't actually met, but I've known by the week and the month over the years now, especially more recently, about your support and your leadership. I'm sure this would not have happened without that being the case.

Burke, we've gotten together a few times now. To have the Titans as the host, have access to your phenomenal

facilities, looking out here at one of the most exciting cities in America is part of the reason we're here.

Matt and Chris, we appreciate your patience and tenacity and leadership. We certainly wouldn't be here without your work.

Josef Newgarden is our champion. He can speak for himself, but the fact that he happens to be from Nashville is just too much, right? How does that happen? He's not going anywhere any time soon, I'm sure.

Butch is just Butch, right? I'm sure he has a last name, but everybody in Nashville calls him Butch. It is so clear how important the CVC's leadership and underpinning is to the success of this event and getting us here today.

I also want to thank Stephen Starks, he's an executive at INDYCAR, been after this for a very long time, wouldn't give up on it. We appreciate your hard work.

I would just say we couldn't be more excited about being here. I think it's a perfect fit. INDYCAR is young, it's fast, it's exciting. We kind of cut our teeth, part of our DNA is ovals, now street races is a big part of what we do. They provide great branding, exposure, international exposure for the cities where we have street races.

They turn into much more than races. They will be a festival. The fact that it's downtown essentially in one of the most exciting cities in the world where food and music, whatever else these creative folks dream up, can be added to a sensational sporting event, an INDYCAR street race.

The mayor is right, this is going to be on your calendar for many, many, many years, I hope generations to come. We look forward to being here this coming August.

THE MODERATOR: Josef Newgarden, a Nashville resident, current driver on Team Penske, the 2017 and 2019 INDYCAR Series champion.

Josef, how exciting is it to have INDYCAR racing right here in your hometown?

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: I can speak for all the INDYCAR drivers and tell you this is going to be the No. 1 destination outside of the Indy 500 next year. We always mark the Indy 500 as a key point for us. Every driver that I've spoke to that's heard about Nashville, they want to come to this event and succeed.

For me it's going to be probably the second most pressure-filled event to get right. How do we win this race with Team Penske next year? I'm so excited, proud to be

from Nashville. It's a good coincidence, I guess. I never dreamed of being able to drive for Roger Penske one day in the INDYCAR Series. Certainly to run a race in my own hometown with a great team behind me like this. It's going to be a big year to come to Nashville in 2021.

THE MODERATOR: Since you know Nashville and INDYCAR so well, tell us why Nashville will be so embracing of the INDYCAR fans and the personalities.

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: As everyone in this room knows, I'm sure Butch will speak at length to this, Nashville is an event town, okay? It doesn't matter what event it is. We're showing up and we're ready to party.

When you think about INDYCAR racing, certainly on a street circuit, it is an event that you don't want to miss. I think people in Nashville will see something they've never seen before, which is a really unique opportunity for not only the fans here in town but anyone else visiting Nashville as a destination.

Yeah, it's an event town. People will support it like nothing else I think you've ever seen in any other city. You have the best backdrop, the best place in the world right now to bring people together for a festival. I think we'll absolutely shine as a series to provide that.

Yeah, I'm looking forward to it. I always love the street course events we get to run at. They're very exciting, pressure filled. One other element to a street course race that you don't get at other racetracks is that you get such close access to teams and to the cars.

INDYCAR racing is a very visceral experience. You want to feel the power and energy of what an INDYCAR is all about. With a street circuit you get a great opportunity for that. People will have an immense feel for what racing in INDYCAR is all about, a great experience here I think.

THE MODERATOR: Butch Spyridon, as the CEO of the Nashville Convention and Visitors Corporation, Butch and his team have been an integral part of bringing some of the most exciting sporting events and festivals to Nashville. Butch knows how to market Nashville.

Tell us why this event is important for Nashville and maybe more specifically to our international tourism efforts.

BUTCH SPYRIDON: I'm not sure I can thank Mark and Josef what said about Nashville. So thank you, guys, for those kind words.

I think first of all, just being here today, I think I would have come for a go-kart race announcement. But to have

something of this caliber and this good in our current environment is particularly special. Thank you for your confidence in us there.

It's also exciting to be part of something new, I would say. Everything we have done in working with the sports council, Scott Ramsey, the Titans, the things we have done at least in my opinion, everything we do is to get ready for the next bigger opportunity. So I think this is part of that next step. We're looking forward to that.

