

NTT INDYCAR SERIES

News Conference

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Doug Boles

Press Conference



DOUG BOLES: Good morning, everybody. I think everybody has probably seen the release that we put out with our statement related to yesterday's qualifying here for the Indianapolis 500.

First, pretty cool pole qualifier. Excited for that. A rookie with a rookie team. I had fun last night calling the team and congratulating them. So good news out of that.

I'm going to back up for a minute just for the folks that didn't get a chance to speak with me last night about 8:15. We had a handful of you over at the end of the evening.

Yesterday for me sort of the lawyer training in me said let's make sure we have our facts correct, so spent quite a bit of time yesterday trying to understand how we got to the spot where we were. There were a lot of rumors circulating throughout given the fact that it was on TV, and we just wanted to make sure that before we really made any statement, we knew exactly what had happened.

For those that missed that really quickly, the 12 cars yesterday in final qualifying go through a pre-qualifying technical inspection. The 12 car did go through. When the 12 car went through, Kevin Blanch, our technical director, and his team noted on the 12 car that the attenuator might have been modified, and Rocket in his head was pretty sure that we had a rule, but he didn't have the rule book with him, that stated that that could not be a modified part. We do, in fact, have that rule.

The next couple of cars that went through, they looked at the attenuators on those cars. They were clearly unaltered. When the 2 car came through, the 2 car had an altered attenuator on it. At that point in time Kevin said to the car chief of the 2, who was standing with him, Will you please call the car chief of the 12 car and tell him to move the car aside because that attenuator also is illegal.

Just to give a little background of why that is. As we quickly try and get cars through tech for pre-qualifying so they can get out to the grid and qualifying, it is not unusual

for -- it's not common, but it is not unusual for our technical team to find something on a teammate car and actually go out onto pit lane and inspect a car, a teammate's car, just to ensure that if they found something on one car, it's not on the other.

So the tech team did the job as they were supposed to. Some confusion happened on pit lane, I think, when members of the 12 car I believe started to grind on the back of the attenuator where it had been modified, which then created -- I think some rumors came out of that, but that was really the reason we were trying to think through the facts of that position.

Rocket did talk to Kyle Novak, who is our race director, on pit lane to make sure that Kyle Novak agreed with him that we have a rule that says that that part, the attenuator, must be run as supplied. Kyle and Rocket both agreed, and at that point in time Rocket did let the team know that the 12 and the 2 car could qualify if they would like to, but in post-qualifying technical inspection, they would likely be disqualified because those parts are not legal.

The team could either do that, or they had the choice of pulling out of line. The team chose to pull out of line and take that option versus qualifying and being disqualified for sure as they went through the tech line.

Our rule states that you will start at the back of the qualifying session in which you're qualifying. So those cars were qualifying in the top 12, so therefore, last night as we noted, those two cars, the 2 and the 12, would go to the back.

The 3 car, who had been in an accident earlier in the day, was already going to go to the back because he did not present to qualify, and those three cars would have been lined up by the way that their qualifying speeds on Saturday were to get things started.

Throughout the night and sort of getting into this a little bit more and, frankly, thinking about the integrity and the importance of this race, INDYCAR has a rule. It's Rule 9.2.1. I highlighted a couple of pieces of it here because I think it's important in this conversation. "Penalties can be determined by the gravity of the violation and its impact on

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the fairness of competition. INDYCAR has the authority to impose any or all or any combination of the following penalties against any member for any violation of the rules at any time."

It sets out of a lot of things, all of which -- if you read the release, all of which we have the authority to do based on this rule. The thing that strikes me the most about this rule is the gravity of the violation. This is the world's largest motorsport event, the Indianapolis 500. This event defines who people are.

For us, especially on that stage, we believed that allowing the two cars, the 2 and the 12, to start in 12th and 11th, which is a place that they might have actually qualified in had they been allowed to qualify, was not a sufficient enough penalty and did not present an appropriate enough result for the violation. Therefore, we have decided to move the 2 and the 12 car to the back of the grid. They will start in 32nd and 33rd position. The 2 car first in 32nd, and the 12 car in 33rd, based on their qualifying times.

The 3 car in our investigation of the 3 car -- by the way, we do have the attenuators from all three of these cars. The 3 car attenuator from the crash with the crashed wing still attached to it was provided to us, and we still have it. That attenuator was not modified at all.

