

NTT IndyCar Series News Conference

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Michael Shank

Jim Meyer

Helio Castroneves

Meyer Shank Racing Press Conference



HELIO CASTRONEVES: Yeah, that's right.

MICHAEL SHANK: 2007 in Daytona Prototype. We started to know each other then, and through a lot of common friends we stayed friends over all the long years.

I think there's so many reasons why Helio is the right guy for us, but I will lead with the passion. There's two things I want to say because this will be a question. I think the passion Helio has is as strong as any 20-year-old out there right now. I think the knowledge he has is times four of anybody out there. And I have to be honest with you, we have metrics that we look at from all the drivers that Bob Perona, our driver coach, has put together, and when we look at Helio's numbers from 2016 and 2017, he's in the top four of all categories when the switch happened over at Team Penske for him.

Of course we're not part of that at all, but what I'm saying is we saw a guy that was still driving at a level that can compete with anybody.

Lastly, what can Helio bring to help Jack Harvey, and we've built our program around Jack, and we're ready to expand it now, and we believe and we hope that Helio is the right guy for us.

THE MODERATOR: Tremendous announcement. Congratulations to all three. We'll start with Jim. It's kind of been a systematic growth for this team. What kind of a step is this for you guys, Jim?

JIM MEYER: Really it's exactly what we planned, and seldom do things go as you plan, but when I first met Mike, it's pretty funny, I approached him and said, I might have some interest in getting into racing, and he said, well, that's interesting, I don't really need a partner, and I said, yeah, you're right, I don't really want to do this anyway.

Then he and I proceeded to meet together over a three- or four-month period and lay out exactly what we wanted to do in INDYCAR and sports car, and certainly adding a second driver and eventually moving to two full-time cars on the INDYCAR circuit was a key cornerstone of what we laid out almost four years ago, and I couldn't be more thrilled that we're on our way.

THE MODERATOR: Good morning to everyone here. My name is Dave Furst from INDYCAR and the NTT INDYCAR Series. Great to see everyone here this morning. A reminder, through the beauty of Zoom, you'll be able to ask questions this morning and to do so please click the raise hand button in the chat and we'll get to your questions here in just a bit.

Special announcement to begin today and three gentlemen who have come together for a very special partnership. Helio Castroneves is a three-time winner of the Indianapolis 500, a total of 30 wins in the NTT INDYCAR Series and 50 poles, which puts him fourth on the all-time list. Jim Meyer is the CEO of Sirius XM and partner of Meyer Shank Racing, back in April of 2017, doubling down on his passion not only for motorsports but in particular the Indianapolis 500, and of course Mike Shank, who began racing back in 1989, found success as a young driver and as someone who leads an extremely successful sports car program, but then found himself with an opportunity to get into INDYCAR a few years ago and has built on that ever since.

We'll begin with car owner Mike Shank, who has a very special announcement. Good morning, Mike.

MICHAEL SHANK: Good morning. Thank you, everybody, for coming today. Although it's not a huge surprise at this point, although we tried for it to be a surprise, Meyer Shank Racing is really happy to announce that Helio Castroneves will drive for six races next year. We can talk about which six those are shortly.

This was a bit of a long process actually between Jim and I on who did we want to fill this very specialized role, and it had to tick a lot of boxes. Helio drove for me in 2007; is that right?



I have to acknowledge that as you know, I think it was three or four weeks ago we announced that Liberty Media, who I know very well since they're a controlling shareholder of Sirius XM and many, many key assets, I know them very, very well. Obviously as you well know they control Formula 1, as well, approached us about interest in becoming a part of what we were doing, and we were thrilled that we were able to work that out, which actually accelerated our efforts for a second car in the INDYCAR circuit.

THE MODERATOR: Helio, you're back!

HELIO CASTRONEVES: I'm back, man. I'm so, so excited. This is incredible.

As Mike alluded, we've known each other for a long time. Mike and his wife built this team from scratch, and look what they were able to achieve, have an incredible sports car program and an INDYCAR program, as well.

Jim obviously is a person that's passionate about racing. I think him and I are going to get along very well especially because of that ingredient. I'm looking forward to knowing him better.

And having Jack Harvey as a teammate, he's been showing an incredible amount of speed on the racetrack. I guarantee you in 2021 he's going to become an Indy winner, as well.

I'm looking forward to working with this group, looking forward to the races. I know it's only six races; however, one of them is extremely important for me, which is the Indy 500, and I can't wait to be in the race car right now.

THE MODERATOR: Mike, you said you want to get into the races. Maybe let's do that and just talk about how mindful you have been in the expansion over the years, and I guess you wonder if you did it too quickly would you be at this point where you can expand to a second car here for the 2021 season?

