

NTT INDYCAR SERIES

News Conference

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Indianapolis, Indiana, USA

A,J. Foyt

Larry Foyt

Tony Stewart

Press Conference



future here, but obviously when AJ called and invited me for the month of May, it was an invitation you can't turn away.

I mean, contrary to his popular belief, we're going to have a blast, and obviously what you heard him say, that shows the relationship the two of us have together and the respect for each other that we have, and I'm excited to be up there. Can't be up there for all the practice and qualifying, but we'll be there for the race for sure, and really excited to be a part of AJ Foyt Racing and hang out for the day.

THE MODERATOR: Larry Foyt also joins us here this afternoon. Larry, how much say will Smoke have in the timing stand? Are you going to let him make a call or two?

LARRY FOYT: Absolutely, for sure. It's a no-brainer, right, with his experience to -- no, just great that this came together. I love that Tony has always been vocal that AJ is one of his racing heroes and vice versa. We've all been cheering for Tony throughout his career, and AJ always one of the first ones to call him when he'd get a big victory, something like that. Just a lot of mutual respect, and it was a no-brainer, I think, for us to have this beautiful livery, and it's a car that you've seen Tony sit in and we've got pictures of it, and it just all made sense so really excited to have him on board.

THE MODERATOR: Tony, four races into the season, I know you're very busy. Probably watched a little bit of the INDYCAR season, but it sounds like a cliché, the competition gets tougher and tougher and tougher, but man, it's been pretty tough already in 2021.

TONY STEWART: Yeah, it literally has. It just shows how as time goes on and technology gets better, the competition gets better, as well, and it forces the drivers, the engineers, the crew chiefs, everybody has to pick up and follow pace with technology. To watch the races, to watch how technical they are, you don't just get lucky and win races. You have to make your own luck, and you have to put yourself in the right positions.

That's what makes Indianapolis so special. Over the course of a 500-mile race there are so many things that can go wrong. You have to have a little bit of luck go your

THE MODERATOR: Welcome, everybody. My name is Dave Furst. Obviously a very busy month for AJ Foyt Racing; practice for the 105th Indianapolis 500 presented by Gainbridge begins a week from today. They'll compete of course with drivers Sebastien Bourdais, Dalton Kellett, Charlie Kimball, J.R. Hildebrand, and then on race day they'll have a very special guest in the pit stand. In case you missed it, it was announced earlier today that Tony Stewart will be the team's special guest. Tony, of course, the '97 series champ, four-time USAC champ, three-time NASCAR Cup Series champion and two-time Brickyard 400 winner. Great to have Smoke with us today as well as his hosts this month, the legendary AJ Foyt, of course celebrating some 60 years since his first win in the Indianapolis 500, and then Larry Foyt joins us, as well, the president of AJ Foyt Racing.

We'll start with AJ. Whose idea was this? How did this happen, AJ?

A.J. FOYT: Well, I have no idea. I think Anne is the one that started all this here trying to make me look old, I think.

THE MODERATOR: Blaming Anne Fornaro. How much fun is this going to be, AJ?

A.J. FOYT: Having Tony with me? It won't be much fun. I've known him too damn long. I'd like to win the race so he could know what victory circle is like on the 500 with the INDYCAR. That would be the most fun week I've had, both of us.

THE MODERATOR: Tony, when an invitation like this is sent your way, how long does it really take before you say yes?

TONY STEWART: It took literally a matter of seconds. There might be a curve ball thrown in this today or in the

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way to keep the bad luck away, but you have to create your own luck, as well, and where a lot of the races are much shorter and the strategies seem to be a little more clear, the 500 there's a lot of times that the complexion of the race will change multiple times over the course of 500 miles. That's what makes the Indianapolis 500 the greatest spectacle in racing.

THE MODERATOR: Some seven, eight, nine pit stops, perhaps, the complexion of that race changes dramatically through the course of the afternoon.

Q. AJ and Larry, how excited are you both to have four cars potentially in the field for the 500 this year, given the anniversary that you're celebrating this year?

