

NTT INDYCAR SERIES

News Conference

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Bobby Rahal

Mike Lanigan

Jay Frye

Graham Rahal

Louis Foster

Mick Schumacher

Takuma Sato

Press Conference



to talk to them at times, all over the place. Some of it was done while I was vacation in Europe. But it was fun to recount the days, the good days, the bad days, from back in that era.

Yeah, I saw it the other day for the first time about five days after it was actually released. I felt pretty good about it. I was surprised they could get that many people to say that many nice things about me.

Now the full length, the feature length, full-length feature is next Tuesday. Yeah, it will be interesting to see how that goes. It's pretty cool. Got a lot of positive comments from people. That was rewarding, for sure.

THE MODERATOR: Mike, team introduced a new partnership with Edwards Life Sciences, Good Morning America has picked it up, Today Show. Good exposure for the sport, the program. What is the message there and why are you and Bobby and Dave really the ideal spokespeople for that campaign?

MIKE LANIGAN: First of all, it's such a great situation to promote. I happen to be a recipient of a heart valve from Edwards. It's amazing what you learn about your heart when you deal with the Edwards people.

The thing is, everybody's taught us over the years to take care of your health, exercise, watch what you eat. A heart valve failure has nothing to do with how you live your lifestyle. It actually can wear out, your valves can wear out. You may be in the best shape of your life, but it may wear out. If it wears out, you're not aware of it, it certainly could be a fatal situation.

What's very special for me and Bob and Dave is we're going to save lives. People are going to know that they have to go in and get their heart valves checked. Promote it in a phenomenal way. Especially if you're over 60 years old, get an echocardiogram. It saved my life. It's probably one of the best things I've ever been involved with, helping people live a better and longer life.

We're very proud to be associated with it. We hope to continue to promote it for many more years to come.

THE MODERATOR: Joining us this morning, the namesake behind the team, the three-time INDYCAR SERIES champion and celebrating the 40th anniversary of his 1986 win, Bobby Rahal. He joined the race team back in 2010 as co-owner, adding the name Lanigan to the team name. Great to have Mike Lanigan with us. On the far end, the president of Rahal Letterman Lanigan. We're delighted to have Jay Frye with us this morning. All four drivers, as well: Graham Rahal is here, Louis Foster, rookie Mick Schumacher, and Takuma Sato, two-time Indy 500 champion.

Bobby, busy month obviously and crazy to think it's been 40 years now since the win back in '86. Documentary is out. I thought it was spectacular. You want to talk a little bit about it.

BOBBY RAHAL: I was approached by Adam Carolla's group, Chassy Media, they wanted to do a documentary on me. Of course, I was surprised, flattered. Not sure if there is enough material to have a documentary.

Yeah, it took a couple years. Scott Borchetta came in towards the end, was really helpful in getting things to move along. Of course, I have a lot of respect for Adam. He did a great documentary on the Ford versus Ferrari battle at Le Mans '66, '67. He did a great one on Willie T. Ribbs. He's done about four or five documentaries I believe. They've all been really good.

I thought, yeah, why not? Certainly made myself available



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THE MODERATOR: Graham, team certainly has made great strides. Phoenix was a great example of that, couple podiums. What do you attribute some of the turnaround and momentum you have here in 2026?

GRAHAM RAHAL: Yeah, it's been a great year for the team. I think a lot of positive momentum leading into this month. Obviously including the Grand Prix, it was great to have a strong result there from myself, Louis and obviously Mick. Unfortunate at the end to get the penalty. He was right there with us. To have all the cars very competitive again like that on the road course was tremendous.

I mean, I think the team has certainly elevated our game in every aspect. The pit stop part of that is one example. There's a lot of pride right now particularly with that. The guys know the results within about 10 minutes after the race. Typically before I even see them, the boys are telling me where they ended up, where we rank. They're constantly paying attention to that. There's a lot of pride for them personally in that.

Obviously we had a great weekend last weekend, P3, retook the lead in the season-long championship for them. I think overall one of the greatest things is that as a group we've got a bunch of really good guys up here that have done a great job to be in sync.

