

# NTT INDYCAR SERIES

## News Conference

Thursday, January 11, 2024

### Sting Ray Robb

#### Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: Continuing with our afternoon session, joined by Sting Ray Robb, who will drive the No. 41 AJ Foyt Racing Chevrolet, wrapping up his rookie season with Dale Coyne last year, making the transition to A.J.'s team. Are you ready to go with the new team and new outlook, new fire suit? How is it? Let's go, right?

STING RAY ROBB: Yeah, I'm ready to go.

#### **Q. How has the transition been with the new team?**

STING RAY ROBB: So far, so good. We haven't seen a track in however many months since Laguna, but I'm excited. I've been to the shop a couple times, met with the engineers, met with the rest of the crew, and seems like everyone is pretty upbeat.

I think they're doing a lot of really good things, and I think the Penske alignment deal is going to be good for both parties. I think we have a lot to learn from each other, so mutually beneficial, and I think everyone is looking forward to the season already.

#### **Q. Are you one of those that come out of a new year with goals and that sort of thing?**

STING RAY ROBB: I think I started working on those new goals after Laguna. That already felt like the new year to me. So when January already rolled around, I was halfway through the goals already. It's good.

#### **Q. What do you want to work on the most from a driver standpoint?**

STING RAY ROBB: Finishing all the laps of the Indy 500 would be a good start. Last year was tough. And it was more than just the on-track stuff. It was the off-track stuff, as well, just the rigors of INDYCAR racing. For myself as a rookie, I think I overcommitted at times on and off the track, and so I think there's a balance there.

I'm ready to go. I've watched the videos. I've learned what I can from my mistakes last year, and I think that it'll just be

a similar story to my past seasons. Rookie seasons are always tough, but sophomore seasons always seem to be a little bit better.

#### **Q. Obviously it's a new year, new team. You've got Santino, who's coming back this year. What do you think you can learn from Santino given that you're going to be with a new power this year as well?**

STING RAY ROBB: That's a great, great thing to have him back, and I think the team is excited about it, and especially, like you said, with that experience with the other power unit. We've gotten some engineers from other teams this off-season that kind of came from the other side of the world and have been joining the Chevy side. It'll be nice to be transitioning together with those guys as well as having the knowledge of Michael Cannon and Santino to help us all learn something.

I think we can learn from my past in the Honda car just as much as we can learn from their past in the Chevy car.

I think it'll be good just because year after year, you see the sort of tension between manufacturers. It seems like one is better at this track, one is better at this track. And I think Chevy is on the up and up right now.

#### **Q. In relation to Milwaukee, how excited are you about going there?**

STING RAY ROBB: Yeah, it's good. Wisconsin is a wonderful place, and being up there at Road America is always one of my favorite places to be. Being just a little bit south in Milwaukee is going to be a good thing. I think it'll be fun for everyone.

#### **Q. Your boss has some good memories at Milwaukee.**

STING RAY ROBB: Yeah, I need to take some notes. We'll have a study date one of these days.

#### **Q. How important do you see it sort of coming in as a rookie to then have a second year or sophomore year to build on that? There's the first year purely for you to adapt and then the second year you feel like you can really kick on? How important is having that**



## second year?

STING RAY ROBB: I think it's super important. I think that for myself especially, I do better with experience. I always like to quote the book *The Outliers*, which talks about the 10,000 hour rule and how you have to spend 10,000 hours doing whatever it is in order to become great at it.

So I'm not anywhere near to my 10,000 hours in an INDYCAR yet, but I'm on my way to it. So having that rookie season out of the way and having some time off to kind of digest everything from the season and really focus on the areas I need to work on, I think it's good.

I think it'll allow me to go into the weekends not just from a learning aspect. It'll allow me to go, okay, I already know what the deal is here at this track at this time and the tendencies with the team and whatever. So like you said, I'm not adapting during the weekend as much as I am preparing, which it makes a big difference.

### **Q. Do you see this as a multiyear sort of thing with Foyt, or is it a case of seeing how the first year goes and going from there?**

STING RAY ROBB: I think it very well could be. With their results in the Indy 500 last year, I think we're all hopeful for what the team is capable of doing. Like I said with the alignment, I think that both teams are going to have a lot to learn, and hopefully that'll benefit both, and it'll allow me an opportunity to learn and progress and have some success with the team.

### **Q. I remember last year you talked about how your deal with Dale Coyne Racing came together because of one gym pass together with Linus Lundqvist. How did this deal with AJ Foyt Racing come together?**

STING RAY ROBB: I'm trying to even think, because this was kind of a long time in the running here. We weren't really sure that AJ Foyt Racing was going to have an open seat before the end of the year. And so when we found out about the Penske deal and everything, we were really excited for the team because we knew that was a good opportunity for them to partner with another team just to learn and share resources that way.

At one point, I think my manager, Peter Rossi, was talking to Larry Foyt in passing and started up a conversation talking about the opportunity. And I don't really know much, honestly. I was kind of a bystander this year when it came to joining the team. I said, yeah, let's do it, sounds like a good program, and it sounds like they're doing a lot of good things over there.

Especially with the Indianapolis-based shop, it allows me to go in and work with the team day in and day out, whereas I didn't have that so much last year with DCR being based out of Chicago. That drive is a bit longer than I'd like to make on a daily commute.

But, yeah, I can do pit stop practices now. I can go bug the engineers before they kick me out at the end of the day. And it just allows me more opportunity to kind of be in relation with those guys, which I feel like I missed out on a lot last year.

