

NTT IndyCar Series News Conference

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Dale Coyne

Dale Coyne Racing with RWR

Rick Ware

Dale Coyne with RWR

Romain Grosjean

Dale Coyne with RWR

Press Conference

THE MODERATOR: Good morning. Let's start with some introductions. Dale Coyne is set to begin his 38th year in INDYCAR competition. The former driver, now long-time owner of Dale Coyne Racing.

It was announced last week that Rick Ware and Rick Ware Racing would be partnering with Dale Coyne this season with a taste of the NTT INDYCAR Series last year in the Indy 500, but the NASCAR team owner expanding things certainly in 2021.

He announced earlier this morning Romain Grosjean will be driving the No. 51 on the road and street courses this season. A veteran of nine plus seasons in Formula 1, some 180 starts. The 34-year-old joining so many others who have made the transition from F1 to INDYCAR.

Let's start with Dale. Congratulations. Speculation is over. What can Romain bring to your team this year?

DALE COYNE: Look at his résumé. He's bringing a lot. Formula 1 is such a challenging world to judge a driver because it's by team. But if you look at what he did, we're impressed what he did before he got to Formula 1. He won the GP2 series by 35 points. It was a year that I think nine drivers in that series made it onto Formula 1. It wasn't a light year. He won six junior categories before that. He's a winner.

Formula 1, it's difficult to be a winner unless you're with the top two or three teams. So we're going to get him over here with the fourth best team and show that he can still be a winner. We're looking forward to having him with us. Our French engineer Olivier Boisson will be his head

engineer. I think they were together over the holidays at Christmas over in Switzerland.

I just think it's a good feeling all around. We're going to create a good environment for him. We're happy to have Rick Ware with us this year. Got a taste of it at Indy last year. Once you get a taste of that place, you want to keep coming back.

We just look forward to a strong year with Romain and with Ed, so...

THE MODERATOR: Rick joins us as well. Welcome to a full-time participant in the series. How did this partnership come together? You're obviously not messing around when you have a driver like Romain.

RICK WARE: Yeah, Dale said it best. I grew up with a road racing background initially. We're kind of knee deep into NASCAR. But follow road racing, love road racing. Anybody that's in motorsports obviously I believe follows Formula 1 to a huge extent.

We had some opportunities for sponsors to expand a little bit last year, from an owner's standpoint I've never been to Indianapolis. Who could not want to be part of that? When James Davidson came onboard, we started talking. The racer in me wanted to try to figure out a way to do it. Talked to several people. Had nothing but great stories about Dale, working with him.

Got to meet him. I felt like we kind of hit it off as far as he's a journeyman driver into a team owner. Kind of the same with us. This is our 30th year in motorsports. This is all we do for a living. We live and breathe it.

The racer in me, man, just ate up Indianapolis. Of course, we'd been there with NASCAR. Indy is about INDYCARs. We put a deal together. I really started seeing the benefit of trying to expand just our reach as a race team.

To go in and say that we're going to just do it all on our own would have been a huge feat. Right now with where we are in our career, we want to have success. I joked a little bit with Dale, I kind of want to be him when I grow up. He's been very, very successful.



We kind of just talked back and forth about kind of what my dreams were, where we wanted to be with RWR. I wanted to expand in the business and marketing model like Penske, Ganassi, that can go to sponsors and be able to offer different motorsports platforms.

We just talked more and more. I think over the long haul we really didn't have a second plan really for a driver. We said there's maybe an outside chance that something may happen with Romain. I think we waited for several months. Selfishly, we figured it was going to be a great story to have a great driver. It's a business, obviously, first.

I'm excited to have a guy like that drive for us. I'm excited to just get to the racetrack, expand our sponsors. It's all business, but man, some part of it I'm kind of like a kid, too. I'm just so thankful to be here.

THE MODERATOR: Certainly congratulations to Romain. Welcome to INDYCAR, the NTT INDYCAR Series. Why is this move the right one for you at this time?

ROMAIN GROSJEAN: Well, thank you.

I mean, it's the one I want to do. I have a chance after doing 10 years in Formula 1, I had the option to discover something new. There were few options on the table, but I felt like the one that I wanted to do was INDYCAR.

I got in touch with Dale last year, before Imola. I really felt there were a big enthusiasm on getting me onboard. It's something that I really, really loved and felt good about.

I looked at the options that I had. I say what I want to do is to go in INDYCAR because I've been watching the races. The series looks super competitive. The car looks fun to drive. The circuits looked amazing, just the old style that I really like. When you look at Road America, Mid-Ohio, the street courses, Laguna Seca, they're part of the circuits that I used to play video games on those 20 years ago. Not good to say that, but 20 years ago (smiling).

