

NTT INDYCAR SERIES

News Conference

Friday, May 16, 2025

Indianapolis, Indiana, USA

Bobby Rahal

Mike Lanigan

Jay Frye

Graham Rahal

Takuma Sato

Devlin DeFrancesco

Louis Foster

Press Conference



by Firestone champ in Louis Foster, and driver of the No. 75 AMADA Honda, great to welcome back the two-time Indy 500 champion in Takuma Sato.

Bobby, we'll begin with you. Obviously a very good test for the team. Open test last month. Three cars in the Firestone Fast Six. Last weekend new president, new sponsor in Desnuda. From the business side and everything, there's a lot of positivity happening with Rahal Letterman Lanigan Racing right now.

BOBBY RAHAL: Yeah, and convincing Jay to join our team, our company, that's a huge positive for us. Having Takuma back, I love having him back with us. It's kind of an annual event now, but it's one I like a lot, and I'm very pleased with where the team is, where we're at and where we're headed and where we're going, the progress we're making.

We've added people over the offseason that I think have given us some real insight and disciplines that are helping. I think last week certainly was an indication of that. It's great being here.

The weather hasn't been the most cooperative this year so far, but looking forward to a good day today, looking forward to good qualifying over the weekend, and getting ready for the race, which that's what we're here for is the race.

Of course, I look at the weather forecast going out that far, and it looks like it's going to be pretty nice. The crowd is going to see a hell of a race. I have no doubt of that.

THE MODERATOR: Fingers crossed on the weather. We'll see what happens next week. Mike, I know it's been fun to watch fox's coverage of the NTT INDYCAR Series this year. From your perspective, what kind of boost has that created? Obviously viewership has been up double digits and so on and so forth. A lot of new technology they brought to the table as well.

MIKE LANIGAN: It's extremely exciting to see what Fox has been doing. Over the years INDYCAR has been on two or three different networks throughout the season. I believe our potential race fans had a hard time finding

THE MODERATOR: Our Fast Friday news conferences continue with Rahal Letterman Lanigan Racing, winner of the 2004 and 2020 Indianapolis 500 presented by Gainbridge. Joining us this morning in the middle, the namesake of the team, the three-time INDYCAR Series champion and the 1986 winner of the 500, Bobby Rahal is here. Bobby. Good morning to you, sir.

BOBBY RAHAL: Good morning.

THE MODERATOR: He joined the race team back in 2010 as a co-owner and first competed as the name as we now know it in Rahal Letterman Lanigan Racing. Good morning to Mike Lanigan. Good morning, sir.

MIKE LANIGAN: Good morning.

THE MODERATOR: Also joining us, he's the president of Rahal Letterman Lanigan Racing on the far right-hand side, Jay Frye. Good morning, Jay.

JAY FRYE: Good morning.

THE MODERATOR: All four drivers are also joining us today. Driver of the No. 15 United Reynolds Honda, six-time winner of the NTT INDYCAR Series, Graham Rahal. Driver of the No. 30 Dogecoin Honda, please welcome Devlin DeFrancesco. Good morning. Driver of the No. 45 Desnuda Tequila Honda, last year's INDY NXT



when the race was going to be on.

Then when Fox came on board, thanks to Roger Penske and his people, having every practice, every qualifying round, every race on one network is going to be spectacular. As you said, we've already seen some excellent uptick in viewership, and obviously with them promoting it and us having the most diversified type of racing in the world with the best drivers and the diversified drivers between short ovals, superspeedways, road courses, and street courses, the entertainment will be spectacular as the viewership grows. As you know, eyeballs is the most important thing generating sponsorships.

I look forward. We're on the upswing. People forget, quite frankly, that in the mid-90s before the split that INDYCAR was much more popular than NASCAR. Then when the split happened, that's when everything went downhill.

With Roger taking over and getting the TV package where it's at and the viewership and the attendance at the venues, I mean, we really have some exciting things coming up in the future, and I'm excited about it.

