

# NTT INDYCAR SERIES

## News Conference

Tuesday, May 5, 2026

### Graham Rahal

#### Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: Good morning, everyone. Welcome. May has certainly arrived. All focus on the Indianapolis Motor Speedway now. It begins with the Sonsio Grand Prix. It's the 12th time the IMS road course has opened up in the month of May at the Indianapolis 500.

It's been a good track for Rahal Letterman Lanigan Racing over the years and driver Graham Rahal. Remember, he won pole there in August of 2023, started in the front row a year ago before finishing sixth. He has 15 top-10 finishes in the 17 races he's competed in on the road course, and I'm sure can't wait to get back at it this weekend.

He's the driver of the No. 15 Fifth Third Bank Honda this weekend. Welcome in the aforementioned Graham Rahal. Thanks for your time today.

GRAHAM RAHAL: Thanks for having me, Dave.

THE MODERATOR: It goes really without saying, just you on this track -- I mean, Louis qualified third last year. Who could forget Christian Lundgaard's debut a couple years ago? What is it about the road course that really lends itself to you and this team?

GRAHAM RAHAL: Well, yeah, it's been a great track for us. Overall it's a place that we've had some good success at. I wish I could sit and tell you exactly why. I don't have that answer, but it's a place that we've enjoyed, that we've -- even honestly a couple years ago, even last year, I qualified second and Louis was third. Maybe it was two years ago when I was on the front row, and we had a few of us in the top five, and the setups were completely different, yet we were all fast.

I'm not sure why it works there, but I'm excited to go back. I'm particularly excited just based on the performance we've had on road and street courses so far. Even the short oval, right? I had a great one at Phoenix. But for me, I'm excited to go back and see what we can do this weekend, for sure.

THE MODERATOR: And you mentioned Phoenix. Last

time obviously the NTT INDYCAR SERIES was on an oval. Based on that, based on the road course, do you feel like there's some real opportunity for the team this month?

GRAHAM RAHAL: Yeah, I do. I feel like this is a big month for us. It is for everybody. Obviously the Grand Prix, we expect to go there every year and be very strong. It's really critical that we get the oval side kind of kicking off.

In our car, we're in the top 10 in points. So it's a big month to carry momentum. Clearly we go right from here on to Detroit and everything else. Detroit we started in the top 5 last year. Hopefully we can carry that on, that performance that we had.

This is a critical time for us in every regard because, when you're kind of in the hunt like this and you're not that far out, each and every race carries a lot of weight. When you come to a track like Indy, road course in particular, where we know we've been very strong, the expectation is very high.

In my car we are going to try some new things this weekend compared to what we would have run here last year, and really the objective there isn't simply just to find speed, it's also to find tire life and consistency. If you look at RLL, this team, we've been quite fast in a lot of places, but we need to get our tire life to be better. So a lot of things we're focused on on the 15 car to start the weekend are dedicated to that, and fingers crossed we can make it happen.

THE MODERATOR: Busy month ahead. Look forward to seeing you guys on track coming up Friday. We'll go ahead and open it up for questions.

**Q. Hey, Graham, how are you doing?**

GRAHAM RAHAL: What's up, Bruce?

**Q. INDYCAR announced you're going to get to use Push to Pass now more than for the rest of the street and road course races, beginning with Saturday's race. How important is that, and how does that kind of**



## change your strategy a little bit?

GRAHAM RAHAL: INDYCAR also announced that I hit the button for 0.00 seconds, so explain that to me. I would say that means I didn't use it.

### Q. I was going to ask about that.

GRAHAM RAHAL: Yeah, I don't know what the hell that is. Anyway, I'm not a fan, Bruce. I'm not a fan. I think -- yes, it's not available on the initial start, but it's available on the restarts. Yeah, I'm not a fan. We'll just leave it at that.

I think, particularly at a track like this one this week and Road America, everybody's going to be on the button and everybody's going to save up to make sure they've got button left to use, and I'm not sure that that makes the racing any better. It would be the same if you all weren't on the button.