I can also say that August is a pretty important need month for us. We love the date of the race. Please don't change that. We love that it's a three-year commitment so we have the opportunity to truly build this into the best INDYCAR race in the world. That's our goal.

We want to be a festival. We want to entertain. But we want people walking away going, I'm coming back next year and I'm bringing my friends.

I want to thank Matt, Chris and Jason for their work. They have worked tirelessly. They've done it right. I can say this is my fourth iteration of chasing an INDYCAR race. None of the other three felt right. There was always something. We wanted it. We tried, but it never worked out. I would say now it didn't work out for the right reasons.

Now we're here for all the right reasons. That leads me to thanking Mark, Roger Penske and Josef. Thank you, guys. Thank you particularly for making Nashville a racing town now. We needed the credibility, street cred if you will. Roger and Mark, your commitment to us, confidence and support is invaluable. You put the Good Housekeeping Seal of Approval on this race. You put that same stamp on Nashville. So thank you.

Last thing I'd say, as we're looking forward, August of '21 really becomes an important date in recovery from COVID-19. Hopefully we'll be doing more before then. But next August this becomes particularly important and personal for me and our organization and our industry. A new televised truly international fan event is a perfect cure for COVID-19.

THE MODERATOR: Finally Matt Crews, CEO of the Music City Grand Prix.

Matt, did you ever think this day would come?

MATT CREWS: Actually, no. It has been a journey. I want to thank so many people who have worked tirelessly to get us to this point today. I'll spend the next week calling and thanking people because there's no way. We would go through hours if we had to do it here.



Incredibly excited to be working with the organizations we're working with to partner to pull this event off. Titans, city of Nashville, Butch and his group, INDYCAR, countless other local and state-wide agencies to make this happen.

I'm extremely proud of the team we put together. I'm extremely proud of the ownership group that has come together over the last two years to support this group. It puts us in a position to be everything we can be, that we did make this the event that it can be because of their support. Just the VIPs we have from a management point of view, it's really special.

Butch says all the time that Nashville throws a great party. We are so fortunate to come in behind that. Nashville is always going to provide great music, the food scene has gotten better. To be able now to layer in the best drivers in the world, the best teams in the world, we can truly create something that moves the event needle in this town and state for the next 30 years.

Anybody that knows me can tell I'm extremely proud Nashville-ian. I love my city. In 326 days now we get to show my city to the world. That's really important to us as an organization. Working with INDYCAR's 27 broadcast partners in 160 countries, this becomes the first opportunity for us to really prove on a worldwide scale what we all know in Nashville what the city has become. I never thought we would get to that day.

I would be remiss if I didn't stop and thank Bob Flynn. Bob, with the Tennessee Titans, at least three or four occasions we have sat and toasted the death of the Music City Grand Prix. Thankfully he or I never quit. A lot of other people as well. The number of times we sat and commiserated about it. It's pretty special. Want to make sure we recognize that today.

I actually wrote something down in my book about three weeks ago. We were fortunate enough to have Mr. Penske and his team tour Nashville. I heard something I never thought I would hear in my life. I can't find it, but I can remember it.

We toured Nashville. Mr. Penske wanted to see the track, the city. We had meetings planned over at Nissan Stadium. We planned about two hours to go through the plan, the site plan, the budget.

About 10 minutes into that meeting, Mr. Penske pushed back from that meeting and said he'd seen enough, it was time to go racing. Mark, you came in pretty quick and said, When he says it's time to go racing, it's time we go racing.

With that, I guess it's time for us to go racing.

THE MODERATOR: I do want to open the floor for questions.

Q. Mayor Cooper, you said this is going to be self-funded, complete private investment. Going to be a lot of police activity, firefighters required to be on scene as well. This will be fully funded and paid for by Music City Grand Prix?

MAYOR COOPER: Yes. Let me just again thank everybody. It's something that people have worked so hard to make possible for Nashville. I want to thank Matt and Mr. Penske, his organization.

This is going to be an event that covers its own costs. But by generating the crowds and excitement and energy for Nashville, everybody else is going to be able to benefit from that, too.

Q. When you say some costs, roundabout figure perhaps?

MAYOR COOPER: Let me defer that question over to Matt, the specifics. When I say I am here to thank people, I'm here to thank people for years of hard work in putting together the successful business plan that allowed us this to happen and our city to flourish.