THE MODERATOR: Attendance has been great for sure. Graham, welcome back. Good open test last month, as mentioned. You've been close to victory here. Weather, as your dad has mentioned, a little challenging so far this week. How have you progressed in the 15 car?

GRAHAM RAHAL: I think it's been a challenging but positive week I think for everybody. Luckily, all four of us have had the same feel with the car and expectation of the car. I said it at the open test right after I felt like the guys did a wonderful job finding some speed in the offseason, and I remain positive about that.

I think we're feeling good as we go into today and tomorrow to see where this all shakes out. I also think Honda has done a really wonderful job this month. So we're excited to get the new engines in these cars today and see what we've got.

No, it's been awesome to work with these guys this month. Cast of characters for sure, but it's been great. Like I said, I think everybody has had, maybe a different levels, but the same feel of the car and been able to work towards a common goal, which has been tremendous.

We've all been a little off schedule as far as what we're working on and things, but I think as we go towards today, it's clear what the goal is. It will be great to have all four of us out there working towards it.

The next two days, three days are critical. It's going to be tricky tomorrow with the wind. Weather has been okay I think this month or this week so far, but the wind is always a major challenge in qualifying. We might see, what, gusts up to 35 miles an hour or something tomorrow.

I don't think I've ever experienced it quite that high, so it will be interesting to see how it affects the cars. We'll go out there and do the absolute best that we can. A lot of reasons to be positive throughout the team, and we're looking forward to the challenges ahead.

THE MODERATOR: Devlin, obviously a strong start to the month of March. Matching your best career start in the NTT INDYCAR Series and Sonsio GP and strong runs and no tow chart so far this week as well. Tell us about your month a little bit, partnership with Riley Children's Hospital as well and how all of that has tied into a big month for you so far.

DEVLIN DEFRANCESCO: It's been a great start to the month of May for us. We're looking forward to today. We had really, really a strong showing last week for all three of us to be in the Fast Six. Unfortunate the way race day went, but I'm really proud of everyone at our whole organization on the improvements made over last year. As Graham said, I think we have really strong cars for the month of May and excited to see what we've got today.

What I'm doing with Riley Children's Hospital together with Dogecoin, the Dogecoin community, is giving back to the neonatal intensive care unit. I was a premie myself. I was born 15 weeks premature. Being able to rally the Dogecoin community and something I'm part of to give back, it's something that means a lot to me and my family. It's important and to tie it into the greatest spectacle in racing and the biggest sporting event in the world is a great feeling.

THE MODERATOR: That's cool. Louis, qualified third last weekend. New partner on board as well. Rookie of the Year perhaps is out there for you as well. Tell us about your week so far.

LOUIS FOSTER: Yeah, good. I think, firstly, obviously it's pretty surreal to be here. Still trying to take it all in and not only do as good of a job as I can, but enjoy the experience at the same time. You only get one first time.

Yeah, so far so good. I think we had a very, very strong open test. Definitely lacking a little bit the last few days, but we think we know where it is, and hopefully today, as Graham said, when we get the new engines in and set up the boost and put our big boy shoes on, we'll have something to show for it.



Yeah, so far all good for me.

THE MODERATOR: Takuma, you're back. We heard from you yesterday. Obviously a very good week so far for you guys. Certainly back with the team that you know quite well. How has your week gone?

TAKUMA SATO: First of all, I would like to thank you, again, Bobby and Mike to make this happen. Not just coming back to the opportunity, but obviously as everybody is aware, I had a big moment on open test. The team is working flat out to building an absolute brand new car, and these owners, obviously the commitment is unbelievable.

So really grateful for the team, back to here. I think it's like anything else, but I think it continues with working is getting stronger. It's great to be part of the development program over the course of the winter and whole engineers working so hard.

I know it applies to all the teams, but I think Rahal Letterman Lanigan Racing has certainly made a huge step forward. Grand Prix weekend last week as well as open test, we showed the speed. Now so far this week I think we haven't put all the pieces together. We're still learning and creating valuable data. Obviously, needless to say, Graham and I had a long-time relationship, so we trust each other. We shared lots of stuff.