So on Sunday we can tell you by facts -- again, the lawyer in me -- that car was presented when it drove at least with an attenuator on the car that met all of the rules of the INDYCAR Competition Rule Book.

So the 3 car will start in 10th spot, which will be the last car in the Fast 12 that did not get removed to the back of the field. So the 3 car will not have any additional penalties.

Additionally on the 2 and the 12 car, because of the gravity of this situation and the importance of this race and the importance of ensuring that the NTT INDYCAR SERIES continues to have its integrity and so that we can continue to tech cars and know that when we tech cars and you bring them through, we expect them to be rule followers. Both of those cars will be fined \$100,000. They will lose any points that they would have gotten for the Final 12.

Both strategists for those cars will be suspended from the Indianapolis 500 through the end of May, and at the end of today we will redraw for qualifying pit positions, and the 2 and the 12 will get the last two positions available.

So, with that, I guess I just want to reiterate that I think our tech team did a fantastic job. We've got a group of people who are trying to get cars through in a very quick way so that we can make sure that we've got cars on track for our

fans, we've got cars on track for television.

Tech may begin at the tech pad, and the teams know this, tech does not end once you roll off the tech pad. The tech does not end even if you have a tech sticker on your car. At all times cars must follow the rules of the INDYCAR SERIES. Therefore, even if somebody might have missed something, which did not happen in this case, we can take a car on pit lane and penalize it for having a part on the car that does not fit the rules.

I would much rather be talking about how great the Indianapolis 500 is and how our ticket sales are and how we had our biggest qualifying weekend in terms of attendance since 2016, but it felt to me like the most important thing for us to do today was set the field of the Indianapolis 500.

One other thing, because I know I'll get a question about it, I'll just address it right now. When we left here on Saturday, we left here with the 30 fastest cars locked in. Some folks have asked me, Why would you not remove the two cars? Those two cars, the 2 and the 12, qualified on Saturday. They had passed tech. We did not see anything illegal with those cars in tech. So, therefore, we are starting the 33 fastest cars in the Indianapolis 500. The 2 and the 12 just happen to start at the back.

I'm happy to take any questions.

Q. On the topic of the awareness of the illegal attenuators, Rocket in his interview, I believe Tim Cindric in his interview, said that something was found in tech that caught their attention. I have been told by multiple teams that is factually incorrect, that they have alerted INDYCAR prior to Sunday that those modifications existed, and no action was taken. Just to try and corroborate that, I've gone back and looked at my own footage. I've found and circled these components on the cars Saturday, Thursday, going back to April at the open test. I've had teams tell me they have photos of these modified attenuators from this race last year, which would mean from a technical inspection standpoint, this wasn't found Sunday morning. These cars have gone through tech many times, and either this has been missed or willfully ignored. I realize you've been in this role for two months. I can't hang this on you, but can you give me something here because you have your paddock, the ones who alerted the series to this problem, saying this didn't just get found in tech Sunday.

DOUG BOLES: So I guess the first way to respond to that, it was found on Sunday. So those are the facts. The facts I know is it was found on Sunday. This penalty is based on



what happened on Sunday.

I have had teams tell me since last night that they have photos of cars -- not just Penske cars -- other cars with things on cars that are not within the rules, and I've asked them why no one has sent anything to me or ever said anything to me about that? So I have never heard that.

I know that's around the paddock, but I have never heard the news. If somebody had told me that was the case, I would have gone to Rocket and talked to Rocket and made sure we paid attention to that. In my conversations with Rocket, Rocket has said that he does hear from teams occasionally about a lot of things, but he did not specifically say that he heard something about this particular issue.

Again, I'm just going on the facts that I have. The facts that I have is I know that yesterday the car was not conforming to our rules. I can only make a decision on what I know. I can only encourage people if there are photos of cars with things illegal on them, they need to tell me. Then I can address it, but I can't address something that happened last year when I wasn't even in this job, and I can't address something that happened on Saturday if nobody had the guts to come and tell me it was going on Saturday.

Q. On the topic of tech and the topic of this with a change in decision yesterday being, We'll wait until after the event to this change today, a lot of the conversations I've had with folks have been on the subject of it's time for a separation of church and state. Having the owner of the series now twice in 13 months have their cars be found to be illegal, this conflict from a competition standpoint, something needs to change, have an external body looking after the regulatory side. Can you give me any thoughts on that, whether you think that could be an actionable item? Not selling the series. Just an independent body in charge of governance.