We experienced that the last couple days actually in Mick's car, found a rear damper change that was extremely impactful. He was precise in his feedback. It's benefited Takuma myself, Louis as well. Things like that, being in sync like that, helps no matter your experience level. I think we've seen that all year long. Hopefully it will keep rolling.

Today is obviously a big day once this weather gets through. It's a big day for us to see where we stack up. Obviously Taku was very fast yesterday again. I think all our cars are actually quite quick.

We got to get the balance right, do it for four laps. I'm upbeat with the program, all feel our sponsors, partners, where we're headed. Fingers crossed good days to come.

It's a good opportunity to raise money. I've had a lot of people come up to me this week with the Riding with Rahal thing. I think there's a lot of pride that goes into that. You put your name on the car, put somebody else's name on the car. We've had several people come up and tell me their father, whoever may be in their memory, is on the car. There's a lot of special moments that go with that. We've been able to raise a lot of money. I know some of you guys have been supportive that.

That campaign is powerful because there's really no cost to it. We're able to raise a lot of money to go back to our veterans, Memorial Day weekend. In the current climate, we have to remember our vets, everything they put forward for us and have done in the past. Got to take care of them now.

THE MODERATOR: Louis, you have shown a lot of speed this week coming off of a seventh Saturday in the Grand Prix. How has your week gone?

LOUIS FOSTER: Good so far. Coming back for a second time, it gives me a lot more of what's expected, what to expect. For me, I think balance of the car and feel of the car has been a lot better this year. We've made big steps in that regard.

Second year again with Takuma and Graham. Kind of learnt how they drive, what they're like, kind of able to feed off them more and more this year as well.

From my perspective, all things are going swimmingly. We're putting in the engine tonight or overnight. We're going to run the full boost, see how many podiums we've really got.

As Graham said, cars have felt really good. We're super happy.

THE MODERATOR: Mick, welcome to your first Fast Friday at the Indianapolis Motor Speedway. We talked about your progression over the year. I mentioned Phoenix, the result there. Certainly the team has been very methodical this week. For you, how would you describe your first week here on the oval?

MICK SCHUMACHER: Yeah, no, I think we definitely started off kind of with baby steps just to kind of really get into the right mood and into the right place with the car.

From my feelings especially, I think it's a tough circuit out there still, just even though we go very fast around the corners and stuff like you have to have the car in the right spot. As we're trimming out, these things start to feel a bit different than what they do when the car is fully loaded, have the downforce there.

Yeah, we are kind of chipping away on the list, making sure that we also contribute a bit to the team with helping through damper testing or whatever, which seemed to be very useful and helpful especially.

Andy Brown obviously doing an amazing job to lead the way and help me out with kind of opening up ideas and



opening up let's say different ways to look at it. Obviously Gavin as well a big part of that.

Obviously getting into the Fast Friday now, it's going to be exciting to see how it is about the boost. Don't know what to expect. Going to let it all come my way, take it from there.

THE MODERATOR: Takuma, you're timeless at this place. Welcome back. Led 51 laps last year, race high, then qualified on the front row. What are your expectations?

TAKUMA SATO: Well, hope we can keep this result until Sunday. First of all, I think really proud of the team. I think obviously Mike and Bobby and David, of course allowed to do everything we wanted. Obviously some limitation with resource.

I think the very clever engineering group, hard-working mechanics building a great car for us. Of course, day-to-day organization for the team. I think I been the team not long enough as Graham. Yeah, actually 2012, when Rahal returns to INDYCAR, I was selected driver, which I was very proud of.

Anyway, seeing that expanding and moving forward for the entire team and really proud be part of the Rahal Letterman Lanigan Racing, come back and do the job.

I think the first two days is not hidden for the short program is very tough position. I think head down, do the job for the engineers. Yesterday we put everything together to see where we are. So very proud of that.

I mean, Mick really first time at IMS. Second day open test. Already his speed is very impressive. Like he said, he did a lot of damper work, give us options. Once Graham confirmed, I have total trust. Put in the damper yesterday and we went faster.

Still there is a lot of area still we need to work on harder to get better race cars. At least four of us, it's certainly made huge progress since last year.