LARRY FOYT: That's why we need Tony to come help us. Going for the big four is quite a lot. But no, it just -- certainly we're excited. It made sense. We feel like we have four good drivers, and obviously four good sponsors. That's why it came together and why we wanted to do it, and to celebrate that and the anniversary of the '61 win, just really cool and just really thankful for Tony to be a part of it.

We know it's a lot of work. Obviously we tried to get as big of a head start on all of it as we could because there are a lot of parts and pieces to put these things together now. Kind of like Tony was saying, there's so much electronics and so many things we deal with in racing now, it's not as easy as just throwing a car together and trying to put it in the 500.

It's a lot of work, but we feel like we've got four great crews put together, and we're really excited about it.

Q. Tony, obviously you're going back to the speedway. How excited do you get kind of entering the speedway when you're there?

TONY STEWART: Well, if you look behind me and see what's hanging on the wall behind me, I think that passion never leaves. Every time you drive through the tunnel to go in the infield, it's always that feeling that it's sacred ground to me. I live literally 55 minutes away from the track, and every time we roll in there you are constantly reminded of the history of the Indianapolis Motor Speedway and the triumphant victories, the agonizing losses that have happened there, the people that we've lost there in motorsports.

It is very sacred ground to me and something that I always cherish every time I get a chance to come visit.

Q. Do you ever think that you might kind of have a go

in the car with the aeroscreen or would you ever try it out just as a test, or you're finished?

TONY STEWART: Well, it has nothing to do with the aeroscreen or anything. It's literally about the technology. There's so much that has happened since I drove in 2001. I mean, it's been 20 years since I've been in an INDYCAR. So try to learn the technology, to get in shape and lose the weight I would need to lose to be competitive to help the engineers out, it's stuff that is just not realistic. I'll be 50 here in less than 10 days now. 50 is probably not an age to try to revive an INDYCAR career at this point.

Q. But it's a perfect celebration for your 50th, going to the 500 with AJ. That's great.

TONY STEWART: Yes, it is. I agree.

Q. Smoke, you threw out a lot of numbers there, but take us back if you can back to '96. Hard to believe it's 25 years now, your first Indy 500, the nerves leading up to the race that morning, the atmosphere. What do you remember from that day?

TONY STEWART: The biggest thing that I remember of race morning is that's the closest I've ever been to throwing up before a race. The nerves were at a level that I had never seen before in my entire life, in any form of motorsports leading up to my first Indy 500. But knowing the history and knowing the pageantry of race day and everything leading up to it, it was extremely hard to stay composed. I mean, I was probably the most nervous I've ever been on a race morning knowing what all was coming up, what all was going to happen, and not knowing what was going to happen during the actual race itself.

All of those things leading up to the command to start our engines was the hardest part of the '96 500 for me.

Q. Probably a little surreal, too, growing up in Indiana and seeing the race on television and knowing what it's meant to you and your family and anyone that has ever attended the Indianapolis 500 and then to all of a sudden be a part of that, probably a little surreal.

TONY STEWART: Not only that, but the year before I actually was a crew member on Eddie Cheever's car for AJ, and our race literally lasted about 10 seconds that year, and I remember running the night before the 500 at IRP with the midget and getting in late and knowing that I had to be at the track extremely early in the morning and then it was disheartening to not really get to do anything that day because like I said, the big crash with Cheever happened that first lap.



To go from being a crew member to literally the next year starting the race from the pole was definitely a drastic shift for sure but one that I was very excited to be a part of.

Q. Tony, I saw in the press release that you mentioned that AJ called you after you won your first Cup championship in 2002. Obviously the two of you have a relationship that's gone back years and years and years. I wonder from your perspective if you could describe the relationship the two of you have and what that phone call was like back in 2002.

TONY STEWART: Well, we obviously knew each other long before 2002, but to get that call right after the race was over, and we'd got done with all the media sessions and the photo sessions and had just got back to the motor home after the race and got that call from AJ. He reminded me, he goes, that's one, but I've still got four 500s. That was my motivation to get the other two championships that we got. He always reminds me that I haven't won as many as he has. That's always been a good motivation.

But we've always been great friends. I think our personalities are a lot alike. We both have a very limited and small filter and are used to calling a spade a spade. We have very similar personality types. My career path I think wasn't intentional necessarily but did follow a lot of what AJ has done in his career, so I feel like I'm just a later generation version of AJ.