### **Q. You mentioned the Penske partnership. What is it you think you can get out of that, and is that maybe the main difference compared to last year, when at Coyne it was a little bit you guys were more on your own?**

STING RAY ROBB: Yeah, as compared to last year, I think it's just going to have more data. Like that's the biggest thing, especially for myself with guys like Josef and Will and Scott. Those guys, their driving style, from what I've understood, are different than what I've seen that work in the Honda. So I think that will be interesting to learn from them early on and have their success kind of right there for us to access.

Especially on -- just having the affirmation of, okay, the car is good, it's quick, now I can go work on myself. I think that an underrated part of being a young driver is having that good baseline to work from, having a good foundation so that you can work on yourself.

I think we forget a lot of times that drivers aren't robots, as much as we'd like to be, and there are outside influences that can make a difference on how we perform inside the race car.

### **Q. We can see on your overalls that you've got some new partners on board. It sounds from what I've read in the press you've done a lot of hard work to bring that group together. Can you talk about that?**

STING RAY ROBB: Yeah, so the big one on my chest right now is Pray.com, and that's an app that is trying to help people bring prayer into their daily life. For me it's a pretty good alignment. We were looking for companies that I could stand behind, that could stand behind me. And obviously faith is a big aspect of who I am and it's where I find my identity. So having them step on board this year was really, really exciting, and I think it's going to be a good long-term partnership for us.

Another brand, Goodheart, they have been with us for a long time. They came on I think around 2020 right before I won my Indy Pro 2000 championship. They've been with

us ever since. As well as Tovuti, PNP, Pinecroft, all those guys, they're returning this year, which is really cool to see.

It's hard to get those guys in the door and get them to our racetrack. So when they sign on and it can last, it means a lot, it means to see their support and they become part of the Sting Ray Robb family.

**Q. With a teammate like Santino Ferrucci, will there be a pit row battle of hairstyles?**

STING RAY ROBB: Maybe. I think that I need to find an electrical outlet with a fork. Does anyone have one around?

**Q. On a more serious note, when you were five years old, you said you wanted to drive race cars. I wonder what that means now. I think you're 23, driving for the iconic Foyt racing team.**

STING RAY ROBB: Yeah, so I'm 22 now, and I think one of the coolest things about signing with Foyt this year was being at least associated with the name A.J. Foyt because that's synonymous with winning, being the winningest driver in INDYCAR history. So for myself it's cool to have that history and that legend to live up to.

It is really cool to be a part of that group because motorsports is a small family. It's a very small community. We all run in the same world together. So for myself, this is the second of some very, very legendary drivers that have won a lot of races that I've driven for.

I have a box of Wheaties with his face on it that I'm hoping to get signed by the end of the year, but we'll see how that goes, see if he approves of that.

**Q. Along that line, have you had a chance to talk to A.J. face to face yet?**

STING RAY ROBB: No, not yet, but I'm looking forward to it.

**Q. I wonder if it's getting harder or just different, the way to find sponsors now with this (indiscernible) coming into INDYCAR, or is it the same hard work to get any sponsors?**

STING RAY ROBB: I think if anything it's a help. I think that we're all looking forward to the innovation that INDYCAR is doing with the hybrid system, and I think that myself, the team, as well as Chevy being a partner there, we're all happy that INDYCAR has postponed the introduction of the hybrid system until later in the year so that way we can all get a good feel for what that will bring as far as the racing series goes and the competition we'll

lay out there.

I see no difference as far as partnerships go that are negative. If anything, it's a positive.

**Q. What could be the most valuable lesson that you take from Dale Coyne?**

STING RAY ROBB: I mean, there's a lot to learn from last season. But from him himself, I think Dale was really good at not overthinking things. He was really good at just kind of maintaining a good balance in his personality, especially on the stand as a strategist. He made some good calls last year, but we were in tough positions a lot of times. And in INDYCAR racing, little things make a big difference.

So for me I think that just learning from Dale's experience and being able to sit down and listen. Instead of just giving him all the knowledge that I have, I should just listen to what they have to say.

**Q. You're joining a new team with AJ Foyt Racing and Santino Ferrucci as your teammate. What can you learn from another young driver like Santino Ferrucci for this upcoming season?**

STING RAY ROBB: I mean, there's probably a lot to learn. I think Santino is a good talent in the series, and I think that his personality goes well with what I have to give, as well. I think we're going to get along just fine, and I'm looking forward to start working together.

One thing that I learned last year that I wish I had known better was kind of how to enjoy the off-track stuff, and I think Santino does a good job of that. He knows how to have fun away from the racetrack as well as on the racetrack. I'm looking forward to kind of learning that side from him and just getting some good time together, having some fun on the racetrack.

**Q. This team has proved to show good speed on ovals. Are you excited for that going into 2024, knowing that you could possibly have a better shot at these oval tracks?**

STING RAY ROBB: Yeah, I'm hoping to not be in the last row qualifying this year. That would be a good start for things.

**Q. Last year Foyt showed a lot of speed, a lot more speed than we've seen, and I think everybody was deep in their soul cheering for Santino at the end of the race, an American driver in a Foyt car. Know you were in the back row last year and just the stress that probably caused you all weekend. I know you want to**

**take it a race at a time, but you've got to be champing at the bit to be able to get out in that car, knowing it's got some speed and show what you can do on the oval at IMS.**

STING RAY ROBB: Absolutely. I remember talking to one of the drivers for the team last year, I can't remember who it was, but they said, the car is fast. I don't know why. Like I just hammer down and it goes.

And that was all there was to it. It wasn't anything different that I was doing in the car that I was in on the last row qualifying. I was full throttle for four laps with no wiggles, no understeering. Stuck to the ground, trimmed out, and it just didn't have it. I think it will be interesting to kind of have that feeling of like the car feels the same, but we're just going faster.

At least that's my hope.

I know there's days like that where everything just kind of flows and it's the way it's supposed to be, so I'm hoping that we can get some of those this year.

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