

# NTT INDYCAR SERIES

## News Conference

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### Sting Ray Robb

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: We are joined by Sting Ray Robb, driver of the No. 41 Goodheart Vet Pray.com Chevrolet for A.J. Foyt Racing. A season-best 15th from Iowa. We all remember what happened in Sunday's race. Sting Ray Robb, thanks for doing this a few days after the fact. How are you feeling?

STING RAY ROBB: Surprisingly good. Considering the impact and the magnitude of that event, I feel very, very grateful to be where I'm at today.

It's kind of funny, I don't know if anyone follows me on social media, but Isaiah 41 was the devotional that I posted Sunday morning.

The verse said, Fear not for I'm with you. I think that was a timely verse for the day. As I went flying through the air, I was actually not that afraid. I was waiting for the piercing of some debris or something. I just didn't come.

Huge shout out to the AMR safety team and INDYCAR medical. They were on top of the car before I was even stopped, I think. Yeah, very, very grateful for all their support, the host event, things we've been going through to make sure I'm all right. We're cleared for Toronto, which is awesome and exciting. It's surprising considering the magnitude of that impact. Very, very grateful.

THE MODERATOR: I know you've been working out this week. A quick turnaround. Is it a case where you can't wait to get back on the track, build off what you had from Saturday night?

STING RAY ROBB: Absolutely, yeah. Race one went really well for us. The late restarts there kind of hurt us. But finishing 15th was really good. I think we've been building this momentum the last few races of progressively getting better in the racing scenarios.

Getting back in the car at Toronto I think is the best thing for me. When you get kicked off the saddle that hard, you want to get back on as quick as you can to keep the momentum going.

I'm very excited I get to do that this weekend. As a matter of fact, the team has done a good job to get the car back together and get it in the truck and headed back to Toronto this afternoon.

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

**Q. Can you take me through the process, can you take me through the moments leading up to the impact and during and after.**

STING RAY ROBB: Yeah, during the race, our first stop, we only got about a half a tank in the car on that first pit stop. We were running light on fuel. I was on a massive fuel save going into that last stint.

The deal was that I was holding up a big group behind me because we were scrambling to try and save as many drops of fuel as we could. I was fighting with Ed. We had a good battle going. I was very surprised I kept him behind me. That's kind of the nature of the race. The single lane lent to the passing we could have.

Pushing the last few laps, I could see that Rossi was slowing. I didn't know to what extent. I looked up going into turn one just to see where he was located. I think it was about three-quarters of the way through the turn, I could see the closing rate. It was very, very big. It was so massive.

It's kind of like the worst-case scenario, when you're exiting a turn at that speed, with that closing rate, not knowing what other drivers are thinking or experiencing. I wish I could have hit a reset button like on a simulator, start over again. I'm sure he would be thinking the same thing.

There were four cars that were pretty much totaled in that accident. The fact that we're all safe and sound and ready to go for Toronto is pretty impressive.

**Q. Did you have any effects, soreness, anything specific?**

STING RAY ROBB: Yeah, so when I immediately got slowed down and stopped, my spotter was talking to me



the whole time. I did a quick self-check. I had the wind knocked out of me. The belts did their job. Everything worked as it was supposed to. I didn't have any cuts or anything abnormal.

I had some bruises on my hips from the lap belts working, as they should have. When they brought me out of the car and pulled me out, I got light-headed, kind of sit out the bed too quickly in the morning sometimes, you get light-headed, see stars a little bit. It was like that, but just super severe.

I passed out for I don't know how long it was. It was pretty quick. When I came to, I was like, I'm not doing too well.

Yeah, we know.

They immediately laid me down on the stretcher. It was a precautionary that we want to make sure it's not just dehydration, turning 248 laps left, getting dizzy from that.

Once I was down on the stretcher, I felt great. I was seeing clearly. They hooked me up to an IV. Immediately I could feel the energy come back and I was ready to go.

The Life Flight out was to get a CT scan and make sure everything was good and it wasn't just the adrenaline of the moment, that I wasn't having pain from.

Honestly the worse injury I got was on my finger. I touched the halo getting out of the car. It turns out when you take titanium and scrape it across the ground for a few hundred feet, it gets hot. Don't recommend. Lesson learned. You'll get a blister from touching hot titanium there.

**Q. Can you talk us through the feeling when you are in the air. Does time slow? Does time go quickly?**

STING RAY ROBB: As I was up in the air, I could see the top of the catch fence almost at my level. At that moment I realized I was in some trouble there. I still had my hands on the steering wheel at that point, bracing myself. I had enough time in the air where it kind of went slow motion. I let go, grabbed under my harnesses to hold on.

