

# NTT INDYCAR SERIES

## News Conference

Friday, December 15, 2023

### Larry Foyt

### Sting Ray Robb

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: Good afternoon or perhaps good morning. An announcement just minutes ago from A.J. Foyt Racing. It led with the line 'Destiny Calls', and it certainly has, as an NTT INDYCAR SERIES driver with the name Sting Ray will now be driving a Chevrolet-powered car in 2024 as AJ Foyt Racing announces that Sting Ray Robb will drive the No. 41 next season. It will be Sting Ray's second season in the NTT INDYCAR SERIES after a very successful rise through the junior series, including the top developmental series for INDYCAR, INDY NXT by Firestone.

Sting Ray joins us this afternoon. Congratulations.

STING RAY ROBB: Thank you. It's a good day.

THE MODERATOR: Also joining us from Texas, the president of AJ Foyt Racing, Larry Foyt. Good to see you, as well.

LARRY FOYT: Good to see you. Thank you.

THE MODERATOR: How did this partnership come together?

LARRY FOYT: I don't want to say it happened quickly. We've obviously been watching Sting Ray come up through the ranks. His name sticks out a little bit. It was always fun watching him as he came up through the ladder series.

We had spoken to them actually in past years. We just didn't get it quite together. This year everything fell into place where it really worked out. We're happy to have him on the team.

THE MODERATOR: Full speed ahead.

Sting Ray, congratulations. There's the Sting Ray Chevrolet angle, the fact you join a legendary INDYCAR SERIES race team. What makes today special for you?

STING RAY ROBB: Other than being an INDYCAR driver for 2024?

THE MODERATOR: There's that, too.

SING RAY ROBB: I think the leading line 'Destiny Calls' is what today means. It's really cool because AJ Foyt Racing, a long legacy. To be a part of that now as a driver, and also to be with an Indianapolis-based team where I can show up at the shop and work with the crew there, it means a lot to me. Those are the things I think develop the best results, is the day in, day out preparation, especially in a super competitive series like this.

But yeah, the Chevy side is also super exciting. I know my dad's going to be happy. Now he can post pictures of his Corvette again without feeling a little bit guilty.

We're all very excited.

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

**Q. Sting Ray, the fact that AJ Foyt Racing has entered into an engineering alliance with Team Penske, you're going to be getting a lot of chance to really find out what works for Josef Newgarden and Will Power and Scott McLaughlin. How valuable is that going to be for you?**

STING RAY ROBB: From what I hear, it's going to be really valuable. Just there the driving aspect, it allows me to be a young learner with some great leaders in the motorsport industry like Scott, like Josef, like Will where I can learn their techniques, kind of the tricks of the trade in that sense.

I mean, AJ Foyt Racing has done such a good job this last year, I don't think that partnership is a one-way street. Both parties are going to be able to improve because of it.

Looking at Santino's results from the 500, even Benjamin's, we've gotten to see what the team is capable of doing and the trend.

I'm hoping through this partnership with Penske as well as

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just in the overall natural growth of the team that we'll continue that trajectory forward. There's no doubt in my mind that we will. It's a matter of learning and putting that time in.

**Q. Michael Cannon, your engineer, is a mad scientist when it comes to going fast, especially at the Indianapolis Motor Speedway. What is it going to be like to work with Michael Cannon?**

STING RAY ROBB: Really excited about that. I remember sitting on the grid going out for qualifying, I think it was probably 2019. I was getting ready to go at Gateway for qualifying. Everyone was kind of gawking at this one guy off in the corner, Oh, man, that's Michael Cannon.

Who is this guy? I don't know who this is.

I got the download from that day on. Kept my eye on him. Like you said, he was the mad scientist behind the scenes that makes those cars go faster on the Speedway.

I'm excited to be working with him. He's got a good brain. I'm excited to try and pull some knowledge out of that.

**Q. Larry, I know you're trying to bring the team back to prominence, getting involved with Team Penske. When you had a little bit of a revolving door a lot of times with drivers, how difficult is it to really find the right combination, be able to get a foothold to be able to make that growth happen?**

LARRY FOYT: Well, I mean, the biggest thing is, like you said, we still have Michael Cannon there. On the engineering side, top down, we're staying pretty much the same.

I think Sting Ray has a year of experience under his belt. He's bringing that with him. It's going to be a big help.

It's not like a complete reset. I think the cars, although hybrid will be coming on later this year, which is exciting, but he's got some experience in this car, so that will pay dividends for sure for us.