Like I said, our personalities and the fact that we raced together and worked together, we've developed a great friendship and one that many people that have childhood heroes and lifetime heroes never get an opportunity to meet those people, and not only have I got to meet him but interact with him a lot, and as you heard on the intro there, we get our jabs in with each other out of fun but it's because we love and respect each other so much.

A.J. FOYT: Well, actually, talking about how we met. I met Tony following his career, and then was at Phoenix testing one day and I asked him to take a ride in the INDYCAR, and he did on our INDYCAR. We were doing some testing. And then we went back, and Snyder and I owned a dirt car together and Tony drove for us and won some races, which we really enjoyed. We've just been friends.

How we fell into it, we do a lot of things the same way. He wants to win. I want to win. We both put up with no bullshit from nobody. I know it ain't good for either one of us, but we kind of express the way we feel, and that's one thing I've respected about Tony, and I think that's what you don't see today because if somebody messes him around

or messes me around, we let you know about it.

I think that was one thing I respected about, and not that he was always right or I was always right, but that's the way we felt about things, and we let the people know.

I think that brought our friendship closer and closer, and every time he did something big I'd call him or vice versa, but that's really why I wanted to do something big for him this year and him be right there with me, so we can join together and celebrate together.

Q. Tony, respecting back on that 25 years since your first start at the Indy 500, obviously '96 was completely different circumstances and this year there's been all this talk about momentum and INDYCAR and your presence as the guest of your hero, it seemed like another example of that. Can you give us a perspective on how different things feel for you, like beyond being just a fan instead of a driver, but the general atmosphere when you're going to be at IMS this year for the Indy 500 as a guest of AJ Foyt and kind of with everything going on in INDYCAR racing now versus 25 years ago?

TONY STEWART: You know, I still have a ton of friends in INDYCAR, whether they're crew members or drivers, and have a lot of respect for what they do nowadays. Like I said, we talk about how much the technology has changed. It used to be you could just kind of get in, and you didn't -- you had a couple sway bars you could adjust and maybe a weight jacker, but that was pretty much it. Now these guys are trigger shifting with the steering wheels and all the things and all the fine details that they have to pay attention to from the driving standpoint is what really makes INDYCAR racing so exciting to me now.

You know, it's just all the technology, all the precision that has to take place to make these cars go around as fast as they do, and these drivers, trust me, when I drove the cars they had a lot more downforce, felt a lot more secure on the racetrack, where nowadays these guys are hanging on and they are balancing on a knife edge in qualifying and even at times in the race late in the race when they need that speed. They start trimming these cars out to get those fast laps at the end and have that speed. That's something we didn't have to deal with 25 years ago. We had cars that were stable and you could make them feel good all day long, and these guys I have a ton of respect for how much they really have to run on the ragged edge. It's impressive to watch how tight the field is, to see how small a changes they make to gain very small increments of time, but those small increments mean so much now with how close and tight the field is. It's really impressive to watch INDYCAR these days.

Q. I think it was 15 years ago that you and AJ played a little bit of a prank on everybody about whether you were going to race again. Are you sure you're not going to pull our leg this month and pose next to a car and pretend you're going to be getting in?

TONY STEWART: No, I promise you I will not be putting a helmet on to drive a car during the 500. We had a lot of fun -- I almost lost my manufacturer's sponsorship that day, and it was literally AJ said, hey, we have some miles left on the motor, do you want to go make some laps. I thought, heck yeah, why not. Nothing was going on at the track and nobody seemed to want to run, so everybody pretty much finished all their practicing, so we thought it was a good idea and then I about lost a major sponsor. Right before we went on the racetrack I got pulled from the car and told that making a lap would not be very productive for my full-time job.

Q. What's your plan? Are you just going to be there on race day?

TONY STEWART: Yeah, I've got prior commitments that I've already made through the week, but I'm definitely going to be there on race day. I'm going to be with AJ and the team and the sponsors the night before for dinner and excited about that, but super excited to be there for race day. I'll definitely -- even though I wouldn't be at the track for practice and qualifying, I'll be very tuned with what's going on and poking around saying, hey, how are we, what's going on, what's he feeling. So I'll kind of be there but from afar. Even though it won't be there, I'll be very in tune with what's going on during the week.