MICHAEL SHANK: No, we'd be broke. I mean, let's see, in -- I'm getting confused in years here. In 2019 we had a -- we started with six in '18, went to 10 in '19. There was a point where we did the first six races of 2019 with a scheduled 10, with a budget, but we were ninth or tenth in the championship when kind of that first six races -- we looked at each other and said, hey, do we want to continue. We could go for this and rob Peter to pay Paul, and we all, including Jack, adamantly said, stick to the plan.

It's the same way with Helio here. We're going to do what

we can afford to do at the highest level we can give Helio. We're giving him an incredible car, an incredible team that we've built around him. We'll have technical support through Andretti.

We can talk now a little bit about the races. We're going to start with the Barber Grand Prix. Then we're going to go right to Long Beach, and then we'll go to the Indy 500, and then we'll do the Harvest August race at Indy road course, and then we'll fish with Portland and Laguna.

That covers a lot of bases for us and our sponsors and partners. We will announce partners as we get closer to things. We're still kind of working that exactly out, what will be on the car.

The program has a ton of potential for the future, and Helio and I have an agreement to keep working on it and do the best we can, and we'll see where this thing goes with us in the future.

THE MODERATOR: Very cool. Again, virtually raise your hand and we'll take some questions here in this virtual format.

Q. Two for Helio and one for Mr. Shank. Helio, you and I checked in quite a bit during the month of August following your trevails talking to team owners for next year and all that. When did all this begin, the dialogue with Mike Shank?

HELIO CASTRONEVES: This was quite a while. Mike called me I think it was the first race in Petit, the short one. We spoke about it, and it started growing. He didn't -- for sure wasn't ready yet, and we kept just discussing and talking, and here we are.

It wasn't right away, but Mike and Jim worked really hard for this opportunity to happen, and I'm ecstatic. I'm ecstatic because I thought, okay, it's not going to happen, and all of a sudden when things started growing, I was actually getting more excited about it. Not only myself but Roger Penske is one of the guys that I asked for guidance, and he is the one, as well, that asked me, and here we are.

Q. So you have a part-time role with this team for six races; Ganassi has got an opening for an oval driver in the 48. Are you kind of hoping to get reunited on the track with your Brazilian boyhood buddy Tony Kanaan?

HELIO CASTRONEVES: It would be great. It would be great to be back with everyone, with Tony, with Scott, with my former teammates from Penske, and especially with Jack. As I said, Jack has been showing an incredible



amount of speed, and he's so close so many times. I'm really looking forward to working with him and trying to build this relationship, new group, new group of guys, new group of people, new friends. I'm looking forward to a great season.

Q. For Michael Shank, a couple of years ago I talked to you at Barber and asked you when you were a one-off that year at Indy how you did it, what the budget was, and you said you went and you rented the timing stand and the pit equipment rather than buy it. Now here you are going from basically renting pit equipment to running the Indy 500 to having a motorsports powerhouse. Are you sometimes amazed at how fast this has come together for you?

MICHAEL SHANK: Yeah. Yeah, we really are. You know, I put a lot of this on Jim Meyer, to be honest with you. His passion for INDYCAR racing and his network and his world has really pushed the INDYCAR program kind of over the top. Plus on top of that I've learned a ton on contractual law and how to do deals. He deals with some of the biggest celebrities in the world, and just getting a nugget of that knowledge is really helpful for me I've found.

Listen, I think we'd have the sports car deal that we have today no matter, but make no mistake, this INDYCAR deal is driven by Jim, and I'm lucky enough to get to run the thing.

Q. Two questions for Helio and one for Mike. First off, Helio, congratulations, fantastic news. You're one of the most decorated INDYCAR drivers there is out there, three-time Indy 500 winner, as well. You've been away for a while, so why come back now?

HELIO CASTRONEVES: Well, you know, I have to say, I have to thank obviously Team Penske to put me in the sports car program because I feel that it was a great experience, and I feel much better as a driver today than actually I was three years ago.

But you know, even though I was in the sports car program, INDYCAR has always been part of my life. I enjoy it very much. I love the sport. I grew up in open wheel. Basically as soon as the Acura program was terminated, I said, you know what, let's go back. Let's go back because I feel that I have unfinished business in the INDYCAR world. And here we go.

Having this program, six races, it's a great opportunity to come back and build something unique. Again, Mike and Jim, they are able to build something really spectacular, and I felt this could be a long way, and hopefully that's the goal.

And again, not only that, but it's coming back to the Indy 500, which obviously everybody knows we're really searching for that number four. Couldn't do it anymore with Team Penske; it could be awesome to do it with Mike and Jim and everyone at Shank Racing.

Q. You mentioned goals; what realistically is the goal for the season, given it's a new team and a limited schedule?

HELIO CASTRONEVES: Well, the sky's the limit, you know. We have a great opportunity here. I don't see anything to stop us from having great results and winning races. I feel that you saw Mike mention about it when we spoke, as well, the commitment, not only from him, from his group, as well. Everyone is really excited, and we've got to carry this momentum, and just, you know, translate that to the race cars.