I think they're trying to get away from the need to police that after what happened with Newgarden and everything else, which I understand that part, but to me the rules are the rules. They've always been the rules. I wouldn't change them. Yeah, that's all I got to say about that.

### Q. I'll ask you something that you are a fan of, your father. His life's going to be on a documentary Friday night on Fox. Just how proud are you of that? Have you had a chance to see it yet?

GRAHAM RAHAL: I've not seen it. I probably should have, but I have not. I'm just really -- I'm interested to see what all they showcase. I'm very proud of him with everything that he's been able to accomplish, not only in this sport, but as a father, as a businessman, as an entrepreneur.

As many of you guys know, a lot of what I do each and every day of my life is to strive to be like him, to build businesses, to do things outside of racing so that racing can continue for many years of my life to be a passion that I can be involved in after driving, which is exactly what he has done.

I'm certainly very interested to see who's in it. I know a lot of it, but I'm interested to see what's said. Like I said, I'm very proud of him in everything that he's done. I'm excited about it.

### Q. And last one from me, you didn't get a chance to race against him, but you sure saw him race as a kid, Alex Zanardi. He was incredible. He broke your heart at Long Beach when he passed Bryan Herta in your father's car with the pass --

GRAHAM RAHAL: Laguna.

### Q. Sorry, Laguna. What are your memories of him and what are your thoughts as he passed away last Friday?

GRAHAM RAHAL: I think he is far away one of the icons in our sport. In my childhood, in those early days of JV and Zanardi and Montoya, et cetera, those were tremendous years.

What I do remember so vividly is just what a wonderful guy he was. I was in Italy at CRG, which is a go-kart manufacturer when I was a little kid. I was doing some testing over there. He kind of appeared out of this dark room, and this was after his injuries. I'll never forget it was like a Godly -- this Godly sort of figure in our world sort of appeared.

He was so kind. I mean, so incredibly kind. What a gentleman on and off the track, but obviously a fierce competitor. You can't help but love what Alex Zanardi did on the track. You can't help but love the fire within his soul to, even after his injuries, to continue on, to continue the fight and have the success he did in the Paralympics, all that stuff. He's just a tremendous guy.

It's terrible to see. Obviously he drove for us at RLL in the BMWs. What he did there, obviously things like that really helped Robbie Wickens and guys with the hand controls and things like that. He was just an instrumental figure who had the heart of a lion. Certainly sad to see that.

### Q. Graham, you mentioned being in the top 10. If that were to hold up this season, it would be your first time in five years, and you have as many top-10 finishes this year as you did last year. I'm just curious, what do you feel has been the key to that, and how do you stay in the right mind state, you personally and as a team, to keep that together?

GRAHAM RAHAL: That's a good stat. I don't know if it's good, but I had not heard that stat yet. I think that we're just in a better place. I think just in general, I think the team is headed down the right path. We've got a lot more work to do certainly, but I feel like there's a lot of great things currently happening, there's a lot of great people within the organization, and there's a confidence that is starting to grow within our organization that we are a player.

Outside of maybe Palou this year, who obviously had an accident in Phoenix, but other than that, has been sort of dominant again, we've been in the mix with everybody else. We had two bad races this year that really took us

out of sort of being in the top 5 at points.

Honestly, if you look at all of the other races -- I mean, with Penske, we're right there. We beat them often; they beat us. You look at the other the Ganassi cars, we've been right there. You look at McLaren, we've been right there, if not better. Andretti the same, right, on average.

We've got a lot of reasons to be confident. We've got work to do, but the men and women in our shop should be very proud of what they've done, and we're going to keep pushing them forward.

The other thing, we've just got a great camaraderie there. It's a great environment, and it's a lot of good people. That stuff inspires me as a driver to keep pushing hard to try to give them the results that they deserve. I'm proud of that. We're going to keep pushing. We're going to keep pushing.