**Q. Sting Ray, coming off of your rookie INDYCAR season, is there any one thing or couple things that you feel like you are going to be markedly more confident or comfortable with going into this second season?**

STING RAY ROBB: I mean, there's a bunch of things. We could write a book probably about all the things I could apply based off my knowledge from last year.

I think one of the bigger things, I didn't realize the impact it would have on the way I would arrive at the track, was the off track responsibilities. That was something during the month of May I didn't really have a good grasp on. People would tell me that it's busy, it feels like the year of May. Man, does it feel like the year of May.

I mean, going into this year, my expectations are a lot different. I know how to manage that better. The team around me knows how to manage that better. I think that just plays into the whole momentum of the season.

When you start the year with that expectation, you know what to do at every race weekend and between race weekends, there's a lot of production done that leads to the results later on down the road.

Also learning the ropes in INDYCAR. The driving style is a bit different than the lower series just because you're not dealing with 15 or 16 cars, you're dealing with 27, 28, 33 cars for the 500. There's a lot to learn in that aspect of choosing your fights, picking your battles on the racetrack.

That was something I learned early on I felt like where I had that experience since I was probably in go-karts when you're racing with 50 other go-karters. If you give up a little bit here, it might actually be a little bit better down in the race an hour and a half later to have that position back, not lose two laps because you made a silly mistake.

**Q. This opportunity you have, when we are at this point a year from now when we're looking back on 2024, how would you characterize a good season or a solid season or one that would meet your expectations?**

STING RAY ROBB: That's something we could probably discuss with the team more. I think everyone wants to improve. We're seeing that trajectory, like I said, based off this last season in 2023 for the team. Then me going into my sophomore year. Historically my sophomore seasons have been quite a bit better than my rookie years for whatever reason. I like to say I don't have the sophomore slump, which is kind of nice. It's really tough that first year.

I think going into the year, my expectations are probably to get at least a few top 10s. It's a very competitive series. With the hybrid being introduced, it's going to be up to who manages those new tools the best. I'm excited to see what that is going to be like, especially halfway through the year.

It will be down to who can make the adaptations the fastest. At the end of the day that's what any car racing leads to, it's whoever can make the most adjustments.

**Q. Larry, it's the same car running out of the Speedway shop that Benjamin Pedersen ran for you last year. Any indication Sting Ray hopping into this ride that Benjamin will not be back with you next year?**

LARRY FOYT: Not sure about that. We're sorting all that out. So, yeah, I can't really speak to that yet.

Today we're just talking about Sting Ray. I think, yeah, he probably will run out of Indy shop, which is good. We're just going back to a number which is more one that we have run in the past. We're just sticking with that.

**Q. Where are you in the process of trying to fill out this team and get Sting Ray a full season teammate? Would you expect to be two full-time cars next year, potentially a third in the 500?**

LARRY FOYT: Yeah, exactly, our plan is to stay at two cars. We're just sorting that out now, working on that. There will be more announcements on that to come.

Yeah, we'll keep that to come out in a little bit.

**Q. Sting Ray, the on-track product, you go from one team in Dale Coyne now over here, different powerplant, trying to adapt to that. What kind of things do you look at to focus on and key in on as you start your sophomore campaign?**

STING RAY ROBB: I think growing off the expectations from last year. Like I said, it's going to be a big key to our success this coming season. Also just focusing on areas of improvement for the team. It seems like these cars tend to have trends, handling perspective as well as what you need to be doing as a driver. There's a lot that we've learned or I've learned personally over the last year just on what those trends are.

I'm sure those trends will change with the new powerplant, like you said, the different tuning styles that will go around that, the package built around that.

Having that information not only from AJ Foyt Racing but from Team Penske, I think there's a lot to learn ahead of the season starting. Going through some race data, footage, whatever else there might be, try to learn that ahead of time, have that expectation built up so when we arrive at the track, I'm not getting in the car and have to adjust halfway through the weekend, which tended to happen quite a few times this last season.

**Q. Following you through your junior ladder system, it's not necessarily year one that you hit your stride, it's the experience that you start to build on the**

**results. How important is it for you to make sure you're able to try to continue that, continue to get experience to have the same cycle at the top level?**

STING RAY ROBB: Yeah, it's super important. I think environments play a big part of success in any athlete. You look at baseball teams where players will get transferred from team to team. They can have success with one team but not the other, but it's still the same player. You talk about race cars, they're set up differently than everything else.