And Jack, as well, he has been there. He has already been with the team. It would be great to have this synergy together so that we can work together so that not only one car but both cars will be up there. Again, it's limited races, yes, but it's a great opportunity, and one that I'm really looking forward to.

Q. Mike, have you spoken with Helio about maybe running the IMSA sports car program with you next season?

MICHAEL SHANK: Yeah, we've talked about a lot of different things. That's not really what this announcement is about, but there's other things going on there for sure.

I think for me, from how much I dreamed about the 500 and the -- just the thought that we could have Helio or be a part of what Helio does to get a fourth just puts me over the moon, and I know it does with Jim, too, and it means a lot. What's that mean? It means I'm throwing everything we can at his car. There will be no budget. It needs what it needs to be the fastest machine we can make for him. Specifically for that race we're going to do lots of work to make sure that car is as good as anything out there.

You ask about results. Listen, we should be able to fit -- it's tough to parachute into these races, right, really tough, and that's been seen a lot last year. But we're going to test Helio. He's going to get some opportunity to run a little bit before we race, and there's no reason we can't finish in the top 5 in any of the races we do, none of them, zero.

We look forward to trying to get that. I just feel lucky that we got him.

Q. A couple questions for both you guys. I'll start with Helio. Kind of going off what Tim asked there, I know this is a new journey for you in your INDYCAR career, so much of it that had been spent chasing 500s and championships with Team Penske. I know it was important for you just to get back to this series, but going into this next chapter of your career, what kind of -- how do you feel like -- I'm trying to think -- how do you characterize this next chapter and what do you want to get out of it more than just kind of the results and the win side part of this?

HELIO CASTRONEVES: Look, no question, with Team Penske it's 20 years we are talking about. They are part of my family. They were part of my life basically, my career, my life.

Right now, again, as you're still saying, Roger and I are partners in dealerships and he is the guy that I'll always ask for guidance. But now there is an opportunity here to make new friends, to build something different.

As you heard Mike saying, everything we're going to try to do here is to have a phenomenal result, and especially in the Indy 500. When you see that, come on, what more can you ask for?

As I mentioned before, Jim is a guy that's passionate about racing, and everyone is excited. Everyone is looking forward to it. We have work, yes, no question, but this is the new chapter of my life, as you mentioned, and I'm looking forward to building new relationships and having great results, too.

Looking forward to it. I can't stop smiling because obviously I'm extremely excited. It's been an amazing couple of months, no question, but we have a lot of work to do, but I'm ready for that challenge.

Q. You mentioned reaching out to Roger and using him for guidance and for advice. I'd be curious to know maybe kind of any advice or guidance he gave you in this. I know you've been a part of the Team Penske family for so long and it didn't seem like that was going to be an opportunity anymore. Did he in some way kind of give you a blessing or encouragement to go out and continue your career because he knows how passionate you are for racing in general?

HELIO CASTRONEVES: In fact, Mike, when we started talking, he went to speak with Cindric even before he was pursuing that idea. Roger knew about it. Roger felt there was a great opportunity, as well.

As you said, he kind of gave the blessing, and we're all here now, and super excited for next year.

Q. What do you feel like as far as this team goes, I know I think you said back in August when you were talking about wanting to come back to INDYCAR in some capacity, you said that you wanted to make sure that you were a part of a competitive team and a team that could give you everything that you needed to succeed going forward. What specifically about this team do you feel like made that perfect fit for what you were looking for in a next partner?

HELIO CASTRONEVES: Well, hopefully I have enough time, but I have so many. One is the passion of Jim, another one is the commitment of Mike, to make sure that we get everything right for all the races, not only the Indy 500, for all the races. Mike has been doing everything he can, the technical support from Andretti, and obviously with having a great teammate, Jack, which has been showing incredible amount of speeds all of the season.

You keep it going, and as I said before, the sky's the limit. We are committed for six races. Who knows what's going to happen in the future, but at this point all of these ingredients were able to show me this is the right direction, and that's why we're here.

Q. Mike, you talked a little bit about why you felt like Helio was a good match for what you guys were looking for in building that second seat. What, I guess, is the roadmap, or is there any sort of roadmap that you guys have laid out beyond the six races that you have planned this year? Do you have maybe a number of years in mind as far as how long you hope it will take to build up to two full-season program cars?

MICHAEL SHANK: We have a roadmap that we're going to stick to that we use with Jack, and depending on what we put together for partners, it could be heightened or quickened, so we did six this year. We want to push that to at least 10 the year after, maybe the full season. We'll do with what the economics dictate and the partnerships dictate. Jim, do you have any thoughts on that?