THE MODERATOR: Jay, steady improvement with this team since joining it just over a year or so ago. What are the positives you've seen and what are you hoping to build on next?

JAY FRYE: I think it was very strategic going from '25 to '26. We had four goals to work on: designate a Speedway program, work on our pit stops, short ovals, and someone to lead the strategy department.

We were very fortunate to recruit some really great people. As you know, it's all about the people. We feel good about where we're going. We still obviously have a lot of work to do. Confident in what's next.

THE MODERATOR: We will open it up for questions.

Q. Mick, obviously a lot of experience you can lean on. How do you funnel the information? Does it sound like one voice, feel like fragments from everybody?

MICK SCHUMACHER: I guess you can try and take whatever works best for you. I've been talking a lot to Graham, Ryan especially. I feel like he's been obviously on my stand, so that's been very helpful. I don't have to go back to these guys and talk to them whilst they're in the car. That definitely helps.

I think overall like the whole team has just been really good at not overloading me with information. I think that's also one thing that I've been told right at the start is, make sure you funnel it down to what really matters. A lot of people will come up to you and try and help you, which is really nice, great to be in a position like that. I think it's better that way than the other way around.

Yeah, no, I learned a lot. It's also about making this experience. Everyone can tell you what it feels like, but actually you're only going to know once you've experienced it.

Especially the first day was really not great. I felt pretty uncomfortable in the car. Then the next day we felt a lot better. It's a progress. Obviously wind and conditions have a lot of impact on how the car feels. I definitely felt that.

Q. Graham, I think back to the 35th anniversary of your dad's win. Now we're at the 40th. Where is the confidence level here on another anniversary here?

GRAHAM RAHAL: Yeah, I mean, it doesn't really matter what anniversary it is. I'd obviously just like to get a win for my dad, for Mike who has been with me for longer in my career than anybody else, back to '06 actually in Formula Atlantic. Obviously Dave as well. It was great to have Dave last week be up on the podium with us. Meant a lot to me. I don't know if I had that experience necessarily with him before.

Obviously 40 is a big year, big anniversary. Single-handedly that moment, that day, not only changed his life forever but changed our family's name forever. I think, correct me if I'm wrong, the only other father-son to do this I believe is the Unsers.

For me it would be particularly because it is the Unisers, a family that means so much to my dad as well, it would be very special to be able to do that.

The confidence is high. I do think that our team is in a very good place right now generally. I think there's a lot of positivity within the team. Even as Mick said, he didn't start off great on the first day. We told him there's good days and bad days around here, for sure. He's rebounded and the team has rebounded extremely well.

Same with Taku. Yesterday was a great day for him, the day prior wasn't. The team has the confidence that when things are not quite right, we can overcome that, get ourselves back on track. We've proven that a little bit.

Yeah, I mean, I am confident. I do feel good about this weekend. I feel good about next weekend. We have a couple of practice days left that are critical. Monday and Friday are going to be a little warmer, maybe more relative than what we've had this week for the most part.

But I'm very, very proud of the team. I'm proud of everybody that's worked top to bottom to make sure that all four of these cars are very strong here and that we put ourselves in a great place as we go into the 500.

I think if we can do that, that will springboard us into the summer months. I think we can be a player here, for sure.

Q. Do you remember the last time you specifically felt this good about yourself and your car going into the 500?

GRAHAM RAHAL: It's been a long time. I must say, and I think Taku can speak to it as well, we've had fast cars here are at times, but the cars were difficult to drive, very hard to feel, numb in the rear of the car. That has hurt us over the past few years frankly. Everyone back to Christian, obviously Louis coming in, when Jack was here, that's something we all really struggled with.

This year I think we've taken a massive step forward at Phoenix. Phoenix is a lot different than here. That was the first time that maybe actually we've sort of found something that's going to be highly beneficial to us as we go forward (smiling).

Look, good results breed confidence, too. It's easier to have good results and keep them rolling than try to find yourself at the bottom and dig yourself out. If things are going right, you have a belief every weekend that you can be up front, typically you're going to find yourself there.