On the way down I had time to think about accidents that I've seen in recent history where guys, they've gone flying through the air like that. Think about Hinchcliffe, Dixon at the Speedway. Even Simon Pagenaud last year. 112Gs. I was at 109Gs.

The fact of the matter is I should be more hurt as I am. I don't know why I'm okay as I am. I'm giving the glory to God for that. Thanking the crew picking me up out of the car. Everybody did their job as they were supposed to.

When I came down, felt the impact, it didn't knock the wind out of me. I didn't feel any of that piercing through my legs or any sort of damage there. A couple light bruises of the bulkhead hit my knees. Skidding on the ground. I was very, very surprised that I was okay as I was.

**Q. The AMR safety crew, can you give a word of how they dealt with it.**

STING RAY ROBB: Yeah, they did everything and beyond what they could have done. When I was getting to a stop, my spotter was on the radio, You're almost stopped, you're almost stopped. They're there. Literally as I came to a rest, there was someone ducking under the halo to see, Dude, are you all right? What's hurting? Can you breathe?

I'll be honest, at that point adrenaline was going, so I didn't handle that as good as I'd like to. I was a little upset.

I was like, Of course, I'm hurt. Did you just see what happened to me?

Can you breathe?

Yes, I can breathe, but it's not very good. I'm hanging upside down in an INDYCAR.

When they flipped me over, I don't know how many guys were there, 10-plus members of the crew supporting me. When I passed out, I could feel two guys holding onto my arms, two guys behind me. They were fully in support of me and I was fully reliant on them in that moment. They did everything to make me safe and it shows.

**Q. Can you expand on the momentum you spoke about going into the Iowa weekend, the performance in the first race, about how the year you feel has gone so far.**

STING RAY ROBB: Thanks for asking.

Mid-Ohio was a decent race for us. We didn't qualify as well as we'd like. Had an issue there. Going into the race, we finished 16th. That was because of the team strategy. We just had really good in and out laps, decent race pace. That was really good to see moving forward in the field that way.

First race at Iowa, finished 15th. Could have finished higher had I done my job better on restarts. The nature of the track made it really difficult.

The fact of the matter is we're building momentum, building

a program a lot from a new team with a lot new Matthew engineers, new mechanics. It's taking time to get to this point, but that momentum is being felt. We're getting better every weekend.

Race two, running P19 with only a half a tank of fuel in the car in the middle of the stint was pretty impressive. The fact we were able to get those laps back when we did and move forward was really good.

I think going into Toronto, we're heads up, really excited about it because I want to get in the car as soon as possible, but it's also a track that some of our team members have done well at in the past. The knowledge they're bringing is going to help us a lot.

I'm excited, as well as my teammate. He's 10th in the championship right now. I'll be cheering for him to keep moving forward and hopefully drag me along with him for some success, too.

**Q. The Indy 500, you led more than a few laps. Talk us through that experience, maybe how it compared to your first year at the 500.**

STING RAY ROBB: Third most laps led was better than only 92 laps completed. That was the highlight of my career, leading laps in the 500.

I remember that first pit cycle, the only car left on track in front of me was the pace car. I was a little worried because I realized what that was going to do to us.

The strategies merged as the race went on. We were actually in the fight. Except for that lap 148 yellow, we were going to be there in the mix. That was the game. The race chooses the winners. That weekend it chose Josef as the winner. We were that close to having a shot at it.

That was cool to see, a lot of fun and definitely one of the things I'll hold onto forever.

THE MODERATOR: When you're involved in something like that, you get texts, well wishes. Anything noteworthy in the last couple days?

STING RAY ROBB: I got a pretty good teammate in Santino. He immediately came over to the care center after the crash, checked on me. The texts I got that afternoon, it was a gift of a flying Sting Ray jumping out of the water with a few comments below. That was entertaining. Typical teammate fashion. I was happy he put a smile on my face at that moment.

**Q. With the hybrid system coming in in Mid-Ohio, how**

**have you taken to that? How are the team doing with the evolution to the hybrid?**

STING RAY ROBB: Good. The transition was actually a lot smoother than I expected it to be just because we know how this works in motorsports.

When everyone is pushing the limits like this, you introduce something like this halfway through the season, even if it's flawless, there's always something to learn, figure out, on the team side or series side. The fact it went as well as it did was very good.