This is a big month for us. You guys know that. Our back's been against the wall a lot when it comes to Indy, and hopefully we're going to turn that around this month on the oval of course. Hopefully we'll get that spun around and have a really good one.

**Q. What do you think has led to that, that extra camaraderie, and everything coming together for you to have this better season?**

GRAHAM RAHAL: I think we've always had a good group of people. It's a little hard to pinpoint one thing. Certainly I think last year we started to see signs of this.

My engineer, Yves, tremendous guy. Timmy on my team who's under Yves has been amazing. T.J. and the entire group, Hop, and all the guys, they go to battle with me each and every day. It's been a great group of people.

I think we've also been able to move some folks around internally in the team, guys that you maybe don't see on the road that much anymore, but putting them in great places that they can have success as well and then maybe they fit a little better.

You look at the build quality of our cars. You look at what Shawn Ford and his group have done there. It's been tremendous for the 500. Obviously bringing in guys in the engineering corps that have been influential.

And I can't look past Brian Barnhart. To me I think singularly the best hire we've made in a long, long time has been that man. I've absolutely loved having him. I've always been close to Brian, but we never worked together until this year. His calmness, the way he goes about his

business, he's a racer at heart, and at the end of the day, do we want to look at AI and we want to look at all this stuff, sure, but this is racing. Racing, you've got to race the race, and Brian does that tremendously well.

When you look at our strategy, what we did even at Phoenix and places like that, it's been a great step forward. All of those pieces of the puzzle are coming together. So I'm proud to be a part of that.

**Q. Graham, as Bruce alluded to, that documentary is coming up about your dad. I got to take part of in some of that. What I wanted to ask you is has that been both a -- what your dad did at Indy, has it been a little bit of a blessing, a little bit of a curse for you, his son, to follow with the expectations, et cetera? Just kind of explain to people if that's a burden at all, has been a burden at all through your career? Then number two, do you still remember that wheel coming off in that one Indy 500 that probably would have gotten any kind of knapsack off your back?**

GRAHAM RAHAL: Yeah, well, first off, I don't think it's been much of a burden for me. What I look at is when you look at all the people that have competed in the Indy 500, very few have ever won it. It's just the reality. I don't sit here and be disappointed in myself that 19 tries at Indy and I haven't won it or whatever.

Look, I've been close before. I've been closer than a lot of people have been, and it hasn't happened. It adds fuel to the fire each and every year to try to go and do it and get it off my back, but the reality is too that -- you know, this place, 500, I don't know what the ratio is, but probably 95 or more percent of the people that compete in it will never get the chance to sniff a win. So you can't look down upon yourself.

Even the greats, the greatest of all time, Scott Dixon, has won one. You would think he's won ten with the amount of things that he's been able to accomplish, and yet, even it's turned its head on him many times.

I certainly don't sit there and be disappointed in myself that it hasn't happened. Yes, do I think about 2021? You got that damn right. That haunts me. People don't realize we had them completely covered that day. I needed one more pit stop to go to the end. They all needed two. It had been a very green race. It was going to continue to be a green race because people needed to save the fuel to get home.

The pace of that race had been so slow that I was able to run a yellow mixture and keep up with the group for 95 percent of the laps I completed, and I played it absolutely flawlessly, and we never had to say a word on the radio.

We knew exactly what was going on.

Unfortunately, things happen, and that's life. I mean, look, it's life. Am I disappointed in that year? For sure, it does haunt me a little bit because everything on that particular day had gone to plan. I mean, everything. Like I said, it didn't even need to be stated on the radio. We all knew. The whole team knew exactly what was going on.

Yeah, I mean, that happens. Unfortunately, yeah, sometimes I do sit and wonder, am I ever going to get that close again? The reality is you just don't know. That year felt like the year.

But like I just said, this place chooses its winners, and sometimes they make complete sense, and sometimes they don't. That's just the way that it goes. Here we are to fight again.

