

# NTT INDYCAR SERIES

## News Conference

Friday, February 27, 2026

### Chip Ganassi

### Alex Palou

#### Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: Good morning. Certainly no better way to kick off a new season with the reigning NTT INDYCAR SERIES champion, 17 titles and counting, certainly would love nothing more than a strong start to 2026.

Joining us this morning with the history that spans over 35 years, two dozen motorsports championships, and more than 270 race victories, team owner of Chip Ganassi Racing, Chip Ganassi.

And the four-time NTT INDYCAR SERIES champion and winner of three straight, also the defending champion on the streets of St. Petersburg, welcome back Alex Palou.

Chip, such an incredible season last year, just last week included picking up the Baby Borg, how does this team look ahead to 2026, reset, refocus?

CHIP GANASSI: Good morning, everyone. Thank you.

Yeah, I didn't want 2025 to end. We were having a pretty good year there (smiling).

Yeah, as we come into 2026, a lot of exciting things going on in the series, a lot of exciting things going on in the team. It's kind of business as normal with us. We're back to racing, back to what we do best. Here we are.

Really looking forward. We have some sponsor announcements this morning. Obviously we have Arlington and DC coming up. We love St. Petersburg. I think the series continues to be on this perpetual threshold lately of exciting things happening, whether it's with FOX Sports, with obviously the work over in the off-season about the Washington, DC event. We've had people come out of the woodwork basically that are interested in that. I think all the teams have heard and felt that. Same with Arlington.

I think we're poised again for another growth spurt this

year.

THE MODERATOR: Alex, certainly an incredible season last year. How much are you looking forward to getting back at it on Sunday?

ALEX PALOU: Yeah, good morning, everyone.

Super exciting. We've been preparing a lot this off-season. It's very exciting to prepare and to go over, like, everything we have done in 2025. As Chip said, this is what we like, we like being at the track competing. It finally arrived.

Excited for practice. Excited to see all the work that everybody at CGR and Honda has put in during the off-season to just try and improve a little bit on some areas from last year.

We had an amazing year in 2025, but we know that doesn't really count much for this season. Excited to get started and excited to hopefully start with a great momentum.

THE MODERATOR: Chip, it was just announced this week that SOLO was back partnering with the team. You guys already have SOLO cups ready to go here on the table. How pleased are you they're back in 2026?

CHIP GANASSI: Yeah, that was a great thing last year, Elkhart, entertain the SOLO people. They said right there with Elkhart in the winner's circle, we're in for next year. Perfect. I've just been waiting to announce that since then (smiling).

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

CHIP GANASSI: Obviously with Sunoco, too. Sunoco coming in in a big way.

THE MODERATOR: The hospitality they brought in...

CHIP GANASSI: I hear it's really something. Stepped up a level. I'm happy that that type of thing exists now here in INDYCAR. I think it's been a void to fill. Looking forward to it.



THE MODERATOR: Open it up for questions.

**Q. Chip, another big opportunity next weekend at Phoenix, sharing it with NASCAR. A track you raced at. In a lot of ways does it almost feel like going home again for you?**

CHIP GANASSI: Going back there, I was out there for the test obviously, the Baby Borg presentation, it just brought back so many memories. First place I drove an INDYCAR. First place, all the typical things. I didn't sleep the night before I remember.

It's just so great to see what's happened to Phoenix Raceway since being there as a participant in -- it was 1981, the first time I was there. To see how that place has grown, what it's done for the sport, just all the success.

We've had some success over the years there, too, me personally and the team. It was very apropos to have it named after the Unser family, had the test named after them. I thought that was a nice little touch.

I'll just tell you one little story. This is kind of a sidenote. The PR people are going to be mad at me for telling you this.

We were out there testing one day. Bobby Unser was helping us test. He was retired by then, I was driving. I'm sitting in the car. We were there all by ourselves testing. All of a sudden all the mechanics run away from the car. I'm like, Hey, what's going on? Where did everybody go?

I'm belted in. Bobby Unser comes over, has a rattlesnake in his hand, a real rattlesnake. I'm sitting in the car with it. I'll never forget that. I was mortified. Probably the scariest thing that ever happened to me at Phoenix Raceway.