That environment plays a big part. Part of the reason we wanted to be with AJ Foyt Racing is because we know their environment is good, they have good personnel around them. Like I said, I'm going to keep bringing that up, that upward trajectory. I want to get on that bandwagon, ride that to the top.

I'm excited about what the team has done in the recent history and what they're going to continue to do in the future.

**Q. Larry, when you look at the situation with the hybrid, the fact y'all are an organization that hasn't had a chance to play with that, what's kind of the challenges you are facing?**

LARRY FOYT: I think that is one place where the alliance with Penske will pay huge dividends is that, because of the experience they're going to have with this unit. It will certainly give us some good information to jump right into it.

I think that's part of why we're having this delay, is INDYCAR wants to be fair to the teams and make sure everybody's got time to get some testing with it. Kudos to them for making that tough decision. I think that's really, really good for all the teams to make sure we have time because everybody wants this thing to go really well. I think what they're doing is good and it will help us out, too.

**Q. How many of your resources do you feel you're pulling in the off-season in that direction, or have you, a percentage?**

LARRY FOYT: Well, the biggest thing is as we get parts in and we're getting the cars built with some of the new parts and pieces, anytime you have change, the engineers have things that weights are changing a little bit, how is our weight distribution going to be affected, how we play with that.

It's a lot of unknowns until we get on track with it. A lot of smart people working really hard. I'm excited. I think

Chevy has put a lot of work in it, as has Honda. Until we really get on track, we don't know for sure exactly what it's going to be like.

**Q. Larry, what do you think the benefit is going into next season with the hybrid and having the likes of Michael Cannon back with the team for 2024 given his experience but also the fact it's a new technology?**

LARRY FOYT: Yeah, like I was saying, it is a new technology for all of us, for all the teams. Really excited with the Penske alliance because I think that's going to really help us on the hybrid side because they had some experience with it.

Now having Cannon back is great. We've had some new additions as well on the engineering side that I'm really excited about. The team just has a good feel going forward right now. Man, I know this off-season it seems long, but it's not because there's still a lot going on. Guys are doing pit stops every day. We're trying to work on all those things that we can control and get ready when the hybrid unit comes on. We're learning that as quick as we can.

**Q. Sting Ray, it's a new engine partner for yourself. Do you know when you're going to get time in the simulator with Chevy?**

STING RAY ROBB: No, that hasn't been decided yet. That's something that I'm sure will come very soon. I mean, for now, like Larry said, we're just going to focus on the things that are in our control to get ready and prepare for the season because things can come at you pretty quick. We're going to try to make the most of this time right before the season starts.

THE MODERATOR: Larry, is Michael Cannon getting paid by the mention in this news conference?

LARRY FOYT: Probably, I think so (laughter).

**Q. Sting Ray, do you know if you're going to be on track anytime before the season, in the simulator?**

STING RAY ROBB: We're just trying to get this deal done as soon as we can. Obviously the goal would be to get on track at some point ahead of the season and knock the rust off.

Larry mentioned it's a long off-season, but it doesn't feel that long. For us drivers, I've been scratching to get back in the seat since a week after Laguna. I'm ready to go whenever they give me the call.

**Q. Have you thought about how quick those cars, Foyt cars, were at Indianapolis? Has that entered your mind already?**

STING RAY ROBB: No, I've been thinking about that since May (smiling). Hard not to think about. When you see a performance like that, it's inspiring. I'm excited to be a part of that this next year.

**Q. Larry, you had quick cars at Indy. Was there a focus in the off-season to get better at a different kind of track, across the board? What has been the technical focus?**

LARRY FOYT: Yeah, so definitely going into last season we knew Indy was a place that we could kind of make the biggest gain quickly. We had a big focus on that.

Yeah, it's definitely more well-rounded. The thing is we definitely don't want to lose anything we have at Indy, we want to keep gaining, go two more spots up the grid there and win that thing.

Yeah, I mean, big thing in the off-season has just been us collaborating with Penske, how this is going to work, making all that kind of two teams coming together a little bit. That's a big focus here in the off-season.

**Q. Can you tell us a little bit more how that's going to work, what is being shared?**

LARRY FOYT: No, I can't (smiling).

I mean, it's good stuff. They've been great, really great. Just getting all of our people working together. The biggest thing is how we all work together most efficiently.