Of course, Dev and Louis, new generation. Young, talented drivers. Obviously they're learning a lot from us as well as they're pushing us so much. Graham and I have to push so much.

No, I think it's lifting whole team. So I really appreciate and feel proud and feel thankful to be part of this team.

THE MODERATOR: It's always great to have you back at the speedway too, Takuma. Finally, to Jay before we open it up to questions. Time flies. Already over a month now that you joined Rahal Letterman Lanigan Racing. Terrific time for this team right now. A lot happening right now. How do you build on certainly the start and then some of the positives that you've seen with the team so far?

JAY FRYE: Well, Dave, first off, I want to thank you for the terrific job you do at these press conferences.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you.

JAY FRYE: You're welcome. No, it's been an amazing 40 days. Obviously this team has a great history, rich tradition, great ownership, committed ownership, great mix

of drivers. The future is very bright.

The facility, we've talked about before, is second to none. Yeah, there's just a lot of good people. We have a lot of really, really good things going on. We're really excited to be here.

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

Q. First question for you, Graham. Can you change the aero package in such a way in the car that it's not such an important fact anymore and better reaction to wind?

GRAHAM RAHAL: Look, the wind is the same for everybody. In these cars on an oval, I don't think even if you're at peak aero, maximum downforce, it still makes a large difference. I think the wind that we're going to get tomorrow is much more of a crosswind from sort of the front straight to the back, whereas yesterday it was obviously straight into three.

We'll just have to adjust at the time. I mean, as a driver, you have to be prepared for it. When you enter turn two, for instance, you have to turn in a little bit earlier because when the wind really pushes you like that, you've got to get down below the grip to let the car take a set, versus if you turn in late, you may just never get to the apex sort of thing.

Then obviously when you turn into three and into four, it's going to become pretty neutral as you go through and the wind gets on your nose. There are things you have to be prepared for.

As I said, it's the same for everybody. These cars nowadays, Dev and I were just talking about it, the whole idea of trimming and taking everything off of them, the rear wing is so small and so efficient, there's really not a lot of drag in it.

The old days of saying that we ran whatever nose up, those days are kind of a thing of the past anyway. There's not much gain to it anymore. You either have natural raw speed and good balance and you can do the time, or you kind of don't, right?

We should be good. I think we put a lot of effort into that, and whatever tomorrow comes at us with, we'll take it in stride and make the most of it. It's going to be cool tomorrow. Of course, having a cooler day like that helps, period, so we'll see.

Q. The second question for Jay. Can you specify your job with the team? Is it just responsible for the



INDYCAR operation or also for the IMSA operation?

JAY FRYE: Thanks. It's both. Obviously from the INDYCAR perspective, I've been around that for a long time and have done that a long time. IMSA has been new to me, but John Doonan and everybody at IMSA have been good friends for a long time. I've followed it very closely from afar, but the IMSA guys are doing a really good job. The BMW team is doing a really good job. I'm proud to be a part of that too.

Q. Question for Graham and Bobby. Graham, I know I could tell that you were pretty frustrated with the car yesterday and just not maybe being able to get the speed or the handle that you were wanting out of it. Where would you say you are in terms of confidence of being able to get through tomorrow stress-free compared to where the team has been these last couple of years?

GRAHAM RAHAL: Well, first off, tomorrow is never stress-free. I don't care what position you're in. Tomorrow is an intense day, period.

I'm not so worried about speed. I think for me it's all about balance. I've struggled with the rear of the car kind of from the get-go. I've been quite neutral compared to my teammates even with the same setups, and that's what's frustrating a little bit is just understanding why.

I ran I think the same exact car pretty much as Dev yesterday, and at one point I had, like, 15 degrees less steering angle at the apexes than he did. That's a lot. So it's trying to understand why I think is the question.

But as far as speed, I think we'll be okay. I saw a lot of guys late in the day, happy hour, go out, do Q sims. A lot were slower than us. A couple were quicker, the guys that you would expect, but I think had we run at 5:00, we would have been quicker. The track is just purely better at that time.

