

NTT INDYCAR SERIES

News Conference

Friday, April 17, 2026

J. Douglas Boles

Daren Lucas

John Doonan

Press Conference



drivers and boat racers and aviators, motorcycle riders, the conversations that happen in that world when you get the best of the best together is certainly unique.

To get inducted into this Hall of Fame, it's a pretty rigorous process. There are two rounds. There are 200 voters, half of which are former inductees. The other are media or colleagues in the industry.

If you get in this Hall of Fame, you get in rightly. It's not someone, like, me as a marketer gets to choose who comes in.

With that, let's get right to why we're here today. We'll start in open-wheel.

Four-time INDYCAR winner, as Doug pointed out, has 21 Indy 500 starts, which is 11th all time. Multiple USAC sprint cars Silver Crown champion, Gary Bettenhausen.

In drag racing, three-time NHRA Top Fuel Funny Car champion, number two in all-time Funny Car wins, Ron Capps.

In sports cars, founder of the successful Dyson Racing, where he won 19 titles and had 70 wins, he was also the winning driver in the 1997 Rolex 24 at Daytona, Rob Dyson.

In stockcars, he's a two-time Daytona 500 champion, has more than 100 wins and four titles as an owner, winner of 15 straight NASCAR Most Popular Driver Awards, Dale Earnhardt Jr.

This has been one of my personal favorites here. In business, the General Motors executive who led GM to 55 manufacturer championships, 11 of them in straight wins, and Corvette wins at Daytona and Le Mans, Herb Fishel.

Our historic inductee is a two-time Indy 500 winning car owner and three-time second-place finisher at the Brickyard, Harry Hartz.

As a pilot myself, this one brought me great joy. In aviation, a two-time Unlimited Air Racing champion and

THE MODERATOR: Good morning. On behalf of the Motorsports Hall of Fame of America we welcome you to the special announcement as we announce the Class of 2027.

Joining us today to help with the Class of 2027 announcement, some familiar faces in motorsports, but strong supporters of the Motorsports Hall of Fame of America:

From INDYCAR, INDYCAR president Doug Boles.

From IMSA, John Doonan.

It is also our pleasure to say hello for the first time to Daren Lucas, another familiar face in motorsports, but new to the Motorsports Hall of Fame of America. As of January, the new president of the only Hall of Fame for all motorsports.

DAREN LUCAS: I'd like to thank everybody associated with the Acura Grand Prix of Long Beach. Thank to our friends at INDYCAR and IMSA. Doug and John have been incredible ambassadors for the Motorsports Hall of Fame. Lately they have been great servants of our organization. I thank them for what they've done.

I'd also like to recognize Nick Firestone is here, he is the great grandson of Harvey Firestone. One of our former inductees.

Chuck Schifsky from Honda, he is one of our board members. I want to make sure that Chuck was aware that we knew he was here, thank them for their support this weekend.

As Dave said, the Motorsports Hall of Fame of America is all of motorsports. One of the most enlightening things I saw when I joined this organization in January, then through induction in March, the camaraderie from race car



world speed record holder at 499 miles an hour, in the famed Red Baron no less, Steve Hinton.

In motorcycles, three-time NHRA Pro Stock Motorcycle champion and winner of 46 Pro Stock Motorcycle races, Angelle Sampey. She is the 12th woman to be nominated into the Motorsports Hall of Fame.

Again, in stockcar, one of NASCAR's most successful engine builders and owners, having won 57 races as an owner and 77 as an engine builder, Robert Yates.

I think we have an extra chair up here because the 10th inductee is actually a surprise today. I'm not qualified to make the announcement. These two gentlemen beside me have a lot more experience in this world and with this competitor than I do.

John.

JOHN DOONAN: You know the saying sometimes it's not so good to meet one of your heroes. Well, in this case for me it was. And she, I think that makes the 13th, didn't even know that I was considering her a hero.

In 1985 I was at Road America at the Pabst 500. I saw my hero win her first IMSA race. Ladies and gentlemen, let's welcome Lyn St. James up here.