I am super excited to discover the championship. I've been absolutely amoring the YouTube channel of the INDYCAR over the Christmas period, watching every race for the last three seasons, trying to understand what I need to learn.

There's lots to learn from a rolling starts to doing the pit stop to learning the car. I'm ready to tackle the challenge. I think it's the right one.

THE MODERATOR: I have to ask you about your recovery from the accident. How is that going for you?

ROMAIN GROSJEAN: It's going okay. This is my left

hand, so it's still quite marked. But it's uglier than it is bad, I would say. It's all working well. The left hand ligament was pulled away. I've had surgery. This is going okay.

I think the first test for us is the 22nd of February. I may not yet be 100% in terms of what I can do, but definitely good enough to drive very well. By the time we go to race one, I think I'm going to be ready.

I'm not worried about it. I've been in the gym since the accident. The accident happened on Sunday in Bahrain. By Wednesday I was already in the gym trying to get the mobility going.

It was a difficult call for the doctors between stopping my hands to move and getting the recovery and the skin faster, or keeping it moving to keep the strength and the mobility. But we knew there were more risk of delaying the healing.

With the season start being postponed a little bit, all actually played in my hand, if I can use the play of word (laughter). As I say, I am not worried that we're going to be okay.

In terms of physical training, I've been going in the gym quite a bit because I know there is no power steering in INDYCAR. That's something I need to relearn.

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

Q. Romain, some of the Formula 1 drivers have been over here in the past, such as Fernando Alonso. They like the fact that the driver can really race with the INDYCARs more so than with some of the technology you were used to with the F1 cars. As a racer, how much does that intrigue you, that you can go out there in a lot of ways hustle this car rather than have the technology be so dependent on the vehicle?

ROMAIN GROSJEAN: Well, this is something I'm very, very much looking forward to. I've been watching the races. The way you can follow the car in front of you, the way you can slide the tires, the way you can either try to play with your 'push to pass', the fact that the cars in qualifying are within 6/10ths of each other. This is all really exciting.

You need to get the details right and so on. I think, yes, as you say, you don't have the differential you can move, you don't have the recovery and all the shaping and the braking, the systems you can have in Formula 1.

I think the racing, yes, the car a little bit slower, but the racing looks much better from everything I've been seeing.

I think in that respect I'm super excited about it.

Q. Formula 1 was the first to come up with the halo concept. INDYCAR kind of went one step beyond that with the Aeroscreen. You tested out the halo. We saw how valuable it was to save you from further injury. How do you feel about the Aeroscreen, that extra added layer of protection?

ROMAIN GROSJEAN: Yeah, I mean, it's now part of the motorsports in general, halo and Aeroscreen. As you say, Aeroscreen is a step behind I think absolutely even because the speed are higher, it makes more sense. But I think it's a great invention generally. I need to test it to see if there are any things that you need to adapt in terms of visibility. From what I believe, no.

Obviously it has saved my life. I'm sure it's going to save some more in the future. It's not unknown that I was against the halo being brought to motorsport. But in French we say only idiots don't change their mind. I did change my mind. I wouldn't race a car with no halo or Aeroscreen on.

Q. According to the release, it says the road and street course races. What's it going to take for you to get on the ovals?

ROMAIN GROSJEAN: Well, I think if I was 25 and single or even with no kids, I would be racing ovals definitely. No, it's also a family choice. I think on the 29th of November, 2020, for 2 minutes 45 seconds thought they had lost a dad and my wife unfortunately lost her husband. The idea of putting them back into that situation, really I can't take it.

The speedways at the minute, no. But I am not saying 100% no to Gateway. Let's see how the season goes. If we can do some testing on short track and see how it goes.

It's not 100% yes and 100% no, but for now I just need to look after my family in the speedways.

Q. Rick, you're still really building your NASCAR stuff. I know you probably want it to be performing better. Looking from the outside, why invest in this? Some people would say you're doing more than what you should be.

RICK WARE: Those are good questions.

The reality is, NASCAR, until the new car comes, which they say is coming next year. It was supposed to come this year. We are stuck in some certain parameters with our budgeting, what we can afford to do and to not do.

Last year we ran more cars. We are running less cars this year. All of our cars across the board are going to be running I think dramatically better, better level.