DOUG BOLES: I want to say one thing first. I've known Roger Penske for an awful long time, and I've gotten to know him really well since November 2019. I don't think Roger Penske understands some of the things that might be going on.

I get the optics challenge, and it's definitely something we should think about. I mean, how do you manage the optics challenge? A lot of these challenges I think are -- while they roll up to Roger at the end of the day, I think they are certainly below him. There are things that happen that don't ever get to Roger.

I can tell you that Roger Penske would not condone this. In fact, I had a chance to talk to Roger, and I can tell that

this is devastating to him. Nothing means more to Roger Penske than the Indianapolis Motor Speedway and the Indianapolis 500. He certainly loves racing across the board. This is something that I think he's going to have to address at some point in time.

As far as the series goes, we are open to looking at wherever we are, but right now at this point in time we have a tech team that did their job yesterday. They found the attenuators. We stopped both of them, and I think we've appropriately resolved or at least appropriately addressed -- maybe not resolved forever, but we've appropriately addressed this particular situation.

I'm not trying to dodge your question. It's hard for me to just immediately give you an answer. That's a big question, right, that we have to spend some time thinking about.

Q. Last thing for you, what would you say to a Bill Abel or Jacob Abel who presented a car that was legal every single time they went out, were unable to muster enough speed to qualify? Two cars that weren't legal trying to qualify were pulled to avoid the embarrassment of qualifying, then being thrown out, their times being thrown out in post-qualifying tech. Cars that never took to the track to turn a lap in qualifying had been deemed to be illegal, all the penalties we're speaking about here. They get to stay and play. The guy who went out and gave his best, he doesn't get to play. Citing the rule, I believe you said 9.2.1, effectively a best interest of the sport type rule. I know that that's occurred to me that I don't know if that tickles my right sense of fair play.

DOUG BOLES: Transparently, the 33 fastest cars are in the Indianapolis 500. I hear you. On Saturday all the cars passed tech. There was not a reason to look at those cars. They got through the cars, so on Saturday that qualification attempt should stand as far as I'm concerned.

On Sunday is where we're talking about right now, the facts are that those cars did not meet to qualify in the 12. The rule says, if you get disqualified from the 12, you start 12th and 11th.

We've gone one step further and put them in the back. Do I feel gutted for Jacob Abel? Absolutely. The guy is running our whole season. I know how important this race is to Dale Coyne. Dale Coyne and I have had arguments after arguments over whether we should guarantee starting spots at the Indianapolis 500. He and I are on opposite sides of that conversation, but in this instance I don't think that the result for the 33 cars should be changed.



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Q. (Off microphone).

DOUG BOLES: Nathan was asking why we thought it was necessary to move them beyond 11th and 12th as the rule written says.

I think I said at the beginning, it's the biggest race in the world, and integrity is paramount for us to continue to grow this event. To me the result of being able to start where you might have ended up qualifying anyway had you been able to qualify is not a penalty deserving of what had happened there.

So for me and for the team at INDYCAR, we had a conversation this morning working through this. This is the right result.

Q. Was this a decision that you came to? Is this something where you consult -- something where Mark Miles gets involved? Is this something that goes all the way up to Roger, who owns the series? Can you kind of tell me who was involved in coming to these decisions?

DOUG BOLES: I didn't sleep at all last night. You probably can't tell, but I frankly didn't take a shower this morning. My hair is a mess. The first thing I did this morning was call Mark. Mark basically said the same thing.

The two of us sat down and started thinking through what is the appropriate thing to make sure that we're managing the integrity of the Indianapolis 500? Roger Penske was not involved in this other than to be told that there would be a penalty, and it would be a severe penalty coming his way. We did call Roger to let him know what the penalty was, and we called Tim Cindric, and we called Ron Ruzewski, the team strategist of those cars, to let them know what was coming.

Ultimately it involved a bunch of us trying to make sure that we had thought through everything as we went through this. Even simple things like, that seem simple, removing their pit selection opportunity. That comes with some challenges because teams are going to practice today a little bit to get ready, but teams don't have to move. There will be an option for teams to move. We involve Mark Sibla and Kevin Blanch and Kyle Novak and Dave Furst and Alex Damron and get the team together to make sure that we're thinking through exactly what we're doing here.

I would say it was walking out of the front door of his house and me walking out of the front door of my camper and happening to call each other at the same time to say, Hey, we got to do the right thing for this event. By walking out, I

mean Mark.