Q. Will you go to Charlotte, as well, or are you just going to stay in Indy?

TONY STEWART: Just going to stay in Indy this year. I've done the double enough times that getting in the plane is not as much fun as it used to be to try to do two events in one day, and there's going to be a lot going on, obviously, in Indianapolis that day. As soon as the race is over, I hope we have a lot to celebrate in Indianapolis, but I can promise you I will be near a TV and be in tune with what's going on at the Coke 600 with our NASCAR teams, as well.

Q. When you pull into the track, do you still kind of feel the same way? Does it hit you the same way it did when you were younger?

TONY STEWART: It really does. There's just something about the Indianapolis Motor Speedway, and especially when it's your home track. Indy is a very special racetrack

for INDYCAR racing. It has been for a century.

To see the -- every time you go in there, and obviously things change and things get updated, but there's just one thing about Indianapolis is that the general feel of the facility never changes. It doesn't matter what they do cosmetically. The feel once you get inside that facility, it feels the same. You think back to previous years and previous 500s, and it just doesn't change.

So every time you go in there you still have -- I still get those same goosebumps I had when I was a little kid that went in there and had the same goosebumps when I was racing INDYCAR full time.

Q. I'm wondering have you had a chance to see Jimmie Johnson race at all? I know he's only raced twice, but have you been able to see it yet?

TONY STEWART: I have. I was really excited when he got through the first crash there at Barber because I didn't want to see it end too early for him, and I think getting to watch him go through the adjustments has been fun. There's nobody I would put in that challenging of a situation other than Jimmie Johnson. I mean, he's one of those guys that no matter what he does, he's very dedicated, and he puts 120 percent effort into it. He will figure this out. It's just a matter of time of how long is it going to take him to figure it out.

Q. AJ comes from a time when drivers could go back and forth. Your generation sort of you guys could make the jump. It's much harder now. Why?

TONY STEWART: I think because of all the technology that's involved. When we started running in '96 and when we ran full-time through '98, we were running new cars in '97 and '98, still six-speed gear boxes, but there wasn't any paddle shifting or trigger shifting, it was still old-school gear boxes and you just didn't do a lot of shifting, where now the gear splits are so small and those guys are constantly shifting gears to keep the rpms in the right spot. Those are details that are much finer details than what we had 20, 25 years ago.

I think that's why it is so hard for guys to make the jump now, and like we said, these guys are running these cars on the ragged edge and they're on a knife edge all the time.

To be that close to the edge you have to have a good feel and be in tune with the race car, and the only thing that gets you there is just seat time. If you're not doing it all the time, it makes it difficult. He has a ways to go, but like I said, there's nobody that I have the confidence that could

be in that position versus him.

Q. How are you guys feeling about the 500 and your entries? Are you guys ready to go?

LARRY FOYT: No, I think so. Obviously we didn't need to tear up three race cars like we did at Texas last weekend, but we were kind of -- we were trying to prepare the best we could for that. We had a lot of spares built up and things ready to go, and those cars weren't any of our chassis that would be part of our 500 stable, so that was good.

But fixing them for the road course race obviously this coming weekend, and no, I feel like we're in pretty good shape. I think Chevy has done a good job, and they'll be ready to go. They were pretty happy in preseason testing there at the speedway, so we'll just see what we've got when the track opens.

Q. You guys going to be fast enough, AJ?

A.J. FOYT: Well, when I was there, you had to beat about 30 or 40 cars, so we're maybe looking to have to beat three or four, and if we cannot beat three or four, we need to go on the trailer, but I'm quite sure we're going to make the race. We've got some good drivers. We've got good crews, and we're going to be pretty fast. I never went there to run in the back.

Q. AJ, this is a celebration of your first Indy 500 victory. What do you remember from that race? What's your greatest memory of that win?

