

NTT INDYCAR SERIES

News Conference

Monday, May 13, 2024

Indianapolis, Indiana, USA

Dennis Reinbold

Don Cusick

Ryan Hunter-Reay

Press Conference



"Yellowstone" that 101 Studios produces through Taylor Sheridan and his group. It's a really cool association to have with those guys.

It's a fun one to have and fun to interact with them and learn their business a little bit and be part of that.

We're excited to have them, and it's a multiyear program with them that we're excited about putting forward and getting to know them even better.

But yeah, the ranch is huge. It's a 150-year-old ranch in Texas, and it's an operational ranch. It's there in the TV show, as well, as a backdrop. Really cool people to work with.

THE MODERATOR: VensureHR is a company that handles things for employers and companies and groups, correct?

DENNIS REINBOLD: They are. They are a turnkey clients company, so payroll, insurance, all kinds of things that a company would need to take over all of their operations from the payroll and reporting taxes and clients issues with the government and things like that. They're very turnkey, and they're a huge company. They're all across the country and do a lot of companies throughout the -- I think it's like -- I may get this number wrong. I think they have something like 5,000 clients. They're a large payroll plus company.

THE MODERATOR: That's the how and the who. Don, I turn to you. You're smiling already. You just walked in the gates here in the month of May to have another go as part of an Indianapolis 500 ownership group. Tell me your thoughts on being here with this group and this effort.

DON CUSICK: Well, it's always great to be back. We're super thankful to Dennis and Brett for having us back. We had a real good relationship with them last year, so this is our second year back, and we hope to continue it, obviously.

Really glad to be on both cars, both Conor and Ryan this year, so that's kind of fun, too. We're excited.

THE MODERATOR: Dennis Reinbold, Dreyer & Reinbold racing; Don Cusick, Cusick Motorsports, announcing that the partnership that will back their entry in the 108th Indianapolis 500-mile race is VensureHR, 6666 Ranch Beef and 101 Studios.

Dennis, we were talking about this being a big group. Is it a B-to-B thing? Is it somebody you stumbled upon in the airport? How did all this come together?

DENNIS REINBOLD: Well, it's been a long time putting it together over the last -- really probably late summer it started, that we started talking to 101 as well as with Ryan, just kind of comparing notes and working through a deal program and what we could do, and Ryan has been involved through every step of the way, and Brett De Bord from our team has put it together, and talking to the 101 guys and got it to the finish line as well as several other components. Us being able to keep Don included and part of our team going forward, we're excited about that, as well, to round out the budget. I know Don can speak a little bit about Sierra Pacific and some of the other partners he's brought on board for us. But it's been a long process.

I go out there and see the car put together and painted and looking good, there was a lot of work that went into that starting pretty much last summer I would say.

THE MODERATOR: So 101 Studios, a production group based out of Hollywood, 6666 Ranch beef, you were telling me 6666 Ranch is like the size of the state of Rhode Island, which is where I'm from, by the way, so that's a little mind-blowing for me to have a ranch the size of my home state.

DENNIS REINBOLD: Yeah, 6666 Ranch quality beef is the product that they have, and it's pretty incredible stuff. This is the ranch that is shown on the TV show



I always have a smile on my face around this place. How could you not?

THE MODERATOR: Same with the guy in the black shirt down here on the end. Ryan, back at Indianapolis, another go to take home a Borg-Warner trophy. Your thoughts on walking in the gates with this group and this car.

RYAN HUNTER-REAY: First, it's great to be back at Indy. This is what it's all about. We wait all year for this opportunity, and we're all excited to get going again.

I had a tremendous time with this team last year. It's a really well-run program with really good people involved in it. Really happy to come back, and I think for the 23 car, for everything that went on here, I think Brett De Bord and Dennis did a great job putting this thing together. It was not straightforward. There's a lot of moving pieces to it.

It's great to be back with the Q6 as well and for them to be on the car and Sierra Pacific to be on the car. Chevy's support also was pivotal in this whole thing, in this whole process. Yeah, it's a great group, and it really required a lot of people pulling together to make it all work, and that's what you love to see coming together.

Car looks great, and I'm excited just to get on track. We didn't have much running here at the open test, so the whole 23 team is just excited to get moving, get operating, and get through our checklist.

Q. (No microphone.)

DENNIS REINBOLD: He's great to work with. We hadn't worked together before last year, and just so many of his thoughts and how he approaches this race are very much in alignment with how we look at it, so he's very methodical and really strong at feedback. Just being a valuable person in the car to let us further the car for him and develop it and get better and better.

It's great to have Ryan back. As soon as the race was over last year, I told him, hey, if it works out we want you back, and it worked out. So we're really, really happy to have him back and feel like we have unfinished business from last year with him.

Q. What's this like compared to running for a full time team? I would imagine there's a lot of similarities but also a lot of attention to this one race?