**Q. One other quickie, I wanted to follow up. With everything you know about your dad winning the Indy 500, you've had to hear about or watch on videos or things like that, what do you think stood out about your dad more than anything else, what strength he brought to the program, so to speak, with those three championships, winning a championship in his first year as an owner? What stood out about him in those years in your opinion?**

GRAHAM RAHAL: Well, I think that Dad was such a methodical thinker and just such a great racer that he was able to have tremendous success. The other thing I would say is this, one of my dad's key highlights and key points and has been to me not only in life, but in racing, is one of my dad's greatest attributes and one of the greatest attributes of a lot of successful people is the ability to surround yourself with other people that are extremely smart and successful. Highlighting and finding the right people to put in the right places.

You look at what he did early in his career at Rahal Hogan when they won the championship. Obviously Adrian Newey. When you've got those people that you associate yourself and that you work with, you just don't let them go. Tim, you know this as well as me. You know JP, Jimmy Prescott. You know Clay Wilson. You know a lot of the people, Ricardo Nault, who have been with our family for 40, 50 years almost, a long time. They become part of the family.

I look at my dad's business. If you look at the success of the car dealerships and hiring Ron Ferris and identifying Ron Ferris to be the guy, my dad has always been superb at having that eye. It's something that most people don't have a great eye for.

If you look at a lot of the most successful teams in racing, they all have that. Obviously RP with Tim for all those years. You look at Mike Hall with Chip from the very beginning and Barry Wanser and a lot of the great guys that they've had around that program. You look at Andretti all those years with JF and many of the other people.

All the successful teams and businesses have not about able to have that, and that's where my dad was not only great on the racetrack, but great off. It's led to a lot of his success in life for sure.

^ Stacey stop I'm starting here

**Q. Graham, I'm doing something on there's a documentary coming up this month about one year since Kyle Larson's last attempt at the double. Obviously it didn't go all that well for him last year or the year before. You were there for that. You were there when Kurt Busch did it 10 years ago. You were around it your entire life. You probably remember the Robby Gordon, Tony Stewart, John Andretti days. Do you have a sense, do you think we're going to see this again? That was the first -- well, Larson was 10 years since Kurt Busch and it didn't go well for him. What is your sense of how often we'll see this again?**

GRAHAM RAHAL: The challenge is just getting the opportunity. Frankly for an INDYCAR driver to try it, we're not going to get the opportunity. I'm close with Mr. Hendrick, very close, have been a long time, and I teased him about, hey, could we -- there's just not the opportunity to go do it. There's not the cars or whatever.

So that is the hardest part. Really it would have to be a NASCAR driver coming here. Obviously Carson made some waves this week in talking about it. Kyle was really the right scenario because of the Chevy. They were able to get Mr. Hendrick, he went to a great opportunity with McLaren. Didn't work out so good.

That's kind of what I was telling Tim. Kyle Larson is arguably one of the best drivers in the world, or one of the most diverse guys, guys that can drive anything, yet he struggled in a great car, in a super fast car too.

To me, I don't know when the next person will be. I would love to see -- I mean, Kyle Busch is certainly getting late in his career, but I'd love to see Kyle give it a shot. Reddick has the size for sure. Your challenge there is going to be Toyota versus Chevy or Honda. I wish that we could put the manufacture classes aside, but we all know the realities of the world.

It would be great to see him do it. There's a lot of guys that would be great to come across and give it -- I mean, Chase Elliott would be a great guy. He could come and get Napa or whoever it's going to be and come across and do the same thing with McLaren probably, right?

Again, it gets back to the same old challenge. We've talked about this time and time again. If we want to have more cars at Indy, we've got to have more engine manufacturers because we've got to have more engines. Until that really changes, it's going to be a bit of a challenge for anybody to jump in and do one.

**Q. You talk about Larson being the perfect fit, and I completely agree. You don't think the fact he struggled so much with it -- again, it factors beyond his control, weather -- but that didn't blunt the momentum for this happening again, do you?**

GRAHAM RAHAL: I don't think so. I thought he did a pretty damn good job. I mean, did things happen? Lost on a restart last year in the pack of cars. These cars are very affected by the aerodynamics. That's just the truth. Maybe that caught him by surprise a little bit.