A.J. FOYT: Well, I remember I was just kind of a young snot-nosed kid I guess you could say, and I was trying to qualify for the race. They had about 120 cars there and 33 of you made, and you had one shot at making it. You couldn't keep using the same car. If you didn't make the race you went on the trailer and you went home and came back the next year. I was driving the car that Jimmy Bryan won the championship and all that with, and I'm a rookie, so when I went out to qualify with Clint Brawner and he gave me my big break and made the race, it was the thrill of my life. That was the happiest moment of my life in racing. That's what I always dreamed of was the Indianapolis Motor Speedway, and when I went up there when I was young, it was kind of like Tony said, there's only one Indianapolis and I had goosebumps all over me and I was nervous, and after I qualified wound up starting on the fourth row, and I was very happy.

On race day I wasn't that happy. That first wreck, you had that big wreck the first day, I'll never forget that. They told me about drafting, but they didn't say going down the back

straightaway about 15 of you are going to pile up. Some cars go over the wall, also. I got to thinking, maybe I'm not cut out to be an Indianapolis driver, but you've got to let bygones be bygones, and I was just so happy to be able to qualify for the race. That was the biggest thrill of my life.

Q. You've got four, Tony has none. Do you ever let him forget that?

A.J. FOYT: Tony has got four. He was pulling for me, so he's got part of the wins, too, because we've been friends and I pull for him a lot. I know deep down he was hoping I would win. To be fortunate enough to win it once was unbelievable, and then to be fortunate enough to be the first four-time winner, what else can you ask for in life? I don't know how to put it.

One other thing I was real happy on the fourth win, that instead of my wife riding around with me, Tony Hulman rode around on a victory lap with me, and I was so happy about him riding with me that my wife didn't get to ride with me, but Tony Hulman. That's still special enough to remember it because he was such a great guy to all the race drivers and everything, did everything he could.

But it was great to win it four times. Don't get me wrong. But the first time was awful great, too. All I can say, Indianapolis is what made AJ Foyt. AJ Foyt didn't make Indianapolis. Like Tony said, Indianapolis, all the world knows that race, and you've got a bunch of great racetracks, don't get me wrong, but you only have one Indianapolis. Like the Kentucky Derby; you only have one. So I'm just glad to go to Indianapolis and be successful there.

Q. Tony, do you think you would have been able to hold your own against AJ and Parnelli and that era?

TONY STEWART: Are you kidding me? He'll even admit he's glad I was born later. I'd have kicked his ass. Are you kidding? I mean, let's be realistic here.

No, I would have loved it. I tell everybody, if there was one thing I could have changed in my life, I would have been born a lot earlier because that would have been the ultimate in motorsports to me would have been to race in the era that AJ raced in and get to race with my heroes like that.

You know, I have a ton of respect -- he said Indianapolis made him. I watched him drive a lot of different cars outside of the Indianapolis Motor Speedway that made AJ Foyt, and it did not matter what kind of car it was, he could find a way to win with it. That's why he got his opportunity in Indy and he made the most of it and got four

Indianapolis 500 victories. I would have loved to have that opportunity to race with him. I would just about trade everything I've had in my life up to this point to have that opportunity.

Q. You mentioned about being a big fan of AJ. What's your favorite moment or a race, even outside of -- I know you watched dirt cars and stuff AJ ran. What's your favorite memory of AJ?

TONY STEWART: I think one of the earliest ones that really made an impact on me was the year that he got out of the car, and I think he had got in the wall or got into somebody or somebody got into him and it went the right front suspension and he got out of the car, beat on it with a hammer, got back in it and got back in the race.

Trust me, I've seen him in a hammer in his hand. I wouldn't want to get in anything after he's had it with a hammer. To watch him do that -- I think there's so many things -- watching highlights of the midget win that he had indoors in the Houston Astrodome way back in the day, there's just so many moments from so many different types of cars that I've had the opportunity to go back and watch, that's what makes AJ Foyt AJ Foyt. I don't think you can ever really pick just one moment.

But one of those that stands out at Indianapolis for sure was the year that he got out and -- I don't think he was quite content with the crew's decision that it probably wasn't a good idea to go back out, and he got out and worked on it himself and got back in the car and took back off. That just shows the true grit and determination AJ has always had.

Q. Coming to the race this year would you ever entertain maybe even a part ownership or having a car, maybe at least in the Indy 500 in the future?