As you know within NASCAR, you get a sponsor, you get a driver. You're at a certain level. Just because you spend more money doesn't mean that you're going to move up two or three or four spots. We have teams that we're spending 14 and 15 million dollars for the season, 10 million dollars more than we were. They finished two, three, four spots ahead of us in points.

What we have to do is we have to make sure year in, year out how we survive and that we're here and we grow every year. You've seen how we've grown over the years. It takes a lot marketing-wise to make this happen. We brought in 20 new primary sponsors last year. We've kept about a third of them over into this year.

To make it through the COVID, to make it through year in, year out, you've got to have marketing partners, you have to have sponsorship, you have to be able to offer some things that people don't have to offer.

We're not taking money away from the NASCAR side. We're generating new dollars. It's a family business. We invest everything back into our business anyway. So my hope is to grow this to where all the conversations I'm having right now are going to talk about running two or three NASCAR cars and full-time INDYCAR in the 2022 season and beyond.

We are investing more this year into our NASCAR, and we are investing into INDYCAR as well. I firmly believe that will allow us to have longevity. We've seen a lot of really wealthy owners. They got tired of losing \$10 million a year. This has to be a business. There has to be a fine line.

We had several top 10s last year. That's hard to do for a small team. To go compete against teams like Romain's car owner and Stewart-Haas is no easy feat. We're trying to grow and be financially responsible.

Q. Is Cody part of this INDYCAR program as well?

RICK WARE: Yes, we haven't made any of those announcements yet. Again, it being a business, Cody only ran a few races last year because we decided to wait until we had proper funding. Cody is now going to run full-time in the Cup schedule.

A few of the Cup races that conflict, we have some really good drivers that we're going to fill in. We've been able to achieve sponsorship with Nurtec ODT, the migraine



medication. They're going to be involved in some INDYCAR. They're involved in NASCAR heavily in the Cup Series and Xfinity.

That's an example of how we were able to get a full-time publicly traded company like this. We are trying to be an entity that for a certain amount of money you can be part of the three largest motorsports opportunities in North America.

Getting into the INDYCAR, I hope this will be an ongoing venture and we will grow it together with Dale. Someone like Romain, selfishly as a business, he's a great tool because I think now he'll be loved just as a family guy and a racer, which is very unique, especially coming from Formula 1.

As Dale said earlier, his accomplishments just speak for themselves. You have to understand, this is a business opportunity to grow. This is going to allow us to be more competitive. But we're kind of stuck on the NASCAR side a little bit until the new car comes out. We lost two or three major car owners this past year because the business model did not work. You have to be very careful.

Q. Romain, you were talking about your hand. The recovery is going well. Is there any concern with the new skin rubbing on the steering wheel, putting any pressure on that?

ROMAIN GROSJEAN: I guess time will tell. But there's always painkiller if needed. We're going to work around the steering wheel the best we can.

I think it's going to be all right. I mean, it's only a simulator back home that I have for eSports, but I've been using it a fair bit just to get my hand in the right position and get the skin used to do those movements.

I don't have any concern and it should be fine really.

Q. With regards to switching to INDYCAR, is there anything in particular that INDYCAR brings that other options might not have, such as Formula E or anything like that?

ROMAIN GROSJEAN: Sexiness. As I say, after the accident, there's one thing I realize in life, is to have the choice to say no or yes. Really I think INDYCAR is a top series, top drivers, top cars, super exciting to drive.

I shouldn't mention it, a competitor of mine right now, but yesterday Will Power posted on Twitter a nice video from the helmet, testing in Sebring. Hearing the sound of the engine and watching the onboard, I just took the clip, sent

it to my wife and said, This is why I do it. I felt like this is what I want to do. This is what I want to race. It looks mega. Let's do it.

Q. Romain, how many of the INDYCAR drivers do you know personally?

ROMAIN GROSJEAN: I'll know Simon Pagenaud, Marcus Ericsson, Alexander Rossi. I think that's it.

Q. Dale, how difficult has this been as a process? Through kind of no fault of his own, Romain has changed from doing a full season of INDYCAR to kind of scaling back initially to do the road courses. From a financial aspect, how difficult has the deal been coming together based on those things?

DALE COYNE: We wanted Romain from the beginning. Like he said, before Bahrain we were talking quite seriously. He was always our target. We're happy that it all worked out together that we could make this happen.

Obviously we respect that he's only going to do the road courses. But we're happy with the whole program and looking forward very much to the year.

Q. You've had a lot of drivers come from Europe, from various backgrounds. What do you think makes the team so great at sort of bringing young talent into INDYCAR and also talent from Formula 1? It seems like the team has a really good record of bringing in engineers, people from different championships, helping them to adapt to INDYCAR quickly. What do you think is the secret behind that?