Q. I think my last question for now, you told that small group of us that spoke to you last night in the scrum that when we asked about potential penalties coming from this, that the plan was to announce penalties after the end of the race, which would have come after next Sunday. At what point in last night or this morning did you feel like there were penalties that needed to be announced now?

DOUG BOLES: I don't know. At some point last night shortly after that conversation. What we were trying to do in that conversation at 8:15 was share the facts that we knew as we knew them, and our procedure is to have those cars start at the back of the 12, and our procedure is to review penalties on a race weekend after the race.

So you asked me a question, and I answered the question based on how we deal with most races. As you walk away from that and you realize the gravity of this event, it certainly makes you feel like, you know what, we shouldn't be treating this like any other event. We should be treating this like the event that I tell everybody it is. It's the greatest race on earth, and it needs to be treated differently. So we got to that point sometime shortly after that conversation.

Q. With so much positive momentum that has been developed with the sell-out and with the rookie pole winner for the first time since 1983 and pretty decent crowds here for qualification weekend and the anticipation of FOX Sports' first Indy 500, how do you keep those being the storylines and not have this overshadow those storylines?

DOUG BOLES: The momentum of the Indianapolis 500 is still going to continue to be there. I've heard since yesterday, even this morning, the number of text messages and notes that I'm getting from fans on how great the weekend was and how excited they are for the Indianapolis 500, it's still there.

The challenge right now is getting our paddock to feel comfortable that it's still there. We need our biggest stakeholders, the people that are investing in our sport, to believe that it's a level playing field and that they have every chance as anybody else does to win the Indianapolis 500 so we're all singing from the same song book.

I don't think our momentum will slow going into this weekend. In fact, I think our momentum will continue to pick up going into it. That doesn't mean that we shouldn't be right here right now addressing this the way we're addressing it.



Q. Also, were you the one who told -- who had to call Roger and tell him? Also, for the second year in a row Tim Cindric and Ron Ruzewski will not be part of this event, and that's --

DOUG BOLES: I made those calls.

Q. Can you share how difficult they were?

DOUG BOLES: Oh, no, super difficult. It's the last thing I want to be doing right now is talking about penalties. I want to be talking about what a great event this is, how we have an unbelievably cool story, and a rookie with a rookie team on the pole, and Pato O'Ward up front. If Pato O'Ward won this race, people would explode.

Do I want to be having those phone calls? No. I've talked to team owners. Mark talked to team owners. None of them have been comfortable conversations, but it's part of what goes with it, but it doesn't mean the momentum is changing.

Q. As this was all happening, cars were lined up on pit lane, including Will Power. The team took the attenuator off and were doing some hasty modifications to the attenuator with an angle grinder, I believe, apparently in an attempt to fix what was wrong with it. That attenuator was then reattached to the car in pit lane while Will Power was still strapped in the car. It seems you've said that he was given the option to make the run. Can you confirm that he was going to be able to run with a hastily modified safety device on his car?

DOUG BOLES: He was going to be given the opportunity to run is my understanding, and I don't know. Hastily modified safety device is not a fair characterization of that. If anything, the safety device had been modified before, and they were putting it back in the state where it should have been at the beginning.

Are you an engineer or a mechanic?

Q. (Off microphone).

DOUG BOLES: Okay.

Q. Were there any considerations of just not allowing them to race or not allowing the drivers to race?

DOUG BOLES: Not really. The facts are what I know from Sunday, and I've explained to you how we got to this point on Sunday. They had qualified in the top 30. The top 30 are locked into the Indianapolis 500. As far as I know, everything was correct on Saturday.

So to remove them from the event for something that happened inside of the top 12 just didn't seem like the right result here. Like I said, we have gone beyond what our rules say and have moved them to the back of the grid, taken away their points, fined them. We're suspending two of their personnel.

I think this is a clear indication, I hope, to the paddock that we take this seriously, that this is not something that we're going to continue to allow to happen. We are going to make sure that the cars on the racetrack are evenly prepared and fall within our rules. The rule said the fastest 30 cars are locked into the Indianapolis 500.

Q. Is this case considered closed on your end? Could there be more penalties down the road?

DOUG BOLES: No, as far as I'm concerned, this case is closed. That's why we're here today. That's why we sent the release.

The only time this case gets opened up again or anything happens again is if somebody comes through tech and is not qualifying on tech.

Thank you, everybody.

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