The INDYCAR weekends, they happen really quickly. You get there and you have practice, the engineers look at everything overnight, boom, you're right back into practice, qualifying, then into the race. Just being prepared for that I think is the biggest thing, getting all our processes to match up and all that.

It's great. I'm really excited for next year. They've been great to work with so far.

**Q. Sting Ray, it's your second season in INDYCAR. How different will be the Sting Ray Robb that we can see in 2023 in terms of motivation, in terms of performance, comparing to the Sting Ray Robb that we will see in 2024?**

STING RAY ROBB: I hope it's going to be a lot better, tell you that much right now. I know my confidence level is

going to be much higher. My preparation is going to be a lot better, as well, because I know what to expect from the season.

Like I said, the off-track pace as well as the on-track pace was a bit of a shock last year. Having the knowledge ahead of time, being able to build a program around that has been very helpful. I've been in the gym almost every day this off-season so far training, so to have that physical foundation already set even a few months before the season starting is a big deal because it's only going to get better.

As we go through the season, like we've said before, there's a lot of races back to back. There's not a lot of time to improve during the year. It's the preparation during the off-season that makes the biggest difference.

For me, that's my goal, is to make sure I'm applying what I have learned through the last season. I think that will pay big dividends during the year, especially from the start.

Going into last year, felt like I was being sent into the deep end a little bit at St. Pete. This year I feel ready to go, even now, today. I feel we're in a better position mentally, physically. I'm excited for the season to get going.

**Q. Since 2019 and 2020, you haven't had the opportunity to repeat at the same team and same series. How much can this affect in order to perform at the highest level?**

STING RAY ROBB: That actually is a big thing. You learn the lingo between engineers and drivers, everyone else on the team. That relationship that's built, it takes time. It's not done immediately.

But for myself it means a lot to be signing before Christmas because I can start working on that now. With the team being in an area where I can access it easily, during the month of May having their resources here close by, it allows us to kind of maintain those relationships during the racing season as well as grow them.

As with anything, with any company, with any success, you got to deal with people. Having the right people in place, having good communication with teams is a super important thing. The more time you spend together, the better.

**Q. Speaking about the hybrid change, there is information speaking about that this change will be in mid-season. How much can this affect in order to make a great performance?**

STING RAY ROBB: I think the hybrid system is going to be really cool to see just because it's not like any other hybrid system we've seen in other areas of motorsport so far. It allows the drivers to have more driving tools, per se. I'm really excited to see that.

Obviously more horsepower is always exciting for a driver. We always like to see a bigger number on the horsepower side. I know as that increases throughout the season, we're going to keep learning.

But I really appreciate what INDYCAR is doing because their innovation over the last couple years is super exciting.

Also from the safety aspect, they don't compromise on safety in anything they do. Having a hybrid system that's not only well-performing and reliable but is safe is super good. For myself, I'm excited about that.

Having more driving tools will be good. I'm honestly kind of glad it will be introduced later in the season so I can get my feet wet with the team first in the beginning part of the year without that different foundation as far as the car goes. As the year progresses, I'm sure it will be a good steppingstone for us.

**Q. Larry, you've mentioned there is still an announcement for AJ Foyt. In which type will be? Is there a driver - I don't know? Which characteristics can we expect about this announcement, maybe second driver?**

LARRY FOYT: Well, I just have to wait for the announcement. I want to keep today about Sting Ray. Yeah, we'll announce our other plans at a later date when we get that all sorted out, so...

**Q. Sting Ray, did you think at any point you wouldn't be on the grid? How relieving is it for you to be on the grid?**

STING RAY ROBB: Thoughts go through your head when you haven't signed already. For myself, I know God has had a plan for my career all along the way. We've seen too many miracles along the way to doubt that plan.

I know where my identity has lied all along the way. I know racing doesn't mean everything to me, but it's what I want to do, what I have a passion for. To be able to attend another season in the INDYCAR SERIES is another dream. We can check that off.

I posted last year about five-year-old Sting Ray Robb getting his first go-kart and dreaming about being an INDYCAR driver one day. Last year that dream was becoming a reality. I feel the same way this year. That

passion, that fire that that five-year-old kid is the same feeling I have today.

For me going into my second year, I feel that probably even more so because there's a lot of growth available to us. The team is super strong and they're getting better. I'm going to get better, as well.

To be here and with the team this year, I'm very excited.