DALE COYNE: I think the secret is the drivers need to feel like we do. We enjoy it. We enjoy the racing, we enjoy the competitiveness of it all. Drivers come here and they enjoy the car. The car is back in my hands again. We can set the car for a driver that likes an understeer, oversteer car. In Europe, they give you a car and you drive it. The engineers are everything and you're just a tool in the car. Here you're the biggest tool in the car.

I think they enjoy that. We enjoy doing that with them. We enjoy learning them and their driving styles, pointing out how to make them better. As Romain says, it goes back to his earlier days in formulas where the camaraderie in the pits, everything that happens, it's such a different feel over here than it is in Europe. I think that gives the driver a whole new rebirth no matter what their age is.

I say this is the year of the old man rookies. We have Romain and Jimmie Johnson, the young guy McLaughlin who is in his late 20s. Hopefully they all enjoy it, have a

good time with it. Again, we're really looking forward to it.

Q. Romain, Dale mentioned you've already met your engineer. How did that go? How have you adapted to working with him? Are you positive your chances this season based on your work with him so far?

ROMAIN GROSJEAN: Yes, I am. I think the relationship, it's very difficult to explain, but sometimes the alchemy works quite well. With Olivier, straightaway we get on very well. We come from the same region in Europe. I guess maybe that helps a little bit. We've had a straightaway good relationship.

I asked loads of questions, some very simple to some more advanced, and we've been talking through emails and WhatsApp quite a bit.

I also told him that I can run on iRacing the INDYCAR. I can send him the data so he can see if it's completely off the reality or not. I can learn the circuits in that aspect.

I also spoke with some of the other engineers working on the dashboard, some of the first few things you do. Also the chief mechanic is named Todd. Straightaway from the day the contract was signed he sent me an email welcoming me in the team, as well as Terry the team manager. I got five or six emails from the guys the day the contract was signed. This is what I'm looking for. I'm looking for working with people that are motivated about racing, and they love it, as I do.

I'm maybe turning 35 in the first race of this season, but I still feel like I'm 20. I've got lots to learn and lots to do.

Q. Romain, have you thought about relocating to the U.S.? Will you commute?

ROMAIN GROSJEAN: Initially I'll be commuting quite a fair bit because the kids are at home at school. I won't move them. But if things go very well and I'm enjoying my life and my start in INDYCAR, we may think about coming a little bit more.

Let's see. For now I'll be commuting. We've been working with the team and Dale on the date, how we can make sure it all works the best it can.

We know family-wise it may be a bit of a tricky year with some long time of dad out of the house. They also know and feel that I'm excited, looking forward to it. That makes them happy.

Q. Romain, how beneficial do you think it's going to be for you coming from Formula 1 into INDYCAR in

terms of getting up to speed? The cockpit is similar. The steering wheel is quite similar, as well.

ROMAIN GROSJEAN: Yeah, I think there are a lot of things that are similar. There's also things that are different. The anti-roll bar you can set up inside the cockpit, that's not something I've run before. I'm quite excited about it. You can always fine-tune things to your liking.

I've got loads of experience from Formula 1. Some will be useful, I'm sure. A lot of things I need to learn as well. I'm really coming with an open mind and getting ready to be like a sponge, to learn as much as I can from all the guys, from the engineers, from my teammate Ed Jones, as well. He knows INDYCAR. He's been racing there. For me it's going to be very interesting to learn all of that.

Maybe on the engineering side, whenever I've got things that I've done in the past that were useful, just bring that on the table and see how we can work from there.

Q. Dale, as Romain says, he's coming from Formula 1 where it was very kind of data driven. How beneficial is that to you as a team owner to have someone who is experienced with engineering meetings?

DALE COYNE: I think it will be big. Honda has already shown more enthusiasm about our simulator work, what we can learn from that knowing he has an extensive background of some work in the Europe. That's probably our biggest addition this year with his knowledge, what we can learn on a simulator.

Q. Romain, is there any one of the tracks you'll be running that you would say you're looking forward to the most?

ROMAIN GROSJEAN: If I'm being honest, pretty much all of them. If you really want to have one that stands out, is Laguna Seca, just because I used to race it when I was, again, teenager couple of years ago on video games. I think it was Grand Turismo. I really liked Laguna Seca. I think it's going to be cool to go there.

Q. You mentioned you have been watching some of these older INDYCAR races while riding your bike. You mentioned the competitiveness throughout the field as something that excited you. What stood out to you, if anything, in some of those races and how it differed from the Formula 1 racing?