We're not done yet. On the IMSA side, that was race win one. There were seven more, including two Rolex 24 at Daytona victories, a Mobil 1 12 Hours of Sebring victory. She became the first winner of a race solo. She won at Watkins Glen in one of those monstrous Jack Roush Mustangs. Factory driver for Ford. Someone I consider personally one of my best friends on this planet. Besides what she did in racing, what she's done for our sport in general, what she's done for other women to jump on the trail that she blazed. Congratulations, Lyn.

Doug.

J. DOUGLAS BOLES: Similar to John, in 1992, Lyn showed up at the Indianapolis Motor Speedway. I was just four years out of school, a massive Indy 500 fan. I remember the days when Janet Guthrie broke through the barrier and ran at the Indianapolis Motor Speedway. Nobody else had come with that pomp and circumstance.

In 1992, I was enamored with the challenge she had, but the grace with how she brought it and the racing spirit with which she brought it. She was a race car driver first, a female second. I have literally a hundred photos of Lyn St. James. I stopped her the entire month of May.

JOHN DOONAN: We may need to notify the authorities (laughter).

J. DOUGLAS BOLES: I so desperately wanted her, it was going to transform our sport. She brought in a partner that was activating. She came in and brought new fans. That's what really captivated me.

To see her make the Indy 500, become the first female Rookie of the Year, for the longest time to be the oldest person be Rookie of the Year until Jimmie Johnson broke that recently, which is a cool thing to have. You don't expect people in their 40s to become successful INDYCAR drivers and become Rookie of the Year. It was certainly magical.

I often talk about one of the greatest qualifying efforts I've ever seen in my life, Lyn stepped into a car that a male could not get up to speed. She got it up to speed in one practice session, hit the fence on the right side, qualified for the Indianapolis 500.

She is a talented race car driver, but as John also alluded to, the most important thing she's done, when she retired, she didn't quit, she got better. She has made a huge difference, continues to every day.

If there's anybody that deserves to be in the Motorsports Hall of Fame America, it's Lyn St. James. We're excited to be part of it.

DAREN LUCAS: One more surprise for you.

LYN ST. JAMES: Is this really happening (smiling)?

DAREN LUCAS: Doug mentioned partners you brought into this sport. As I was going through images from our Freeman Collection to find of you, I learned something that I didn't know, but it's a small world.

So Lyn in 1993 raced with a sponsorship with J.C. Penney and Nike. When I saw these images, the smallest of worlds is that the current CEO of Nike, Elliott Hill, was one of my oldest friends. He actually worked on this program in 1993 to bring Nike and J.C. Penney to your race team. He sends his regards today.

LYN ST. JAMES: Oh, my God.

THE MODERATOR: Well, surprise, Lyn. Any thoughts? Any emotions here? What do you want to share?

LYN ST. JAMES: I've had so much time to think about it (laughter). I can't think. I'm overwhelmed.

First of all, Phil Knight said there will never be a Nike swoosh on a race car. So maybe this president guy, this guy, I was like, You wait, you're going to see it. I was so proud of that Nike swoosh on my car (smiling).

I'm overwhelmed. I know you guys like me, love me. I remember when I got on the podium in the vintage race, I was drinking milk. I'm overwhelmed because this means you guys, I'm now really part of the family, you know? I've always felt it, and I've never worried about it, but at the same time I've never felt this was where I should be because I've not won championships, I'm not Scott Pruett, I'm not (indiscernible), I'm not Mario. Those are the people that win championships and win races that are in the Hall of Fame.

I worked really hard. I tried. I did everything I could. I just love the sport so much. So this is, like, the most extraordinary thing that ever happened.

I've had some amazing... John, when he introduced me for the Automotive Hall of Fame, I know all those years I worked with Ford, tried to get women to take care of their cars. So the Automotive Hall of Fame, that was off the wall.

But this is my sport, this is my family. Now I'm part of the family. I can't thank you enough. I wish I could be eloquent, but now I can't. I'm so emotional. I can't believe it.

This is going to happen again? Do I get to come back in March when I get organized?