I don't think so. I welcome anybody to come and give it a shot. It shouldn't be easy. This shouldn't be easy. It genuinely is the old saying, if it's easy, everybody would do it. It shouldn't be easy. I hope many more give it a shot, for sure.

**Q. One quick follow up. You mentioned joking about with Rick Hendrick, I know Newgarden and McLaughlin have talked about trying to do it. How serious did you get about exploring it? You don't think there's any way an INDYCAR can do it going the other way?**

GRAHAM RAHAL: The problem is can Penske run another car for Josef or -- I mean, Scotty is the obvious fit because he spent most of his life in those. Frankly I think the current Cup car is a lot more similar to what a V8 super car was or is than what the old Cup cars would have been. I understand at an oval with the spool, things are a little different.

I didn't get super serious about it, to be honest. I think it would be really sweet to try it, but it's same as everybody. If you're going to go there and you're going to go do it, you want to be in good equipment. You don't want to get hurt. You want to be in a shot that you can do very well and not look like a fool.

Same for them coming here. You want to make sure that you're in a fast car. You don't want to go and just drive around. I think that goes both ways.

**Q. Just following up on a few minutes ago, RLL have obviously seen quite a lot of change in recent years, but obviously Jay has had a full off-season now, you've made some of these hires. Is there a sense of more stability with the team now, and just talk about the importance of having that stability compared to kind of what it's been these last few years.**

GRAHAM RAHAL: Yeah, I mean, there's a stability -- (video froze).

Tremendous for us for a long, long time as well. That's clearly been a benefit to our team. With Jay it's also great. We don't need to make a lot of changes in things honestly. We've got to keep building upon the consistency and what we've started.

From there, just go and acquire and accumulate some other good folks. I think, if we make RLL an attractive place where we can keep having the success from the beginning, the success that we're having, more and more folks are going to want to come work here.

There's plenty of teams that don't have the environment we have. I think, if we can bring some of those guys on -- as I tell dad all the time. I don't think anybody here needs replaced. I really don't. I just think we need more. We need to just continue to add and get more good people and get more information and data, and things will get better.

**Q. I know you kind of alluded to being aware of some of the BS and some of the criticism that you and the team have kind of faced in recent times. I'm kind of just interested what sort of effect that has on you or the group, and I guess from your side and the team's side, how do you rally around that and try and almost defy what people are saying externally?**

GRAHAM RAHAL: Tim asked earlier about the burden and everything else. The reality is honestly I don't think it matters what I do. I'm always going to get those comments because even after we started on the front row -- started in the top three 2 out of 5 races this year, you go on social media, all you're going to read is how Graham can't drive, he's slow.

No matter what you do in a person like my shoes, it's never going to be good enough. That's the reality. I'm okay with that because I don't -- if I've been blessed with one thing, it's that I've been blessed with a mindset and the ability to block out a lot of this stuff. I do know there are a lot of drivers that that's not the case. They get wound up. They see a comment or whatever.

The accessibility of the fan today is a blessing and it's a curse. In my dad's day, if they had a bad race, you weren't going to hear anything about it because it was probably written in a newspaper and the reality was you weren't ever going to see that newspaper. Today's world is not that. Everybody has you at their fingertips.

So you have to be able to mentally put all of that aside and stick to the plan, stick to the focus, and the reality is we've had a strong start to the year, and we've been fast in a lot of places. We've had some great results. I believe this weekend is an opportunity for us. That's all I'm focused on.

We'll just keep pushing along, and I think everybody within my team knows my capabilities, and more importantly, go ask Will Power, go ask Scott Dixon, go ask all those guys that race wheel to wheel, I would firmly believe that they would say very positive things about me, and those are the people and the opinions that matter. That's all I really focus on.