ROMAIN GROSJEAN: I have been watching 18 hours and 36 minutes of INDYCAR racing over the last couple of months (laughter). Yes, I think the excitement comes in

the fact that in Formula 1, after turn one, you normally know what's going to be the race result just because you know the pace of the car, Mercedes is going to pull away, maybe the Red Bull is going to be there. Some things can change, but nowhere as much in INDYCAR.

Mid-Ohio 2018 I watched recently was Sebastien Bourdais had an issue in qualifying and started back of the field. He came back like a bullet from the gun and finished sixth just behind Scott Dixon. The race was not over. The strategy was the alternative one. He started on the black tire, went for the reds, just came back from the back. That's not something you're going to see in Formula 1 unless Mercedes qualified in the back, which never really happens. That was great to see.

Most of the races between the cautions, the pit stop, the fueling and so on, there is always options for strategy. Sometimes it goes your way, sometimes it doesn't really go your way. That's really something I have appreciated about it. The fact that, yes, it's never over. You may run into trouble with fuel, you may not. You may have tires going away. Because the car are quite close in performance, the field is never really spread. That's cool to see.

There's also things that I'm surprised with. Blue flags. You don't need to let by when there's a blue flag. Many times I got penalties in Formula 1 because I didn't respect the blue flags. You have five corners to let the car by, whilst in INDYCAR you can just keep racing. It's an information. It's not so much mandatory. Few things that I just need to get used to that are quite different.

Yeah, the races are really good to watch.

Q. Dale, obviously Romain has this long, extensive list of achievements in Formula 1. Being in that series for nine years along says a lot. Was there anything beyond the fact that he's this experienced Formula 1 driver when you look at what he's done and what he's accomplished that stood out to you or maybe excites you the most?

DALE COYNE: I think it's just says volumes to have the ability to stick it out over there. Being with Haas, it's not like being with Mercedes, yet he tries every weekend and gets the best he can out of his car. They say in Formula 1 you're racing your teammate. He raced his teammate. Never gave up, went at it.

Again, his attitude here. You see how he is. He's excited about being here. We're excited about having him. I think that's just a good combination, a good marriage. We can do good things with that.

Q. Are you guys committed with this driver/team relationship beyond more than one year?

DALE COYNE: We haven't committed to next year yet, but we've certainly talked about it. I think he wants to stay here and prove some stuff. Maybe we'll get him to Indianapolis next year.

ROMAIN GROSJEAN: Never say never (laughter).

Q. Romain, with all the other racing series that are out there, my question would be why INDYCAR? Why not something like endurance racing? Did you talk to any of the other INDYCAR drivers who are currently racing about the series before signing on with Dale?

ROMAIN GROSJEAN: Yeah, I did. I did. Simon Pagenaud and Marcus Ericsson were very helpful in asking questions, basically what HANS device to use to what are the good teams, what do you think, how do you deal with your hotels. Various questions. They've been great help in that aspect.

Why INDYCAR? Because I am passionate about motor racing. That's the most fun, exciting and competitive option I could think of right now. As I say, I'm super happy to be joining. Endurance is a midterm thing that I'm looking for when I'm too old for single seater. Right now I felt like I was ready to take the challenge, I wanted to do it. As I said, I'm a rookie, there's many things I need to learn and to understand.

I think the passion of racing was the number one priority in my choice.

Q. You mentioned your hand was healing well. You'll be taking part in INDYCAR testing in a few weeks. There's no power steering in INDYCAR. What in particular are you having to do with your hand to rehab it, to get full strength back?

ROMAIN GROSJEAN: Yeah, the strength is 90% back, which is very good. Initially the first limitation would be the ligament from my left thumb because that is just time that heals it. But I've been very gentle and followed the rules from the doctor, which is a hand specialist in Geneva I really trust. When he tells me I can do something, I do it. When he tells me not to do it, I don't do it. I think that was quite important for me to know where to put the limit. He's very confident in the ligament being good.

Really I don't see much limitation. As I say, when I wake up in the morning, the hand is quite stiff. I need to put some cream, getting it moving and so on. Some of the

movements are still a bit limiting.

I shouldn't say that, but I've been on the podium in Formula 1 with a broken right hand twice (smiling). The pain goes away when you go racing. Yeah, I've been racing with broken parts. I've been on the podium. I think it was okay.

Q. Dale, you've been around INDYCAR from the beginning. This current season INDYCAR rookie lineup is impressive. Can you rank the talent compared from 2021 to back in the '90s?