THE MODERATOR: I think you'll get invited back.

LYN ST. JAMES: Okay, thank you.

DAREN LUCAS: We get to do this again in March.

LYN ST. JAMES: I need to get my brain organized because I'm so emotional. I'm honored to death. This is the most extraordinary thing that a racer can have. Every racer that is in it knows that. It's just the best. It's extraordinary.

Anyway, thank you.

J. DOUGLAS BOLES: Allison feels badly because she didn't tell you the truth. We had a whole team working behind the scenes.

LYN ST. JAMES: I was supposed to give you a hug at 10:00. You were eating tacos or something (laughter).

THE MODERATOR: Talk about Gary and Rob, as well. The thing about Lyn is that not only great racer but a real ambassador even now in motorsports. Doug and John, talk about that with respect to the classes. We love to see you everywhere we go. When you don't show up at a race, Where's Lyn? The way she continues to promote the sport, women in motorsports as well, it's second to none.

LYN ST. JAMES: There are times that I know you guys weren't always happy to see me because I was always either asking for money for driver development programs, then Women in Motorsports North America. I know. I got to a point where I closed my foundation, my driver development, because I knew they liked me. Oh, God, she wants something. I took a break from that for a while.

I have to thank all of you because Women in Motorsports North America wouldn't happen without the allies that we have. It's not a women's organization; it's an organization to grow the sport.

Lisa Boggs sitting here, who is one of our founding board members. Allison Langdon. Cindy Sisson... Jacob from Bosch. Ed Holloran. I can't see everybody with the lights there.

Anyway, it's the whole community of motorsports that has made Women in Motorsports North America happen. Now I know that you don't say, Oh, my God, here she comes. It's like, Oh, here she comes, and how can we help you?

It isn't just about giving money; it's about supporting programs and using our brains to be able to make the sport grow. It's growing.

But we got to keep doing it, you know? We can't rest on any of our laurels. That's what I love about the sport, we never rest on our laurels. It is like, how can we take names, kick ass and grow?

Roger Bailey. John and Peggy, I think of them so many times.

J. DOUGLAS BOLES: I don't think we could top that.

LYN ST. JAMES: So sorry (laughter).

THE MODERATOR: John, do you want to talk about Rob a little bit, Rob Dyson.

JOHN DOONAN: I go down that list. I'm a Chicago boy, Gary Bettenhausen, the family, there's still a Bettenhausen Dodge in Tinely Park, Illinois. A lot of passion for that.

You mention Rob, certainly another hero I watched when I



was sitting on a hill at Road America, Brainerd or Mid-Ohio. Those drivers like Lyn were my boyhood heroes.

To be able to be part of announcing a class that involves Rob Dyson. Worked with the Dyson family 2009 to 2013 when I was at Mazda. Like a Bob Aiken, they were the independent teams. They weren't necessarily a factory effort. They ended up aligning with factories. They were the independent teams.

Rob didn't do it full-time. That was his passion. I think there's no question that the Motorsports Hall of Fame of America is built on passion no matter what the discipline.

You know what happens at the inductions when you show up? The motorcycle guys and gals think the folks that race cars are lunatics. The airplane folks, the boat racers, Tom D'Eath, they think the race car drivers are nuts.

The stories that come out of the time that we're all together as a sport, no matter what discipline, no matter what type of focus, the language is the same, and that's passion, passion for speed, passion for horsepower, and performance. That's what makes it really special. I'm really thrilled to be part of it.

I was on the board for a while, chaired the board when we moved it to Daytona. Just thrilled to be part of this. Congrats again, friend.

LYN ST. JAMES: Thank you. Will you quit saying you were 13 (laughter).

JOHN DOONAN: When she won her first IMSA race, I still had a minor hard card at the time.

THE MODERATOR: Doug, for you, John was talking about passion. No one had more passion than the Bettenhausens. Harry Hartz as well.

J. DOUGLAS BOLES: The second-place finishes at the Indianapolis Motor Speedway are pretty remarkable if you look at his record at the Speedway. Never won it, but led 57 laps over his six races there.