JIM MEYER: Yeah, I would say the one thing that Mike reiterated earlier and it's taught me early on in this, passion can get ahead of your wallet if you're not careful because I mean, we're very competitive. By the way, I would just point out, I think as participants in this sport and owners, drivers, team members, we sometimes forget how good the racing in INDYCAR is. In my opinion it's the best in the world, and I realize my partners own F1. I think it's the most competitive and best racing in the world. And by the way, there's no reason why we can't win every week, and

particularly with -- we couldn't be more thrilled with our partnership with Andretti racing and the technology we're getting.

I think the point Mike has taught me is not to let your passion get ahead of your plan, so we're very careful. We are not going to go any faster than we have the proper amount of funding. And I don't mean -- we could put the funding together now to expand, but we want to expand correctly and do it the way that we have with Jack and continue on that way.

It's going to be all about how we build, I call it the book, going forward for a commitment of the money to be able to do this correctly, but I'm confident we'll do that.

Q. For both Mike or Jim, whoever wants to chime in here or both of you certainly can, you both I think have spoken on it a little bit already on why you think a seasoned veteran driver was the proper fit. Is this just a partnership for 2021, you guys will evaluate and move forward? Is this a multiyear program that you hope you guys can build with Helio, or do you see this kind of maybe as some sort of a bridge maybe to what you guys can be five years down the road?

MICHAEL SHANK: We want to build it. If Helio is the guy, we both agree, Helio and us agree, we'll go forward with Helio if he wants to. We've all been in this a long time, and I want to see how this year goes. It takes a little bit to get the gel to happen. But you know what I like about this is I've got -- when you decide are you going to do a young or new guy or are you going to do a veteran guy, I just like hungry guys. I like hungry. I don't care how old you are. I don't care how old. Do the job. I've got a hungry guy that I know can do the job and wants to get a fourth Indy 500. So what's the choice? He's sitting there on the TV with us. So I'm really pleased to have him.

Q. Quick question for Mike and Helio. Mike, how important is it for you from both a business perspective but also a personal perspective that you have two cars next season to kind of build the momentum from this year into next year?

MICHAEL SHANK: It's very important. This is part of the grand plan that Jim and I when we sat down three years ago said that we want to do. We want to do it correctly, like we've said all along here.

You know, we're going to do two INDYCARs and one prototype car this year. This is exactly the size of business that Jim and I want to be. Jim can speak for himself here. We have plenty of work. We're building a new shop. We have 45 people working for us now, which is not a little

team anymore.

Just so many positive things that have happened since Jim and I came together. I don't even know what to say. But this is just a natural evolution.

Jim and I like to sit and have a beer at the end of each day at the 500 in front of our motor homes, and to have two opportunities to sit and have a beer like that, that's just perfect for me. I don't know about you, Jim.

JIM MEYER: Yeah, I couldn't agree more. You know, at this point with our investment, we have in my opinion a huge new shop under construction in Ohio that we broke ground on about eight weeks ago that we're thrilled to accommodate the size of our new program. We wouldn't be building that if we weren't in this for the long-term.

And I just -- I haven't said it, we're thrilled to have Helio. I think Mike summed it up. We're just kind of thinking -- we think we got lucky, and we think he's going to be a tremendous partner for Jack. We're really pleased with our -- but we took a chance on Jack. Funny story, when Jack and I first met, we took a chance with Jack. We're thrilled with his progress, and I think 2021 is going to be a really, really outstanding year for us with both the No. 60 and the No. 6 car.

Q. For Helio, for yourself obviously this is a new chapter for you in your career. Do you feel like you're a rookie going into a new team or do you think you'll be able to bring an awful lot of your previous experience from Penske into MSR to kind of guide Jack then, as well, for next season?

HELIO CASTRONEVES: Yeah, it's starting out, again, no question, but it's starting different. When I started 10 years ago I had no experience, and now I know exactly what I need, I know exactly what I want and I see the commitment that the entire organization is ready to do it. That's not only showing me the light at the end of the tunnel but it pumps me up to go out there and probably the guys are going to say get out of here at one point because I'm going to be like digging everything I can, because it's what I love. That's the only thing I know how to do is drive cars, and that's part of my passion, and that's what I'm looking forward to.

It's great when you rejuvenate. It's great when you have something different and something new, but you see everyone putting the efforts together.

Man, this is going to be great.

THE MODERATOR: Mike, I know you've got to split.



You're involved in a championship chase, as is Helio. I assume you guys are going to be rooting for each other.

MICHAEL SHANK: Yeah, what we're trying to do is not hit each other.

HELIO CASTRONEVES: Be sure when you see the No. 7, just wave and stop the other guys.

THE MODERATOR: Jack Harvey, back full time; Helio Castroneves, six-race deal, including the running of the Indianapolis 500. Congratulations Mike, Jim, Helio, good luck this weekend. Enjoy the off-season and can't wait to see you back on track in 2021. Thank you all very much.

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