DALE COYNE: I think the talent's gotten better every year. I think the teams have gotten more competitive. We're much more competitive today than we were back in the '90s. Everybody has raised their game. I think that's why it's attractive to that kind of talented driver, because the series, everyone from top to bottom, is strong now. Obviously that brings in strong drivers.

Yeah, I think the whole series is much, much stronger.

Q. Dale, I want to be clear. 51 will run the full season, you're just going to fill the ovals later?

DALE COYNE: Yes.

Q. The third car, is that going to be the Indy 500 or more than the Indy 500?

DALE COYNE: Probably more than the Indy 500. We haven't come up with exactly what we're going to do there yet. It will probably be four, five races plus the Indy 500.

Q. Is it your goal to get to a three-car team?

DALE COYNE: No. It's funny. That's an interesting question. We got to a two-car team. Back in the day we had different drivers. We got to a two-car team worried we weren't going to be a one-car team. We get to a three-car team worrying we're not going to get to a two-car team. Every year we put it together and get it done.

We're happy being a two-car team. We think we can do it well. Obviously running a third car at Indy helps the series, and you have the time there to do it. We already have the team assembled for the third car. Really strong group of guys, great group of guys. We're excited about where we are manpower-wise. Manpower is the biggest thing when you started adding cars. We're confident about what we're doing.

Q. Rick, you said Cody is going to do full-time in NASCAR, but indicated he could do some INDYCAR. He did the Rolex. Where do you see him going with

his career?

RICK WARE: We're trying to just give him a well-rounded career. Obviously NASCAR is our core business. I think he's going to do a handful of races this year. We've put together the funding to do that.

We're trying to test a lot of what we can do to make sure we have a continued base of interest with sponsors, et cetera. The 24 Hour, obviously it's an off weekend in theory from all the series actually. It was really good for us social media-wise for our sponsors, television time, et cetera.

NASCAR, like all mega series, is very competitive. Sometimes we have to think outside the box how to make sure we can stay relevant for our sponsors and have a storyline.

Again, I'm a hardcore racer like Dale. I'm very excited just to be part of it. We're very serious in trying to see how maybe Cody can work into a handful of races a year, to be part of an ongoing sponsor program.

He's got a fair amount of experience on ovals. He does really well there. So there might be some potential to do a handful of those here and there throughout the year. But right now he's really looking forward to doing some testing, the road course, some INDYCARs.

One of the weekends we have on the schedule, the All-Star weekend, which is a non-points event for the Cup cars. We're just kind of looking at all that, trying to build a brand around Cody as a driver, trying to attach a sponsor to him for his ongoing career.

Q. You have an interesting entry at Daytona with Derrike Cope. I'm wondering how that came about, what you expect from that entry.

RICK WARE: So Derrike drove for me I want to say I think 2005, 6, 7 or 8. I'm not quite sure. He's driven for me in Trucks, Xfinity and Cup. We do a lot of business back and forth together. We were kind of talking. He was an older guy, obviously won the 500 years ago. He was wanting to do his final race.

Again, I think we do a good job, storylines that have some interest that we can tie into things that make sense. At Derrike's age, I would say it's tougher for him to go to Martinsville for 500 laps. To go to the Daytona 500 with the car we got from Richard Childress, an ECR motor, he has a legitimate shot to stay out of trouble and have himself a top 10.

Jacob Companies, which was our sponsor on my first Indy 500 with Dale, they're back. There is their fifth year with us. That's a perfect example of how we've kept some interest. It's something different we have to offer. Jacobs is back now. They're doing 17 primaries on the Cup side. They're going to be involved with some INDYCAR stuff as well. They were on the 24 Hours this weekend.

I say, Hey, we got a shot to have a really great storyline with a guy that's won the 500. They're all excited about it. So we partnered up Jacobs with Derrike for that race. I think it's going to be a great storyline.

That's my responsibility, whether it's my son or whether it's Romain or Derrike Cope or Haley. A lot of different storylines. We have to make sure we're relevant with the media. Every year we're trying to grow our team and the quality of our team. It's very competitive so we have to take baby steps.

Q. Romain, it's been mentioned making the jump from Formula 1 to another racing entity has helped certain drivers, Kevin Magnussen. Are you hoping to have going into the INDYCAR campaign?

ROMAIN GROSJEAN: I spoke with Kevin yesterday morning. I think we exchanged. He was super enthusiastic and super happy about his experience in the Rolex 24. He also showed his speed. They had the speed to win the race. It showed, again, Formula 1, if you don't have the car, you just can't do anything.