The things he did with Chrysler, the things he did with the automotive industry, it's cool he's getting inducted.

Gary Bettenhausen, we were talking about Dale Sr., and Dale Earnhardt Jr. Now you have Gary with his dad Tony Sr. in the Hall of Fame.

I got a chance on Tuesday night to have Gary's two twins, Todd and Cary, and Gary's sister Sue, come by, and tell them their father and brother were going to get inducted

into the Motorsports Hall of Fame.

Unfortunately Merle, one of Gary's other brothers, I called him that we were going to have this event. He didn't know why. He had a stroke and is struggling in the hospital in Indianapolis.

The Bettenhausen family means so much to motorsport in general. Gary certainly belongs in there. Lyn knows he could drive just about anything, was fearless, kind of like Arie Luyendyk. Qualified on a non-Pole Day.

Gary was our fastest qualifier in 1991 at 224 miles per hour and led 138 laps of the 1972 Indy 500. But for an engine issue, he probably is in the winner of that race, not Mark Donohue. Who knows what would have happened to his career.

Both really deserving to be in the Motorsports Hall of Fame.

LYN ST. JAMES: I'm getting my head together a little bit. I also to want to congratulate all of the other inductees. I would have done that normally, but I got so emotional, I didn't do that.

Angelle, who I know well, and Rob Dyson, a lot of them I know. I just wanted to say congratulations to all the other inductees.

AUDIENCE: (No microphone.)

LYN ST. JAMES: That was Don. He insisted it was going to be all women. To be honest, I argued with him. I asked later, How do you get Don to change his mind? You don't (laughter).

But I wanted it to be a ProAm, a mixed doubles, like in tennis, have a guy and a gal. Don was absolutely insistent that it was going to be all women. I finally said, Okay, he's paying for it, he's the boss, that's what we'll do.

I'm actually proud that we did it. Cindi Lux and others went on to have great driving careers.

I do listen sometimes (smiling).

Q. Lyn, I wanted to thank you for all the wonderful years in IMSA GTP. Those cars were wild back then. They were the monsters of the midway. You held your own in there. Congrats.

LYN ST. JAMES: That decade of the '80s in IMSA, the GTO or GTP cars, that was just the best. I never thought I would get to Indy. I think the '80s, it was like a golden era

for sports cars. You've done it again. You've taken it to a whole new level.

That was just the decade of the '80s. That's where I learned so much about being a race car driver. That all paid off when I got to Indy, so...

I mean, Talladega, the records I set there. No one knows the Indianapolis 500 was my first oval track race and only my second open-wheel race. But it was those years, those other cars that I drove, that I said, Okay, I can do this.

I remember this (laughter). I remember white walling those tires. Dick was so proud. Literally I white walled the good-year tires on my qualifying lap.

AUDIENCE: One thing that hasn't been mentioned, but Lyn's significant role of women in racing which continues on. To me it's a very important addition to our sport. Cindi Sisson sitting up here in the front row, she also plays a big role. Lyn is a shaker and mover with women in racing. Thank you.

LYN ST. JAMES: Thank you. I think it was sort of brought up, but everything's about timing. I realize that Women in Motorsport North America, the time it's right now. We have so many more women. Bosch, the electrifier career, there's 20 women sitting there that all want to work in motorsport. They represent the defying odds that women aren't interested in it.

It's all about timing. If you hang around long enough, the timing will get right.

AUDIENCE: (No microphone.)

LYN ST. JAMES: Ken Clapp, thank you. You were our first donor. Cindi took care of the books. Thank you, Ken.

J. DOUGLAS BOLES: Unfortunately for Ken, he's not allowed to retire. Even though you're trying to escape, we're going to be leaning on you for all you've done for our sport.

DAREN LUCAS: Ken is on our board of directors, as well. We're not going to let him go anywhere, soon.

THE MODERATOR: For Lyn St. James, a Hall of Famer now. Congratulations to the Motorsports Hall of Fame class of 2027. We'll see you in March at Daytona.

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