TONY STEWART: Well, the hard part is it's so hard right now, and AJ can confirm this, too. It's just so hard to get partners to help fund these cars. I'm spread pretty thin between a racetrack, two racing series, two wing sprint car teams, four Cup teams, an Xfinity team. At some point you get yourself spread so thin that you can't cover it all.

I've learned to never say never, but it does become more difficult the more series that you spread yourself out in, the harder it is to get enough partners to help fund those projects.

I would love to have that opportunity, but it's just a matter of making sure that you could properly fund it to where you could do the proper job and give yourself the right opportunity to have great drivers, great crew members and

give yourselves an opportunity to go out and have success on the racetrack.

Q. AJ, we've always heard it talked about how Tony reminds us of you back when you raced. What about Tony does he remind you of yourself that you saw of him from inside of the car?

A.J. FOYT: Well, he calls a spade a spade. And what else can you ask for? And that's what I really like about Tony. Like I say, I watched him drive all kinds of cars. He works on them a lot himself, and when you try to work on them with him, then he raises hell with you for not doing it right. He's got a lot of ways he wants to do it, his way, just like I was kind of the same way on cars. I didn't like the way some people were working on them, so that's the reason I did it myself. That's one thing that stands out with Tony in my mind because if it ain't going his way he wants it his way and then he'll go out and win with it, so what else can you ask for?

Q. AJ, you have four Indy 500 wins but you also have seven INDYCAR championships, and one of the major storylines coming into this year is Scott Dixon being on the verge of matching you as far as INDYCAR titles are concerned. You've seen many drivers during your racing career and even post-career. What do you think of when you see Scott Dixon, and what will your reaction be if and when he eventually ties your record?

A.J. FOYT: Well, records are made to be broken, so if he breaks it, he breaks it. But let's put it like this: I did it first, so he can't say he did it first. He can tie me or he can go and beat it, but he's still got to do it.

Q. Tony, of course we're now about a month away from the start of the superstar racing experience. The race format was announced last week. You're participating as well as other INDYCAR legends like Tony Kanaan and Helio Castroneves. How nervous are you with the start of this new league that you're pretty much heading now just about a month away now from the start of competition?

TONY STEWART: You've got to remember, we've still got a month of May and an Indianapolis 500 to run first. I'm excited about the month of May first and we'll worry about what comes after that next. We've got a lot of eggs in our basket and a lot of variables going on and we're excited about all of them, but today I'm more excited about being with AJ Foyt and being back at the Indianapolis Motor Speedway than anything else right now.

Q. We lost Bobby Unser this week. He was one of your big competitors during your INDYCAR days. Your

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thoughts on Bobby, and anything that stands out in your mind as far as competing against him? Any race or anything that happened?

A.J. FOYT: Bobby was a good race driver. He won Indy three times, and it wasn't given to him. He was a super guy, so we're all going to pass on, it's just lucky I'm still here so there's nothing you can say about it. He and Al were brothers. I gave Al his first ride at Indy, and I've been friends with the Unsers for many, many years.

It's like Bill Yeager; I think Tony remembers Bill Yeager. Maybe you don't, but I do. He told me one day, he said, AJ, you're not a permanent fixture, you're just passing through, so I guess that's what you're going to be doing, you're going to pass through, and like I say, it's something we all have to face, and it's not much we can do about it, because like I say, you're just going to be here so long. They never thought I'd live to be over 22 years old, so I have no idea.

I'm hoping to be at Indy this year. Maybe not, but who knows?

Bobby was a good race driver. He didn't win -- they didn't give him three Indy wins by him being a slouch race driver, so that's all I can say, he was a good race driver.

Q. Tony, your roots were in open wheel racing. You said that you wished that you had the opportunity to race and win at Indy. What made you decide to go the NASCAR route rather than stay in INDYCAR?

TONY STEWART: You know, and that was probably one of the hardest decisions of my professional career was having to make that decision. I mean, I was fortunate in '95 to win the USAC Triple Crown and I had been working with the Ranier family to have an opportunity to go NASCAR racing. They had been working with me for over a year and a half at that point to go the NASCAR route, and then Tony George developed the IRL and I got a chance to test with AJ, and it truly was one of the hardest decisions I ever had to make.