**Q. This weekend is a two-day race weekend. How does that adjust and influence how you prepare for the race?**

GRAHAM RAHAL: It does quite a bit because it's just so -- I mean, really it's the same amount of running because most weekends we get one Friday practice and then -- so it's the same amount of running, but it's so condensed that it is a lot.

The track's always in great shape. The track is always very similar year to year to year. Normally we go out on Friday morning, and it's fairly cool, it's fast, it's whatever. I think most teams now know what to expect.

Frankly for me on a personal level, I quite like it. You get out there -- when I go to the racetrack, I just want to be all business, hammer through it, and get the job done. For me, it works well.

Now, the problem is if you start the weekend on Friday morning and practice and you're not competitive at all, that becomes an issue because you really -- it's not only just that, yes, you still have the next practice, but they're right on top of each other. The time in between is very tight. So to react and make big changes is quite hard.

I don't mind it. In fact, I would be a fan of taking this sort -- what I don't really love is like Fridays on normal weekends where we don't do anything until 3:00 in the afternoon. If I'm going to be at the racetrack, I want to go. So I don't mind the weekend for sure.

**Q. Looking forward to the Indy 500. How important**

**was the open test last week? Did you learn anything new that you can take on board for this year's race?**

GRAHAM RAHAL: Our car was much better at the open test than what I've had the last few years, so I do have some confidence at least in that regard. We didn't do any qualifying simulations or anything like that.

So I don't really know where we'll stack up in that regard, but overall that was an important test to validate some of the changes that we made, some of the things we've done in the off-season that we were hoping would be better, and frankly many of them -- not all, but many of them were. So we're excited for what's to come here.

**Q. Hello, everyone. Graham, 20 years ago, May 21, 2006, to be exact, you were the first and only winner of the race in Monterrey, Mexico, in Atlantic Championship and shared the podium with Simon Pagenaud and David Martinez, a driver born in Monterrey, and one of those who directs DEForce. Can you share your memories of 20 years ago and the land of Pato O'Ward.**

GRAHAM RAHAL: Yeah, it is the land of Pato. The trophy is probably sitting around here somewhere. I do remember Monterrey. I remember I ate great food every single night. My highlight was to go back to the hotel.

Yeah, those were great years. I really enjoyed going to Mexico for racing. I've been a big proponent, particularly with the escalation and popularity of Pato, that really INDYCAR Racing needs to get back down there and go racing as soon as possible.

Yeah, those were great battles. There's a lot of guys. Hinchcliffe was in that race. Rafa Matos was a big competitor of mine in those days and won a lot of races that year. Rafa, and obviously Martinez was a tremendous young Mexican driver. I saw him just the other day actually.

Simon and I, Simon Pagenaud and I battled for many years together. Miss having him out on the racetrack for sure. Yeah, those were great days. Those were great days. Certainly I hope we can get back there.

**Q. Obviously I make the question because I live in Monterrey, Mexico. Back to the reality, this year on Indy, this year on month of May will be very important. Obviously we all -- but how to catch finally this first win of the season here on Indy?**

GRAHAM RAHAL: Obviously, when we look at the season as a whole, I think we can confidently say as a team our

 . . . when all is said, we're done.®

best opportunity every year is the Indy road course because honestly, I'm not just saying it, I should have won this race probably three times by now.

One year we were dominant. We qualified second. I was disqualified for being half a pound under weight. So I ended up having to start last and still finished third. That one kind of slipped away.

Obviously COVID year, I finished second, dominated the race, but a yellow at an ill-timed point. Dixon had just pitted, and I was out in the lead and a yellow at an all time point allowed Dixon to cycle through and get around me. That damn guy did it to me again just, what, two years ago. Same thing, a long yellow to start the race, which allowed their strategy to be too easy to accomplish. He beat me by a second at the stripe.

I feel like this is a track where we've had a lot of great opportunities, and fingers crossed this weekend we can get that monkey off our back. I'd love to do it.

Then of course the 500 is the biggest one and the one that we have the most attention on. We've got to get through this weekend first. I don't like to look too far ahead. Obviously the 500 is always in the back of our mind each and every day, but I want this weekend to be very successful first.