**Q. Obviously you had your rookie season last year. Improvement towards the end of the season. What things can you take from last season coming into next season?**

STING RAY ROBB: How to deal with chaos. That last race of the year was all chaos. That was our best finish.

Yeah, there was so much to learn throughout the year. Confidence level has increased. How to deal with people on and off the racetrack was so much better throughout the season.

I learned a lot about myself, too. Racing has the highest of highs and lowest of lows. If you don't have something to lean on between those event, when you have those bad days and good days, it's going to be tough.

I feel like I'm doing better personally just as a human dealing with adversity as well as learning how to apply that to being a better INDYCAR driver.

**Q. Larry, last season showed some great improvement, especially at the Indianapolis 500. How are you going to replicate more on road courses? Is the Penske alliance going to be significant in improving that?**

LARRY FOYT: I hope so. Hopefully as a team we continue to improve. That's it.

But definitely I think just having more information will be helpful. I think there were some tracks we gained on for sure last year and some places that we need to work on. That's where we've got, like I say, some new engineers that have joined as well that have some ideas.

Just excited to get testing. We'll see where that shakes out. But definitely want to improve overall.

**Q. Sting Ray, I wanted to rewind the clocks. AJ Foyt Racing had a strong performance at the Indianapolis 500. In contrast you had to do it the hard way. How much did that grow you as a person going through perhaps the height of adversity in the NTT INDYCAR**

**SERIES for the Indianapolis 500? What can you learn from that experience to try and build going towards the front come May?**

STING RAY ROBB: I learned I don't want to ever do that again. Last-row qualifier there, that's not a very exciting day. When you make it into the 500, it means so much. To have to go through the stress of an extra qualifying session or two, man, I don't want to have to do that again.

I think going into this next year, the team is obviously very promising. So for myself, I know that my expectations are a lot higher. The contrast of last season's performance for myself versus with AJ Foyt Racing, there's a lot to learn, a lot to learn.

I think mentally it will play a big part of where I'm focusing my energies as well as my confidence level. Going into it, I was just trying to be a sponge and learn as much as I could. This year I actually have some sort of knowledge. I know it's only four left turns, but at 240 miles an hour they come up on you pretty quick and there's a lot of dynamics in there.

I'm excited. I think it's going to be a really great year. The month of May I'm sure is going to be a lot better.

**Q. You talk about the mental game. What kind of things did you learn during your rookie season in order to boost your confidence and some self-belief in you?**

STING RAY ROBB: Great question.

I think one of the most important things for myself is where am I focusing my time. I think it's so easy to get pulled different directions in INDYCAR racing, as far as your responsibilities on and off the racetrack.

For myself, making time for the right things, the right moments, is one of the biggest things. I felt like I wasn't getting (indiscernible) into at different times during the season when I needed to be. That's because I wasn't making time for that. For me that means my faith aspect, who I'm spending time with, am I recovering in between races, am I getting good night's sleep because I'm stressed out or not stressed out.

Having those areas of improvement, it's not the things that people really think about, but it makes a big difference at the end of the day when you're dealing with 27 of the other best drivers in the world in INDYCAR racing.

For myself, all of those are going to play into a factor of how am I performing on the racetrack. Is my brain working



at full capacity because I got a good recovery last weekend or whatnot. There's a lot that goes into that, but it all plays out in the end.

THE MODERATOR: Larry, you have meetings and whatnot, so thanks for joining us. We have to cut you loose.

LARRY FOYT: Yeah. Thank you, everybody. Appreciate it.

**Q. Sting Ray, with the reintroduction of Milwaukee, how excited are you to go there in an INDYCAR?**

STING RAY ROBB: Milwaukee has some great cheese curd, so I'm excited about that. To get back there twice is a good thing.

The track obviously has some good history. I've gone back and watched some old racing videos from there. It looks like it's going to be a fun track to race on.

Like Larry said earlier on, we don't know what the hybrid situation is going to be like until we get in the car. I don't know what that track is going to be like until we get in the car.

I'm going to try to do some simulator work ahead of time. It can't be that hard, just two left turns. But really fast and all the excitement in the world with a bunch of other cars on the track that are trying to kill you. Welcome to INDYCAR racing. That's what makes it so fun.

THE MODERATOR: We're going to go ahead and leave it there for now. Congratulations, Sting Ray Robb.

STING RAY ROBB: Thank you. Thank you for being here today. I'd excited for 2024. It's going to be a good one.

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