RYAN HUNTER-REAY: I love it. I really do. You have all these guys that are just absolutely dialing in on this one race, and that comes down to the attention to detail on the car, the preparation of the car. You don't have all these

folks being pulled in a million different directions.

Right now the rest of the -- pretty much the rest of the field is mid-season grind mode right now. These guys are tired, and it kind of just ends up being another -- even though you're at Indy, it ends up being another Tuesday that you're on track or another Wednesday. You're just kind of going through the process.

Last year was my first time ever experiencing that, working with a group that really focused on the 500 only, and I love it. I know Dennis would like to run all season if the numbers made sense and the right partners were involved, but there also is some advantages to doing what we're doing, coming in and operating just at the 500.

With that, you don't have -- everybody is not in their stride, either. So you have to build that up through the week. These guys are practicing nonstop on pit stops and all that stuff. It's more just getting through the moving parts of a bunch of different personalities working together on the go, on pit lane, and getting through all those things.

The good thing is we did it last year together, so we're going to hit the ground running this year.

Q. Ryan, it's been 10 years since your Indianapolis 500 win. I'd like you to take a little bit about that and how important winning this race was to you in your career from then to now.

RYAN HUNTER-REAY: Yeah, it's crazy it's been 10. Then I think of all the big fish that got away, the ones that got away. '16 comes to mind, '18. That's the thing about this place is everything has to go absolutely perfect. You have to be driving at your absolute best. The car has to be set up absolutely right. Strategy has to be absolutely perfect all day, and you need a little bit of Indy luck with it to win it.

I mean, it's a career-defining moment for sure. I think a lot of drivers within the racing industry will say that an INDYCAR championship is more valuable all around, but when it really comes down to it, at the end, when you hang up your helmet at the end, what would you rather have, an Indy 500 win or an INDYCAR championship, absolutely Indy 500 all day every day.

Q. How many more years do you want to come back and try to get No. 2?

RYAN HUNTER-REAY: I still feel like I'm 28, so I have no idea. It doesn't even enter my mind. I think about this race all the time. That's what I really love about working with this team and with Dennis, as well, is he's got that same

passion about it that I do, for it that I do.

As long as it's one of the most important things for me and what I focus on, then I don't really have an answer for you on that because I haven't thought about it.

Q. For Dennis and Don, there's been a lot of talk about the upcoming charter agreement. We've got a unique situation, Dennis, you've been around for so many years, Don, you're a new partner to INDYCAR relatively speaking. What are your thoughts right now about the charter agreement currently being an Indy-only team? What would you like to see included in that and provisions for Indy 500 teams and protections for them?

DENNIS REINBOLD: I told them my suggestion would be to base the number not off 25, which was the proposed. It still hasn't been solidified. I've had a number of conversations with them, sent my suggestions in the form of emails on two different occasions.

I think the number ought to be 33. This is the crown jewel of the sport, so there should be 33 charters, and it should reward the people like Don and myself that come here year in and year out and strive to be full time.

We haven't become full time -- adding Don to our partnership starting last year has given us the opportunity to do a lot more testing. We've done a lot of wind tunnel testing the last year two that we haven't been able to do on our own before, so that's been a good step for us as a team to build and grow.

For us to do the other races on the schedule correctly, and that's the only way I want to do it, we recognize that we would have to go outside of ourselves to be able to bring in like a venture capital type of partner, or we've had discussions with three different NASCAR teams that have an interest in coming to INDYCAR full time. There's a possibility we could partner with them to join us and do that and put one heck of a good effort out there to go out there and compete on a day in, day out basis in every form of racing.

Where we are good is that we focus on Indy only. The only teams right now -- so that's where our budget goes. Don's involvement has got us to the point where we are pretty adequate at that. We're never where you want to be, obviously, but we are very competent and confident in what we bring to this track right now today.

To think we could go to Milwaukee and compete, we can't do that. We don't do the testing that's necessary to go there and be competitive with road courses, street courses,

short ovals. We don't have that, so we recognize we have to bring in a partnership sort of situation to be able to do two full-time cars full time in the circuit.

That's where we're at right now, and the charter being closed off at 25 doesn't give us an opportunity really to expand, if that's a theoretical possibility, and I think it is possible. We've talked to a lot of people that have interest, and if we can do that, we would like to do it. But we don't want to be excluded from the possibility of being able to be a charter and then being able to compete for the 22 Leaders Circle spots.

We've been here 25 years. This is our 25th year in INDYCAR, Dreyer & Reinbold Racing. Knock on wood, again, hopefully this will be our 50th car -- 50 cars qualified at the end of this week.

We're definitely dedicated to this place and want to be a part of it. We just don't want to be shut out, and the 25 really kind of closes it off and it shuts us out of the situation. So I hate it. I don't like that scenario at all because it limits what we can do and what we can potentially grow into.