**Q. Graham, the topic is joint weekends with other series. Thinking back on the Phoenix weekend with NASCAR, the conversation we had earlier with Nate, I just returned from Texas Motor Speedway where NASCAR did a doubleheader with the High Limit Sprint Car Series, and it sold out, Texas Motor Speedway sold out for the NASCAR Cup race on Sunday, which it hasn't done for a while. Your thoughts on the INDYCAR/NASCAR weekend at Phoenix? From a business standpoint, does INDYCAR need to seek out other joint weekends? Can we put fans in the stands with these joint weekends?**

GRAHAM RAHAL: I'm a massive, massive fan of them. I thought the Phoenix turnout was great. I know the Saturday turnout was way, way up for them than what they've had in years past. I don't know we're going back, but I heard we were. I heard good things, that that was likely to happen, which would be tremendous.

I think it's good for both. I really do. I don't think anymore that we can look and say, oh, if INDYCAR is there, it pulls from NASCAR or whatever. It doesn't. We all need to put our sports into a healthier position. Motorsports is the global thing, and then you've got the individual buckets.

I've always been a fan of this, and I've said it numerous times in interviews. To me, I think it's -- I think it would be tremendous to do events more with NASCAR. I think it would be great to do events with IMSA. Obviously we do a couple, but even when we look at Long Beach, Long Beach isn't the full field. When we look at Detroit, not the full field. I think it's GTD, the prototypes, and I think it's Pro, GTD Pro or whatever for one race and it's Am in Long Beach.

When we used to go to Road America together, it was huge. I would get back to those days. It's certainly better than doing these things separately. Then, of course, I've mentioned it numerous times, but to me, what I would be looking at if I was NASCAR and NHRA, is why are we doing Bristol together? Why aren't we doing -- obviously NHRA can run in the evening, and that's the best spectacle in all of NHRA drag racing is to go to Bristol. What's to stop them from going to Sonoma together or INDYCAR to go back there with them?

NHRA is probably the one that would benefit the most from all of these concepts, to be honest, but I don't understand why we don't do it.

That leads me back to conversation of just being a fan. Forget being a competitor. Being a fan. When I go to the racetrack, I want to see action. I go to a lot of races nowadays, not just INDYCAR, but NASCAR, et cetera, and there's a lot of down time. There's a lot of time that the track is not being utilized.

To me, that's where you can bring in High Limits. That's where you can bring in bring in Silver Crown. That's where you can bring in some of these others and just stuff these schedules full. I'm going down a tangent now.

To me, I feel it would be absolutely critical, and it would be a great thing to see some of these deals put together. I threw it out there a long time ago.

To see NHRA run down Hulman Boulevard at the speedway is an amazing thing. There's plenty of runoff. You just keep going out the back gate and down the north side. Anyway, it would be great to see some of these different concepts come to life. I'm just a driver, so I'll stay in my lane for now.

**Q. From being bumped in 2023 to being Stefan Wilson's replacement, and then to racing in the next two Indy 500s, how has your approach to qualifying evolved, and how will it help you this year?**

GRAHAM RAHAL: I wouldn't say it's evolved much. Unfortunately, I've been in the hot seat too many times --

more than I want to be over the last few years. That appears like it may be different this year for everybody because there won't be a hot seat. For me, the reality of the situation is, look, every time I go there, we want to qualify as far forward.

Speed matters. If you have a fast car at Indy, it's just easier, period. It's just better even in traffic. It's better in race configuration. It's better all around. To me, we just want to put ourselves in a place that we can go out and we can qualify better. I think that's a critical thing for us this year.

Ask me in two weeks, and we'll find out pretty quickly. Or not even, a week and a half.

THE MODERATOR: Graham, thanks for your time. We'll wrap it up and leave it there for now. We'll see you in a couple days, Graham. Appreciate your time today.

A reminder, coverage of Saturday's Sonsio Grand Prix begins at 4:30 p.m. eastern.

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