Yes, I'm excited to come to the U.S., discover a new world, a different world of racing, but a world where you stand on the same chance to win the race.

Q. Rick, what is the one thing that over the past few years Cody has grown from a competitor? Does running the multiple disciplines, like Asian Le Mans, help him realize his confidence level?

RICK WARE: Yeah, I think every driver has their strengths and weaknesses. You'd like to think there's some core talent there. I believe there is. There's a lot of drivers that have core talent.

His biggest issue probably has come up through a racing family is having to preserve equipment, the mental aspect of not being able to race like he would like to race. The Asian Le Mans definitely gave him some experience and confidence.

He loves road racing and so do I. It is definitely harder to make a living doing that from a business model just because of the amount of television time, the sponsor you

can attain, then the prize money. It's an issue.

We try to do that as much as possible. We had an invite to Le Mans last year. Cody was going to be one of the drivers. But with the COVID, they were going to cancel, pushed it back to September, so it wasn't even an option for us because we were running so many NASCAR races. It's given him a lot of confidence.

It's also making him a better driver, learning how to do different disciplines. It's amazing just how I see how he takes that to different levels.

We did a test with Dale in INDYCAR. It was kind of amazing just how he took different things from that. It definitely elevated him in the LLP2 car this past weekend. We had a (indiscernible), which is a lot slower car, straight line. He had some good teammates. It just made him a better driver.

So we're looking forward to doing more of that. Every bit of it makes it better now with NASCAR, having seven road course races, including going to COTA, where the F1 guys have been, INDYCARs have been. He is even more excited about that because he loves the road racing.

The racer in me, we just finished the 24, kind of thinks about if I can talk Uncle Dale to get involved, we get Romain, Ed Jones, we could have a heck of a lineup at the 24 Hours next year.

Anything is possible. But, yes, as far as Cody goes, I'm excited for him, just to see him grow, for sure.

Q. Romain, when you were first released from F1, were looking for a new drive, you said you were only motivated by joining a competitive team. At the point after Bahrain where you were looking at the contract, in what way you wanted to go forward, how much did the competitiveness of Dale Coyne Racing matter as a factor in terms of not having to justify going to it but in motivating you to?

ROMAIN GROSJEAN: Again, I know if you compare maybe the Penske or Team Ganassi, Dale Coyne Racing is a small team. Again, it doesn't mean that you cannot compete at the front.

I think I need to learn how INDYCAR works. We need to learn to work together. I'm not going into race one thinking I've done 10 years in Formula 1, I'm going to win that easy. No. I need to learn. Drivers there have been running for many years, they're very competitive.

But the car are pretty much the same, apart from the

dampers. It's up to setting it up and getting the right relationship with the engineer and driving it.

I think we can be competitive. I am not coming just to be entering INDYCAR. That is definitely not my option. But also I'm entering knowing that I've got many things to learn. Let's see where that brings us. We're ready to tackle the challenge and to learn as fast as we can.

But as I say, I've been watching many races. The team has done very well last year with some rookies, so I'm hopeful that we can repeat that or even top up a little bit on top.

Q. Dale, Romain mentioned that February 27th was going to be the first test. Where is that going to be? How many times do you think you'll get him in a car before the season starts?

DALE COYNE: It's actually the 22nd of February. We're at Barber. A week later we're at Laguna. Looks like we're going to have four testing days scheduled before the first race at Barber, four road course tests. That's good. We got that and some simulator work that's going to be coming up. I think all that will get him ready.

Q. Rick, I want to clarify something you said earlier. Maybe I misheard you. I thought you said this was a business deal and that there was a corporate sponsor as part of this deal. I didn't see that announced. Did I miss something or did I mishear you?

RICK WARE: I think we're probably a week or two away for announcing that because we have sponsorships for both the 51 and the 52. You have to understand that Romain has been I wouldn't say first choice because it's really kind of our only choice or decision that we're having to wait. You can imagine trying to sell a sponsor at this level without being able to say who the driver is.

First and foremost from the business standpoint, we needed to make sure we had Romain on. Now we're going to put together the pieces of the puzzle. There are going to be sponsors tied to our NASCAR scenario. We're going to be leveraging some of these INDYCAR sponsors to cross over into the NASCAR.

I think we're probably a week or two away from that announcement.

Q. Rick, you mentioned Cody has an interest in maybe trying INDYCAR. I believe he may have tested last week with Dale on a road course at Sebring. You said he likes road course racing. If Romain isn't going to do the ovals, would he do an oval race and fill in for

Romain or would he try to do a road race?