Again going to Iowa, I think that we did learn a lot on what the capabilities and advantages are of using versus not using the hybrid system in some instances.

That first stint in race two, I was right ahead of Will Power. He was able to go that just little bit longer, even though he was very similar pace to us. That's what essentially won him the race, what moved him to the front.

I think there's some tricks we could learn from him, just looking at how he learned on the hybrid system, the regen to save fuel. I think that will play a big difference in the future. It's just a matter of us figuring out the system, what its capabilities are.

As far as power output and the regen levels, I think the series has done a good job of getting it close to where it needs to be. I would like to see lower torque because the tires are a little bit less grippy, different compound to deal with the weight of the car.

Increasing the hybrid's capability in the future, it's output in the future, would be good to see. I'm sure that will happen over time, it's just a matter of when and where it will happen.

**Q. We have seen physically you are good. The crash, the impact mentally, how has it been this 48 hours mentally? How can you handle the situation?**

STING RAY ROBB: That's a great question. I think that we underestimate the mental side of racing a lot of times because as athletes, we want to just turn into robots and switch on to the next game, just forget what we went through. It's not that easy sometimes.

Honestly, I'm doing very well. I had a conversation right before the race weekend talking about how my faith takes away the fear of dying in an accident or something like that. You don't think about getting hurt that bad. I think the fear that I didn't feel, that I should have felt, was very surprising.



I think that just comes from having that foundation of faith that I stand on, what I rely on during my daily life. That's kind of what I've been leaning on as I recover from this.

I find gratitude in the fact that I am as good as I am as far as health goes, and that mentally I have a chance to recover very quickly heading to Toronto.

I have a great group around me that support me well. Having them in my life after an accident like that has been very important.

**Q. Speaking about the future, how optimistic are you with the fact you can make a great step up, for example, to achieve a top-10 result during the rest of the season? Is that your goal?**

STING RAY ROBB: Yeah, absolutely. I think we were very close in race one to doing that in Iowa. Even though it was a very single-file race, we were able to go from the back to the front and be able to fight at that pointy end of the stick.

I feel very optimistic. I think a top 10 is in our future very soon. I think that's a matter of the team's effort and support we've had from our alliances as well.

At the beginning of the year we didn't know what kind of program we were going to build because everyone was new to the team. Who is going to check the tires? The cambers? All this simple stuff that you have to learn how to communicate about and work well together. Having continuity going into the second half of the year has been valuable for us.

Honestly the 500, even though it was pre hybrid era, it was very good for our confidence because we could see what we could do as a team, to fight at the front, we feel like we earned a spot there.

We're not out of that same feeling now. I think we have opportunities. The fact of the matter is that this series is the best in the world because it's the most competitive in the world. Everyone deserves a chance to be there. Everyone can fight at the front. It's just a matter of on that day who has done the best to adapt to the conditions and done the best to prepare for the event.

**Q. You talked about burning your fingers. Did your helmet have any scratches on it? Did the aeroscreen have scratches? How much did that help prevent any injuries?**

STING RAY ROBB: There's no doubt in my mind that the

aeroscreen saved a lot of damage to my head and to who knows what else that would have happened to me in that incident.

Yeah, the halo was ground down quite a bit. The titanium that I burnt my finger on got pretty hot from grinding on the surface.

I haven't seen my helmet yet, but from the people that have inspected it, there's no visible issues with the helmet. It's pretty impressive because that means that the cockpit did its job, everything in there took the impact rather than me taking the impact.

Yeah, the aeroscreen was severely damaged, but that's because it worked as it was supposed to.

**Q. Obviously a freak deal, but is there anything you think should be done that could maybe decrease the amount of liftoff you had?**

STING RAY ROBB: No. I mean, when you look at the way that I made the impact and the angle that I was able to kind of get the car going, we're doing 170, 180 miles an hour on that track. You do anything at that speed, it's going to get liftoff in some way, shape or form in my mind.

The car came down very well. I didn't take off left, right or anything into the catch fence, which I'm very, very grateful for.

I wouldn't change a thing about this car. I think it's as safe as it's ever been. I think that INDYCAR has done a great job of looking at and analyzing past crashes and adapting to make cars even stronger or better for the future. I'm sure they'll do the same here. I'm sure there will be a little things here and there that they could find.

From my perspective, everything worked as it should have and I'm safe because of that.