I'm not by any means in a sort of panic mode in that regard. We'll see what today brings too. I know that we've been fairly conservative on some things, and today is a new day. I'm eager to get out there. I'm eager for all of us, all four of us, to get out there and understand where we're at.

I feel good in the signs that we see. Certainly for Dev, he has a super fast car. I think things are looking really positive for him. Louis and I are about the same, I think. We'll find out today with Taku when we're all in the same engine spec to see what we get.

There's no reason to be in a panic yet. I think Twitter likes to panic about everything all the time. Leave that to us. We'll figure it out tomorrow and see if we've got a problem or we're good.

Q. Bobby, how are you feeling going into this weekend?

BOBBY RAHAL: I have to say I have tremendous confidence in this team. We have Todd Malloy leading our engineers. He's a two-time 500 winner, lead engineer winner. Weldon and I can't remember the other fellow that they won with. Anyway, Todd is a sharp guy. We've got a lot of good people.

Yves Tournon, who is Graham's engineer, he's been in INDYCAR racing for quite a while. We have some real experience in the team this year that we didn't have last year or maybe even the last two years.

So I sat down with them earlier, and they led me through the whys and the wherefores and what we're going to do and plan. I have great confidence in that. I'm pretty excited about it.

So I'm not worried. I think a lot of it is just for us, obviously, for guys like Penske and Andretti -- or Ganassi, I should say, they did the development on the hybrid units, so they have a lot more time and experience with those than the rest of us. We probably had some of the least amount of time of any of the teams ourselves and Dale Coyne maybe, right, and everybody else had more.

It's catch-up. We did have a good spring test here, the open test. I think we have a lot of good insight into where we want to be, need to be, and can be. I'm not worried about it at all.

I'm looking forward to today as well and having four good cars, four good drivers. That generates a lot of information. I think we have the ability to take advantage of that. I'm in a good spot.

Q. Louis, I think the most important question is, is this a 1986 Bobby Rahal stache or a 1993 Nigel Mansell?

LOUIS FOSTER: It was actually in the contract when we signed with Rahal, I had to have a mustache. I'll say Bobby, yeah. You are my inspiration.

BOBBY RAHAL: A little bit more of a Foo.

LOUIS FOSTER: Yeah, I need to buy some gel. Do you have some gel I can use? Any leftover?

Q. Graham, you were saying yesterday in the broadcast that you weren't going to lay it on the line yesterday, but you're willing to lay everything on the line on Saturday. What are you going through in the car when you're on the razor's edge?

GRAHAM RAHAL: There's a time and a place to do it, and obviously yesterday just when you get a big wiggle or you've got something, for me at least there's no reason to just stay out there and pound around. Typically whatever your balance is on lap one, it kind of exaggerates as the run goes on. That's all it was really about.

But, no, today, tomorrow, tomorrow in particular, you've got to do what it takes. We'll be ready for that. Like I said too, we've worked really hard as a group to continue to get better. Our feel of the car is the same, which has been really particularly a positive for us that we can work towards a common goal.

I may be more sensitive to the rear than most for sure, but the reality is that we've got to continue to work to make the cars better. I think we can do that.

Q. How many game plans do you have with the hybrid for qualifying? I mean, we talked the other day you can use it in a headwind, you can use it in a tailwind, if it's coming out of a different direction.

GRAHAM RAHAL: This is what Dad was referencing a second ago is just the knowledge of the hybrid is massive, and we actually, all of us drivers and engineers, have been watching almost everybody on their end cars to understand what they're doing because they're doing things that we didn't really think possible, to be honest.

All of the Chevys seem to be regenerating, like gearing short and regenerating at peak speed on the back straight. Well, we can obviously change how much regeneration there is, and that's where Dad is talking about the knowledge.

When we started with this thing, we didn't know how to do any of that, and really it hasn't been until the last race or two that we've started to play with regen maps and how much regen. For us if you just pull the paddle, it would really decelerate the car.

Obviously what we're seeing is they're not having that, so they're clearly messing with the mapping to reduce the regeneration amount. Therefore, they're able to move it more throughout the run.