Q. You see it more than a race car event, but more as kind of like the CMA event?

MAYOR COOPER: Agree. I think Butch highlighted it brilliantly. It's a festival that can really enrich our city, be an international destination, to be a platform for a lot of other exciting things to happen.

Again, I'm grateful for the business acumen and the long-term efforts to make this possible to be just a complete win for Nashville.

Q. How much street closure will we see downtown as a result of the festival?

MAYOR COOPER: I think the plan is evolving. Obviously people are going to have plenty of notice. In the end not that much. I think it's the Titans willingness to be the primary sponsor that makes so much of this possible. It's really on this side of the river, on the Titans property itself where they are that allows this to happen with a minimum of disruption.

At the same time the CMA festival brings some disruption, too, to be sure. It's kind of a profile for our city as we get



on the other side of COVID that we're going to be the greatest city in America in the 21st century. This is one of the ways we're going to do it, to show the excitement and energy once we get on the other side of the virus to not only get life back to normal but better than it was before.

MATT CREWS: We've worked extremely hard with the site plans to interrupt traffic as little as possible. A lot of the surface work will be done intermittently throughout the year leading up to the event, a lot done at night.

Ultimately around race weekend we will have a about three days of closures. We'll have a very aggressive TV, radio campaign not to just explain the closures but alternate routes. Ultimately we look at it less traffic impact than a particular sporting event because we think a majority of our attendees will be walking to the venue.

We'll be far ahead as far as the messaging campaign. We've been working with metro police on that. You really understand once you work with metro police, fire, special events why events are successful in this town because that's what they do. They do a phenomenal job of heading off problems long before they happen.

Q. Can we talk about the course, how unique it is?

MATT CREWS: I'm probably the least qualified.

From a fan point of view, again, we've always kind of said jokingly that if half the people leave here and never see a car, have a great time, we've done our job.

The road course is phenomenal. Tony Cotman, who is somewhere here today, he spent two to three years working on this design. We were finally able to get use of the bridge so it turned this from a racetrack to more of an epic event. We've put a lot of thought into fan opportunities, fan zones. We've studied the sun path for those particular dates to make sure we're building as much in the shaded areas.

The infrastructure of Nissan Stadium is unique in that we're able to use the eastside clubs, a typical event like ours wouldn't be able to use. It's such an unbelievable home-field advantage with what Nissan Stadium provides the fan experience.

From a track point of view, the early response we've gotten from drivers is phenomenal. It has everything. Very technical, high speed. From a fan point of view, it's got all that. The ability to race over water is something the best we can determine has never been done to this scale and degree.

Again, as much of anything, to show off our city. We said from day one, if this is going to be the first glimpse of somebody to see Nashville, we want to show them our best side. To race over the Korean Veterans Bridge, with color and the background lights, really special.

Q. In a relatively short period of time, you've gone from Music City USA to Motorsports USA, the addition of the NASCAR banquet, NASCAR race, now INDYCAR. If you could discuss how rapidly the city has gotten back into the motorsports industry.

MAYOR COOPER: One of the things people don't understand here in Tennessee, but people outside of Tennessee don't understand, is what a presence our automotive industry is in this state. It's really probably the biggest single employer in the state. It's growing. We have the headquarters of Nissan here. We are a car capital. We don't recognize that we're a global car capital, but we are.

The Council of Mexico met me a few days ago talking about getting international flights to the cities in Mexico that have a lot of production that's being managed by Tennessee.

So having a recognition of how important the industry is and how important the racing is, which is part of the industry, it's completely natural for us to be here.

(Indiscernible) Detroit has a Grand Prix experience. Part of our celebration, being on the world stage, in an industry that people don't necessarily associate with us.

Q. Josef, speaking of epic events, the daunting aspect of racing over a bridge, how do you look at that? It's got to be a little bit of a thrill ride for you.

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: Yeah, I would say so. It's going to be very exciting. I've never seen a street course laid out like the one we have here. I think the uniqueness of the challenge is very present.

To Matt's point, what I have in my head when I see the layout of the track, it's going to be a pretty shot of the city when you see the cars going over the bridge. It's not going to be just really fun to drive, but showcase the town of Nashville probably the best way possible. It is probably the best viewpoint you can get of the beautiful city.