**Q. From a business standpoint, the shared opportunity both here and Phoenix to run with NASCAR, can't do it every weekend, but a couple times a years, how much does that help both series?**

CHIP GANASSI: I think with our history, obviously I was in NASCAR for 20 years. I think in the back of everyone's mind, there was always that question of, Do you wonder what would happen if you had a race somewhere, somehow, and you had both series, where a fan could buy a ticket and see both races. How exciting that would be for the fans.

I think that's kind of what we're all on the precipice of. Quite frankly, we're excited about it. It obviously takes NASCAR and INDYCAR to have an agreement.

I think the winners are going to be the motorsports fans. They're the real winners before the green flag or the checkered flag falls.

**Q. Alex, how did the settlement with McLaren come about? I have to believe it must be a welcomed weight off your shoulders.**

ALEX PALOU: Yeah, it's the first time I can finally say that it's over. I can finally focus on what's important, which is just to race, win races. Very happy about that. Very happy that everything that had to be said has been said. We can finally move forward and focus in this season. So yeah...

**Q. Chip, you and Zak planning summer vacations now, holding hands, walking down the beach...**

CHIP GANASSI: Zak and I had a good conversation, so everything is good.

**Q. Alex, you have to reset. You got a lot off your shoulders. How do you prepare yourself to stay up front in a series that's going to be so competitive this year?**

ALEX PALOU: Well, the good thing about this sport, I would say all sports, is you get a new chance every year. We all start from zero. I wish I could carry some points from last year, obviously, carry some momentum, but INDYCAR said that's not allowed (smiling).

Honestly, I think it's always tough. It's tough because we need to redo all the work that we did in the past couple seasons. It's exciting. Chip actually told us yesterday, we had a meeting, very quick meeting, of we had to do all the work all over again. Just because we were really good last year doesn't mean anything in 2026.

I think that's what everybody at Chip Ganassi Racing thinks. That's why they've been able to win 17 championships in INDYCAR. We're ready for more.

We're excited. We know we have a lot of work ahead of us. We know we have all the tools, as well, to try and have another great year.

**Q. Chip, can you recall a time -- I think about the momentum with FOX and influx of sponsorship. When is the last time that you can recall this sport has felt this healthy?**

CHIP GANASSI: And Honda, too. That was a big question mark looming over everybody's head last year.

Yeah, good question. I'm trying to remember. I would say

 . . . when all is said, we're done.®

not since back in the CART days, when reunification came. Certainly there haven't been too many times it's been this exciting for the sport going forward, obviously with FOX coming on as a partner.

When FOX announced they were coming as a partner in the sport, I think I said that this is one of the top three or four things in my lifetime in INDYCAR racing as a pinnacle of a moment.

Yeah, I'm not sure. Maybe when live TV came in or something. I don't know (smiling). It's big. It's big.

**Q. Dario has meant so much to your organization. He gets to go in and play in the trucks this weekend. Your thoughts on getting a chance to watch him this weekend?**

CHIP GANASSI: I was kind of disappointed really that he didn't have a fire suit with the bell-bottom legs on it (smiling).

**Q. Why?**

CHIP GANASSI: Because that's what you have to have to drive in that Truck Series (smiling).

No, hey, am I completely in favor of Dario going out and being in a truck with a bunch of young kids trying to prove themselves against a guy like that? Probably not my first choice.

But I'm happy for him. If he wants to do it, go for it, yeah.

**Q. Alex, during the last few months, you go through this six-week trial, what were your emotions? Were you angry after everything? Was it a frustrating time? Were you able to say this is business and not make it personal?**

ALEX PALOU: I mean, I don't recommend that to anybody. It's not a very exciting experience for your life.

Learned a lot. I'm glad it's now over and that it's in the past. So yeah, honestly, I think I've gone through a lot in the last two and a half or three seasons. Yeah, ready to get started now in 2026.

**Q. Does the settlement allow you to do any more extensions with Chip as far as contracts?**

ALEX PALOU: Oh, absolutely (smiling).

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