The mental side of this sport is as strong or maybe more important than anything else. I feel like right now the entire team is a pretty good mental space. Like I said, I'm proud of everybody. Hopefully we can carry that forward next week.

Q. Takuma, what is your evaluation process when signing on?

TAKUMA SATO: I like this team a lot. I want to win again with this team. 2020 was no doubt a special year. Come back to the Rahal, won together in such fashion. We're really proud of that day. Also huge appreciate to the INDYCAR, Roger Penske to be able to race us in such a difficult pandemic situation.

Difficulty was just like today. Great, empty, very lonely track. I miss 350,000 people buzz that I really need to hear again in my head (smiling).

For the boys sake, too, that's why I wanted to challenge. Now I'm not the seasoner, so I missed that part of it, not participating in INDYCAR SERIES for all year long. At least I have once in a year, my life still keep going to the challenge. With this I can say almost family team now.

Feel great. There's no lie that last year after the race, next day, I went to Jay's office, We need to sign up. Of course, we need to get sorted for the document stuff. In heart I believe everybody wanted to do it again. That's why particularly I think Mike, financial background for the team, is very stable.

Ultimately Bobby just hit the button for green button, yes, we can do it better. That feels confident, like Graham said. I think confidence is based on the result. But results you have to challenge all the time.

Really, really proud to be back in here and hopefully one of us to have a happy, happy day for next Sunday.

Q. You mentioned last year, there were a handful of drivers that could have won it. For you is it more feeling going into the next year when it's a close call rather than finishing middle or back of the pack?

TAKUMA SATO: You could see the most competitive field right now for the INDYCAR SERIES. I think year by year, of course it's different. Now you could say the margins, difference between teams and driver, it's highly competitive. It's night and day sometimes.

Hopefully we can sort it together. It will be great if you one of the best result here amongst this very high competitiveness.

Q. Bobby, when you raced here, this place was known for the massive crowds that showed up every race day. The second year in a row it's sold out. You as a team owner, charter owner, franchise owner, stakeholder in this series, what are your thoughts? Does it feel like the days when you were driving?

BOBBY RAHAL: I think so. Very much so. It's not just here. Last year tremendous crowd at all the races. This year has been no different. Long Beach was packed. St. Pete, I think the best crowd ever they've had. I think INDYCAR is in a pretty good spot right now, on the right trajectory, just getting stronger.

I've gotten to know Eric Shanks very well. We chat about the series. I think having FOX doing what they're doing is so important to the future of this series.

Yeah, I mean, I think it's a pretty good time to be in INDYCAR racing. Crowds are certainly reflective of that. Better TV ratings have been reflective of that. I see it just continuing.

I think we're in a good spot.

Q. You made a key personnel decision in the off-season by bringing Brian Barnhart over. I know Graham loves the guy. If you and Jay could talk a little bit about the importance of having Brian and what it is that he's really helped with the team.

BOBBY RAHAL: All credit to Jay on Brian. A few others that have come on board through Jay's efforts.

But Brian Barnhart, he and I worked together at Galles/Kraco in '90 and '91. I've known Brian a long, long time. He's a solid guy. I have no doubt that part of Graham's so far having a pretty good year is due to the fact that Brian is on his stand talking to him in the races.

Brian brings a ton of experience with him here. I think we're seeing the benefit of that just overall. Yeah, guys like Brian have been important to where we are today.

JAY FRYE: Like Bobby mentioned, when we talked about the goals and the strategic thing we did in the off-season, that was obviously one of the bigger ones.

Gavin's work on the oval stuff has been amazing. Kyle has been amazing on pit stops. There's been a really good group of people come in. We're not done yet. They've made an impact immediately, and the results are showing. It's going well.

Q. Graham, you've always been really gracious in saying how much Justin Wilson was a big impact on you as a new INDYCAR driver. Now that you're officially old, how are you embracing that with Louis as well? You're the full-time vet.

GRAHAM RAHAL: Well, I mean, I think honestly it's better to ask them than me 'cause the true judge if I'm helping is them, what they say.

I don't know. I've been fortunate to have a lot of very successful teammates over the years. It's just factual that some are more helpful than others.