RICK WARE: We've talked about that. Again, Dale has probably literally run more rookies than anyone in the garage, right? We're discussing that. I'm kind of leaving that up to Dale for the final decision.

Cody has a lot of oval track experience. Obviously he's never been on an oval track in an INDYCAR. Dale has taken a lot of guys to oval tracks for the first time in INDYCAR. So for me, I have full confidence in Dale. I think it's just a matter of what makes the most sense.

Again, we want to make sure if Romain changed his mind that we were prepared for that, right? The Indy 500 is a big scenario.

We're prepared to fill in the gap if we need to. But I think that's really going to be some conversation with me and Dale, ultimately with Dale, kind of where all the sponsors see fit.

We would be excited to do that if that opportunity makes sense.

Q. Romain, I wanted to ask you about the TV coverage of INDYCAR in France, the Internet coverage in France in French language. Do you see a lot written about champions like Simon and Sebastien? Can you add to that? Do you see it blossoming in years to come thanks to your participation?

ROMAIN GROSJEAN: I hope so. I think the channel that does Formula 1 does INDYCAR in France, as well. It's a pay TV. It's always going to limit your viewers. But they are doing most of motorsports. Obviously Simon, after the Indianapolis 500 was a big thing. One of the top four races in the world. That was big.

Yeah, obviously we can get people involved. I think with the social media, we mentioned the YouTube channel, some of the tools we have we can reach out to a big audience.

I think we should have some good viewings. I'm hopeful that we can make INDYCAR even more known in Europe. It's a very American-based series, but I'm sure if we are competitive people will follow.

Q. Dale and Rick, how hard is it to sell to a company, a business, to sponsor your car with a Frenchman compared with an American, those barriers being knocked down? Is it just all about talent, they just want to see their names running up front and it doesn't matter who's in the car?



DALE COYNE: I think it's about talent. Romain coming here kind of reminds me when Nigel Mansell came here. He wasn't American. He lit the world on fire over here. People want to see results. They want to have a driver they can cheer for, somebody who is a good spokesman for them, a driver that has results.

Numbers don't lie. If you can finish towards the top, I think it gets you what you need.

Q. Rick, do you share those views?

RICK WARE: Yes, I absolutely share those. Again, it still takes dollars to make all this happen. Romain is in a unique category. Nigel is probably a perfect example of that kind of person that came over and raced. Using Nigel as an example, he was technically a foreigner, but he was sponsored by Kmart. At the end of the day Kmart got a lot of coverage.

Things are a little bit different now. Again, like you're talking about with television, the value of social media, the things kind of behind the scenes. Again, me and Dale are racers. First off, we got a racer in our car. But we can work around. We don't necessarily have to be selling hot dogs and hamburgers. Social media is so important.

Again, we leveraged that this past weekend at Daytona. That's where we're going to get the by-product of having a true professional. Just a great guy, great storyline, a great race driver.

At the end of the day people want to see people go fast. People want to see people passing people. For sure I think we have that person. So that's going to sell for us.

Q. Romain, coming into INDYCAR, a lot of time a lot of people see the fan-friendly aspect of INDYCAR. Drivers are accessible to the fans. How exciting is it for some of these new areas, potentially being able to interact with the fans, especially American race fans?

ROMAIN GROSJEAN: It's super exciting. I don't know much of the U.S. As surprisingly as it is I've been traveling around the world a lot. The first time I came to New York in my life was 2018, whereas I've been pretty much everywhere. I know a little bit New York, obviously Austin, a little bit Los Angeles. Nothing really outside of that.

I'm super excited to discover new places. With the jet lag anyway, I will need to come quite early on the races to get used to that. It's going to be a great opportunity to discover something new, as you say, to discover new paddocks as well where you don't need a very complicated pass to

enter, and you can have interaction with the fans, open paddock sharing with the drivers and sharing passion.

If you come to see a racetrack, it's because you're passionate about racecars. If you're drivers, you're passionate about racing cars. We have many, many things to share.

THE MODERATOR: That is a good point, Romain. The credentials we have don't have the chip in it. It's a little easier to get into the paddock. You'll look forward to seeing that.

A lot of wonderful stories of Formula 1 drivers coming overseas and transitioning to INDYCAR. We welcome you, can't wait to see you at the test here in a couple weeks. Congratulations, Dale and Rick. That season opener Barber Motorsports Park is going to be here before we know it on April 18th.

Thank you, everyone, for joining us.

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