There's the ability to just how you use the deploy, when you use the deploy, where you use the deploy. There is so

much more that goes into this than I think people realize or recognize that even today I'm pretty sure all of us will be trying something different to learn, to try to see what is best for us.

It's an interesting thing. I mean, the hybrid, it is quite powerful here. On a single lap if you utilize it correctly, it does make a hell of a difference in lap time or lap speed. There's a lot to be learned there.

Q. Got one for you, Louis. You've always looked comfortable as you've been advancing through the ranks in the recent years. You still look comfortable even though you're here in the midst of the Indy 500. Do you feel comfortable on the inside? How has the experience of this team prepared you for this?

LOUIS FOSTER: To be honest, I don't think you're ever comfortable going 220 miles an hour, but yeah, I think so far really enjoyed my past five races. Five races?

THE MODERATOR: Yep.

LOUIS FOSTER: A bit of a blur now. I've really enjoyed the last five races. I think as I've said before, it's massive credit to everyone at Rahal Letterman Lanigan Racing. They've had rookies in the past, and they know how to deal with rookies and what's best for me.

It's very much about coming into this championship with the mindset of I'm here to learn, and I need to listen to Graham and especially Takuma at the 500 as well. So, yeah, I'm blessed to have a great group around me to be able to help me with that, right?

I think if you were to be thrown into a top team, and I've seen a lot of good drivers from INDY NXT that have been thrown into top teams and completely sink because those teams aren't used to having those rookies. I don't think they really know how to support those new drivers.

I've really enjoyed the last five races. I think we're just now beginning to show our strengths. I think we had some issues in the first kind of three or four in the races, but after the race at the Sonsio Grand Prix with the qualifying result and a pretty strong race, definitely had some left on the table in the race.

I'm still learning, but definitely enjoying it.

Q. Jay, every driver that suits up and gets into one of these cars owes you a of gratitude to your commitment of safety during your tenure with the Indianapolis Motor Speedway and the series. What's it been like for you to hit the ground running with this

 . . . when all is said, we're done.®

organization? I think it's probably not a lot different than what you did for the series wearing all those different hats, but again, on a personal note, Salute to Safety, everything that you did for listening to drivers and trying to develop things. What's it been like hitting the ground running?

JAY FRYE: Well, it's been great. First off, this group here, I consider them very good friends. Going in there the first day it was never awkward at all. It was like you're coming to work with your friends. So that part was very seamless, and it's exciting. We're excited about the future.

From the safety perspective, thank you. Obviously that was a great project. It was something that the paddock worked on very hard collectively. It was a great paddock-wide effort. It's definitely done its job. The Red Bull Advanced Technology guys were very important to that. Henschel was important to that. It's evolved since we first did it in 2020, I guess.

Yeah, it's made a massive difference, and we're really proud of that. Thank you.

Q. This is for Mr. Rahal and Mr. Lanigan. How great is it to know that a driver like Takuma is pretty much plug-and-play? You can just drop him into the cockpit, and he's going to go fast.

MIKE LANIGAN: I don't have enough knowledge to really answer that. I know one thing. I know Takuma is fast. He's brave, and he's smart. It gives me a big comfort feeling knowing that whenever he's in the car, there's a chance for him to win be.

BOBBY RAHAL: I think I've said it many times, but Takuma is a pro. The guy, he's a hell of a race car driver. I've watched him race when he was in Formula 3 when I was at Jaguar Formula 1, and he was always at the front.

When he came to us in, what was it, 2012, something like that, and we damn near won this race, and I didn't think we had a chance in hell. It wasn't because we had the best car. It was because he took it there.

Of course, we saw the same thing, a great disciplined drive in, what, 2020. I think Scott Dixon still hasn't gotten over the fact that he was going to make it on fuel.

Anyway, he's just a pro. I just love having him with us. I think he brings great value to us as a driver, as a person. And also, let's face it, he's a great representative for the country of Japan. That's pretty cool to have somebody like that in your car.