I know when I was a young guy, all you really wanted was some positive, truthful advice to help. Obviously Justin for me was very, very impactful in that way. Really that was my second year, but I felt like he really helped me a lot and opened my eyes to a lot of things. Didn't necessarily view me as competition as much as really wanted to help me grow and see what I could accomplish.

I remember when I got my win at St. Pete with him, he was one of the first guys there and he was so happy and excited and so on. I've had teammates that weren't that same way, right?

You just wanted to try to help these guys as best as I can. Christian as well. There's been a lot of young guys that have been through here the last few years.

Yeah, I still want to go beat them. There's no doubt about that. The reality is seeing them do well gives us all a sense of pride. Even to see Christian do well, you'd like to think a little bit of that came from some of the support you've given over the years.

Louis is amazing, done a wonderful job. His speed and race craft is improving at all times. Last weekend was tremendous, his best result. He's always got the speed. He's going to be right there.

Mick has a lot of experience, but obviously this is a whole different ball of wax, so to speak, the style of racing. With all the battles that he's had this year, it's not been easy whatsoever. But super proud of him for the way that he's handled himself. Just a pro.

For me, yeah, I mean, I guess I'm not out of here yet. At the same time I do want to see these young guys succeed. It's a massive part of the future of our team, the future of our sport. But for all of them I just think, if things were on the flipside again, that's what you'd want. You'd want somebody to help you, and that's what I want to do.

Q. How is Grandpa Rahal as a mentor?

GRAHAM RAHAL: First of all, I'm not even the oldest up here (laughter). He does look younger. He doesn't age.

LOUIS FOSTER: I don't want to glaze Graham too much. Obviously Graham is super helpful. Ever since I came into the team...

The weird thing for me I always found, in junior categories it's all different. All the drivers are waiting for the same thing. When I got into INDYCAR, the first time I raced Graham, okay a middle-aged man with two kids, he can't be that fast. He was. He was also super helpful.

Ever since I came in the team he's always been supportive of me. The biggest thing we share is a very similar feel for the car, which has been quite helpful for me.

Ever since coming here, it's different to what I'm different in junior categories, but a very nice change.

Yes, Graham, thank you (smiling).

MICK SCHUMACHER: No, obviously he's been great. I think he's been very honest in terms of, like, what he felt and how he felt about certain things. I was just going to say he's actually not that old. The only thing I would say, though, he doesn't know what a Spotify Wrapped is. I thought that he was pretty interesting (smiling).

Yeah, on the racing side, definitely he's super talented, but also really, really open in terms of how he feels, the car feels, how he would approach certain things. It's definitely helped me understand the sport better. Obviously it is a very different environment compared to Europe. It does take some time to kind of adjust to this.

Yeah, I mean, everybody on the team has been great on that, especially Graham. Definitely he can be happy with himself.

GRAHAM RAHAL: Thank you.

Q. I have a personal note for Jay. I was reading on various motorsports-related Internet pages in Germany that you were instrumental to bring Mick over to America and INDYCAR. Personally from me, thank you very much for that.

JAY FRYE: My pleasure.

Q. The driver coach Ryan Briscoe, he coached last year Robert Schwartzman to pole position. Do you think that is a very good omen for yourself?

Regardless whatever happened for you in the race, I would say you're already immortalized in the various archives of Indy 500 for the simple reason you're the very first German representing Germany in the biggest race in the world. What does it mean for you?

MICK SCHUMACHER: I mean, like to answer the first question, Ryan has been great on the stand all season. Whether or not it's going to be a good omen for us, we're going to have to wait and see till tomorrow. Yeah, no, it's been definitely good to have him on the stand.

I heard it was more than a hundred years ago there was a German.

Q. (No microphone.)

MICK SCHUMACHER: Okay, never. We have the wind screen, so luckily that can't happen this time (laughter). Not good.

Yeah, no, I'm very excited to go into the race. Again, I'm just looking forward to how it's going to be race day. I think it's one of those I've done Le Mans, Monaco, F1, this is the last one in the books to kind of experience. It's going to be great.

THE MODERATOR: We'll leave it there for now. Thank you.

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