I'm excited. It does look challenging. I've always welcomed new racetracks because it's a brand-new challenge for everybody, an opportunity for the drivers to try to figure it out first. That first year is going to be very special. Whoever figures out this track the quickest, wins



the first event, I think they're going to be really happy about that because that's always a goal when there's a new event on the calendar.

Q. Mark, does that grow the 2021 schedule to an 18-event schedule? The last couple years it's been 17. I'm sure a lot of things, because of 2020, things are up in the air. Is the intent to make this an 18-race schedule?

MARK MILES: We are two, three, four weeks away from releasing next year's schedule. All I would say at this point is beyond the fact that we're delighted to be able to add Nashville, it is going to look a lot like what you expect from the INDYCAR schedule, a lot like what it looked like before.

Q. Mark, how beneficial is it to INDYCAR to be heading to Nashville given that it's such a popular city in the U.S.?

MARK MILES: As I said earlier, we're thrilled. Nashville to me, if cities have a brand, Nashville's brand is just in a meteoric rise. We see cranes everywhere. I feel like I'm in Shanghai. It's also young and exciting. We know that this is a city that turns on.

What y'all did for the NFL Draft sent a message around the sports world, especially in this country. We just have complete faith that this is going to be the kind of success where the two brands marry up, young people get involved, have a great time. It's going to be here for a long time.

I come from a city that had its 104th race at the same time, same place. That's what you want, you want it to be in the same time of year with date equity, the city doesn't know the date on the calendar, they just know INDYCAR is here, it's the Grand Prix week.

I was here as a tourist, visitor, for a college bowl game a couple of bowls ago. We stayed on the other side of the river and we walked with the governor of the state of Indiana to your stadium. As far as I'm concerned this is downtown. It's so seamless, yet gives us and you the advantage of being right in the entertainment district but with a minimum amount of disruption that would come if we had to be on the other side of the river.

Between the logistics, this track, which I believe will have lots of passing, will be esthetically amazing, but also competitively dynamic and exciting, all the people that are here, we're sure this is going to be around for a very long time.

Q. Mark, can you say anything at this point whether the Road to Indy will run here as well?

MARK MILES: Not definitively. I wouldn't be a bit surprised if that's the way it works out. We haven't really gotten to that yet.

Q. Mark, looking at next year's schedule, 13 of 18 races presumably are going to be on street, road courses. Is there a concern maybe the balance between ovals is skewing in one direction, that you need more ovals to balance out the schedule a little bit?

MARK MILES: I've always thought about it is that we want balance. I actually sort of think about it from the point of view of ovals, temporary street circuits and road courses. We've had for years about a third, a third, a third. There's not a quota. It doesn't need to be precise. We just want to represent our racing in all three genres.

I'm sure you're going to still see a good balance next year.

Q. We've seen street or road course races come in with great expectations, a lot of hype, whether it's Baltimore, New Orleans, Houston. What is it about this race, this event, that is different from those, that this is going to give it staying power so it's a mainstay on the schedule?

MARK MILES: We talked about some of what I will say. Date is critical. I think it was already said that this date in early August is a great opportunity for Nashville. I think it works really well on our calendar.

You mentioned Baltimore as an example. I was involved in that. We'd love to be in Baltimore. We were kind of racing around the environment of both a Major League Baseball and NFL stadium. We knew in the date that we had, we couldn't have date equity. We wouldn't have consistency.

So to work with the Titans, the folks in Nashville to get a date that does not complicate the NFL schedule or our schedule didn't have to work around an NFL schedule I think was one of the reasons that this took years to put together.

The other things we've talked about, we couldn't be more impressed from the city and the administration, we met with the governor, everybody is stitched together. This is a place that knows how to come together and put on a great event, whether it's in the music industry or sports. We've seen that.

We've got a great group of investors, a couple of whom are here. I won't name you all, but we can't tell you how grateful we are that you stepped up to help make this

 . . . when all is said, we're done.®

possible. We got a great track.

I just see no reason that this won't be a sensational addition to the series.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you all for coming today or tuning in wherever you are. We are celebrating today with this formal announcement. We look forward to sharing additional details on other partnerships, music, entertainment, food and more as we continue to work toward the event August 6th of 2021.

For more information visit musiccityGP.com, or @musiccityGP on Twitter, Facebook and Instagram.

That concludes today's press conference.

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