**Q. We've seen a lot of criticism from other drivers like Pato and Alex Palou, they criticized the lack of action in both races in Iowa. We know Iowa was repaved before the race. What are your thoughts about how the races went? Were they too boring? What are the expectations for the next short ovals, Gateway and Milwaukee Mile? Do you think the Iowa lackluster is going to be a trend for the next ovals?**

STING RAY ROBB: This is a trick question. You're trapping me here, but I'm going to answer it anyways.

Iowa was a little bit of a disappointing race. The degradation levels we've seen in the past at that track were



much higher, that was because the pavement surface was more abrasive, chewed through the tires a lot more. We were also using a slightly different tire compound to deal with the different racing that was required. We were racing on a completely different surface. When we went back and tested at Iowa earlier this year, we got to see the blistering in the tire because of the compound. They brought a new compound to the race that handled the heat very well. Didn't have any issues in the race.

I think it was a bit disappointing, but at the same time I'm going to give INDYCAR the benefit of the doubt and letting them adapt over the next few events.

I think it's challenging when you add mid-season changes like the hybrid system, different tire compound to deal with that extra weight, also a new track surface that's not going to degrade the tires much. It makes it challenging to adapt that quickly, to make the racing as good as it has been in the past.

I'm not sure what Milwaukee will be like. I think it will be new for everyone. There's not really a baseline that we can look at.

I do know that the degradation levels there are much higher than they are at Iowa. That will play into different strategies as well as different lines that drivers can take to hold guys behind them or make a move ahead.

That degradation level is what really makes the racing good. If they don't have that, it makes it hard to see a lot of passes on the racetrack.

**Q. For you personally, when you go through what you went through, how do you focus forward on Toronto?**

STING RAY ROBB: Well, I feel like I've done my fair share of looking back at the weekend's events. It's as simple as a short memory. Also I think gratitude is something that is overlooked a lot of times in these instances of looking at things that went right leading up into that event and during that event.

Also just being thankful. I feel like God protected me in that instance. Having the ability to get back in the car this next weekend, I'm not doing it from a place of fear, I'm doing it from a place of gratitude and thankfulness and joy that I get to go driving a car again.

It is a scary incident. You don't know what is going to happen. While you're in that moment, it's terrifying, like you don't know what your future holds. When I turn my future over to someone, which is where my faith comes in, it allows me to move on much quicker than I think I would

otherwise.

**Q. Do you think what happened to you at Iowa validates INDYCAR's decision to consolidate going to the bigger tracks, Pocono and Vegas, over the course of the last decade?**

STING RAY ROBB: I'm down for whatever means safety. I think INDYCAR's decision to look at those and say that we want to make it safer are good.

Honestly, IMS I think in the last few years is about as safe as we've seen it. We've seen some big impacts and crashes. Guys have walked away from those. That's a huge testament that goes into that. The AMR safety team doing their job right.

I think what we're doing now is good.

THE MODERATOR: Back at your workout regimen tomorrow?

STING RAY ROBB: Back at it today. That was a final check to make sure I didn't have anything weird going on. The concussion protocol all day yesterday. Met with Dr. Vargas and Julia there. They gave me the green light to go a push the limits a little bit, get back in the regimen of things.

I didn't pass out today, which is great. My head stayed on straight. I will admit my cardio has gone down during the season more than I would like to admit. Other than that, felt great.

**Q. You have three races with the hybrid. What things can you extract about the management you have, that you can do in these two races, that you can apply in the rest of the season?**

STING RAY ROBB: I think going to Mid-Ohio we decided to keep it very simple. We wanted to have a very simple perspective on it, make it simple for me as a driver.

There's a lot going on the car. When we're adjusting roll bars, weight jackers on the oval, you don't want to be worried about what is going on with the hybrid system until you're very comfortable with it. That was step one, lesson one with the hybrid unit.

Going to Iowa, we got to see the gap grow and the guys that learned. You can see the balance of the car change with the regen levels. If you're running no regen versus 100% regen, it can secure the rear of the car or not, and slow the entries into the middle of the corners.

There's different tools that we have now at our disposal with the hybrid system, depending on what we need. I think the bigger teams that have the more experience with that have that advantage, they carry that advantage, because they carry the weight of all the testing time.

I think that's where Will kind of gained an advantage over someone like AJ Foyt Racing this past weekend, to save fuel a little bit better and manage the tires a little bit better, whereas we're still kind of playing catch-up with the limited experience we have with it.

As we go into the next few events, we have it and I'm sure we'll learn and apply it.

THE MODERATOR: Stingray, thanks for your time.

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