I think at that time, at that particular time, we didn't know what the future and how successful the IRL was going to be, and obviously NASCAR at that time was not at its peak yet but nearing its peak and was extremely successful. You know, it really was a matter of just knowing that for sure we knew exactly where NASCAR was at at that time. We weren't exactly sure what the future was going to hold for INDYCAR racing on the IRL side, and like I said, though, that was one of the toughest decisions of my life to not follow my dreams of being an INDYCAR driver. But I can say that I was very fortunate to have the opportunity to

race, I guess, 27 or 28 races now in an INDYCAR.

Even though it wasn't what defined my career, I'm glad to say that it was a part of my career.

Q. When you look at your open wheel career, what's the biggest memory that stands out for you?

TONY STEWART: I think '97. I mean, obviously '96 going to the Indianapolis 500 my first year was definitely a highlight, but beating my hero's team in '97 with Davey Hamilton driving for AJ, that was a hard-fought battle, and to race one of my friends that was a good friend of mine through midget and sprint car and Silver Crown racing with Davey for two INDYCAR championship in '97 was something that I was really proud of, probably most proud of, of having that opportunity to race head-to-head with him and obviously against AJ. Those are two of probably the biggest highlights for sure.

Q. We saw Chase Briscoe run the Foyt colors this past weekend at Darlington. What did it mean for you to see one of your cars carry his colors and that respect across the board, Chase looking up to both you and AJ and you looking up to AJ?

TONY STEWART: Yeah, I was super excited. My organization at Stewart-Haas, they know not to show me paint schemes too soon because I get excited about it and I tell my friends about it and I always beat the unveilings and the press conferences about it. But when I was allowed to finally see it, I was super excited, obviously, to see a car that I was proud to watch my hero drive and to be able to take those colors and put it on the car for Chase to drive and celebrate and show his respect for. That was a cool moment. To see that car at Darlington was awesome.

Q. Earlier in the broadcast you were talking about you'll be 50 in like less than 10 days I think you said. Happy early birthday. Will you have any radio contact with the drivers during the race, and if you did, what advice would you give them before the race and even maybe while they're on the track in the spotter thing maybe?

TONY STEWART: Well, thank you for the early birthday wish. I'm not sure I'm excited about the age that my birthday is going to be this year, but I'm glad that I'm still having birthdays, so that part is exciting. As far as race day, if they're smart they won't give me a radio that actually talks. I'm just be able to listen, but they might make a mistake and give me one that talks, so you never know what I could say.

I think the biggest thing if I had to give the drivers some advice, it really wouldn't be during the race as much as it would be before the race.

I think with what we saw early in the race at Texas that you can't win the race on the first lap but you can sure lose the race on the first lap. So my advice to those guys is the start of the Indianapolis 500 is very unique being 11 rows of three and having those cars three wide, the air, if you're not in those first couple rows, the air is very turbulent. My advice to those guys is really don't get too worked up over what happens the first five, ten laps of the race because you have a lot of pit stops. There's going to be a lot of things that can happen that change the complexion of the race.

Again, it would be as simple as saying you can't win the race on the first lap but you can sure lose the race on the first lap, so I'm going to encourage those guys to all be patient and use their head early in the race and get settled in and work on their cars to be in the right spot at the right time to give them a shot at winning the race.

Q. Do you think you'll ever try an INDYCAR?

TONY STEWART: I don't think I'll be in one again. I had a great short career in INDYCAR racing and was very fortunate to win the championship in '97, but I'm kind of like AJ, I don't think I'd fit in them very well anymore.

THE MODERATOR: AJ, head-to-head in the '60s and '70s between you and Tony Stewart, who wins?

TONY STEWART: Don't lie.

A.J. FOYT: That would be a toss-up. I think I could beat him, but he thinks he could beat me, so you've got to say it's a toss-up. Right, Tony?

TONY STEWART: Yes, sir. I agree. I can tell you this: It wouldn't matter who won the race, but I can promise you this, it would sure as hell be entertaining.

A.J. FOYT: We'd have a lot of fun.

THE MODERATOR: This has been a lot of fun, guys. Thank you so much. We'll leave it there.

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