DON CUSICK: Yeah, really the only thing I can add, and I obviously have talked to Dennis and Brett about this quite a bit, I would just say that we want to be here, Cusick Motorsports, our sponsors want to be here, and we just need that opportunity. If there is an opportunity to go full time, then yeah, we'd be super interested to do that.

But this is a steppingstone, and this is where people get to know about INDYCAR racing, and this is where we cultivate new sponsors and grow them, and so it's super important that we have an opportunity to be here.

Other than that, like I said, I agree with Dennis, and we're going to fight, see what we can do.

DENNIS REINBOLD: I'm jumping back in. I'm obviously fired up about this topic.

The other thing that we do is year in and year out for 25 years, we've spent exactly the same amount of money as the full-time teams. We have had to update all of our cars and all of our equipment to be ready to come to this race and be prepared.

The cost differentiation, yeah, we haven't raised the operational capital to go to other races. We have; we've done other races in the past. But we don't have that in our budget right now today. It's not to say we couldn't, and we would like to have that opportunity to expand if possible.

Q. Don, talk about your involvement, your relationship with Dennis. Obviously Thermal Club was great for the sport, but what bit you, the bug, so to speak, about the Indianapolis 500 and making you want to come back and how that's grown to what we see here today?

DON CUSICK: Great question. I think anybody that's been to this place and been a part of what goes on here gets bit pretty hard by it. I don't know how you couldn't.

The first couple of years I think for us was a learning experience. Last year we felt like we were truly a partner with these guys, and of course this year even more so. I think I equated it to we kind of had our first date last year, and now we're engaged, and if that goes well maybe we'll get married next year maybe.

It's fantastic. There's nothing like welcoming sponsors here and showing them what this place is and what it can do for their businesses. We're fortunate; we've had Sierra Pacific here with us for four years now, and we brought some new sponsors on this year that weren't businesses that I owned, so that's good.

I mean, every time I talk about this place to anybody, new sponsors, old sponsors, friends alike, I get goosebumps. This place is amazing. We're just super fortunate to be here and have guys like Ryan who's all the best parts of INDYCAR as far as I'm concerned. Our sponsors love him. It's just an amazing place. I don't know what else to say about it. I'm amazed every time I step foot on these grounds?

Q. How do you approach this week? You look at the weather, kind of iffy, kind of a jam-packed week. Friday you probably turn your full focus on qualifying, but what's your approach as a veteran driver to what could be a short week this week?

RYAN HUNTER-REAY: We just have to make sure we get through our list of -- there's always the debate going back and forth, how much of the race car setup do you focus on versus qualifying. You've got to qualify up front to run up front.

It's tough, and especially when you get a little bit of a weather delay like that. Obviously tomorrow doesn't look very good at the moment. We didn't get any running really at the open test.

Yeah, we're going to have a lot to do in a short amount of time, and it's just going to be that much more of a fire drill, but this group is ready for it, absolutely. I'm good with that. More time on track here at IMS, all good with it.

We'll just keep working with them and getting through what we can. In combination with the 24 car, with Conor, we're going to try and get through some setup items that we can dry and double the speed of how we get through that list, run together in traffic, things like that. There's a whole lot to do in a short amount of time, but I think we're pretty used to it.

Q. Versus it being an entire year since you had been in an INDYCAR, you ran the end of last season for most of it. Helpful somewhat in bridging that gap for you, seeing where things went at the end of last year?

RYAN HUNTER-REAY: I don't think the two really -- you would think they would, have anything to do with each other, but when I got back on track here last year, the toughest laps I did all month were the rookie orientation.

The car is not designed to do 200 miles an hour, it's designed to do 220, and even at 20 miles an hour less, it's difficult. You have less downforce on the car.

At the time we were running a little bit too far forward on center pressure. It was tricky. That was the toughest part. I was like, wow, this is difficult; how is the rest going to be. But I hadn't done ROP since 2008, so it had been a while.

No, it's kind of like riding a bike in some way here. Once you get back on it, it comes to in lap 1 or 2.

Q. The whole mantra about nothing is given at Indy, a guy who has a Baby Borg at his house has to take the refresher program --

RYAN HUNTER-REAY: I did last year, yeah. We always used to laugh with that, with these guys that come back, 500 winners. Helio has got to do it, right? He did it.

Q. He would have done it last month.

RYAN HUNTER-REAY: Yeah, there's a four-time winner here doing rookie orientation -- oh, right. There was somebody else that was super accomplished that had to do it that we were joking about last year.

But yeah, it's part of it.

THE MODERATOR: Don, Dennis, Ryan, thank you. Thank you for coming in, and we look forward to seeing this beautiful new race car out on the racetrack. I love that the colors are distinct from anything else in the field.

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