

# NTT INDYCAR SERIES

## News Conference

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Indianapolis, Indiana, USA

**J. Doug Boles**

**Michael Bates**

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: Good afternoon, everybody. We're going to get started. The countdown to race day certainly continues. I won't use the number. I don't want to steal Doug's thunder here.

J. DOUGLAS BOLES: You can use it. We're inside the window. It's okay for somebody else to say it.

THE MODERATOR: I'll offer up this quick catch-up and offer some tips and ideas and what not to make sure fans have a great 110th running of the Indianapolis 500.

Joining us today, the President of INDYCAR and the Indianapolis Motor Speedway, Doug Boles, and to his right, Mike Bates, senior director safety and security here at Indianapolis Motor Speedway.

Doug, we'll start with you. Go ahead.

J. DOUGLAS BOLES: So we are five days away from the 110th running of the Indianapolis 500 presented by Gainbridge, which is exciting and also a bit nerve-wracking, especially as we start looking at the weather, and obviously with a sold-out grandstands, just making sure that people are prepared as they come in.

This has been an annual press conference we've had since leading into the 100th running in 2016 just trying to make sure our fans have all the information that they need to make it a great and safe day as they come to the Indianapolis Motor Speedway.

One of the things we've said since 2016 is come with a lot of patience, and more importantly, come with a plan, because 350,000 people deciding to show up in one location at basically the very same time can be intimidating and challenging. So it's really important for our fans to just continue to plan.

Know where you're going to park. Know where your gate

is. Make sure you have your tickets, all of those things. Most importantly, though, it's just planning that trip in and where you're going to park.

Just as a reminder, all of the parking that the Indianapolis Motor Speedway has is sold out. So for those folks that don't have a parking pass, unlike a practice day where you can come in and park in the infield, we are completely sold out. So if you don't have a parking pass to get into the Indianapolis Motor Speedway or on our grounds, you need to start thinking about some of those plans on where you are going to park.

One of the beauties of this event over the last many years is that the town of Speedway is such a great partner with us, and so many of the neighbors in the neighborhood just immediately to our west, their yards become parking lots, and it's a fascinating thing. There's always parking there.

The closer you get to the racetrack, the less likely that you will find parking, because many of those places have been camping and parking and the same people year over year. So just sort of have a plan.

I always tell people as well that at some level the further you park away from the Indianapolis Motor Speedway, the easier your egress will be. What people don't always remember is when 350,000 people decide to leave here at the same time, we don't allow any traffic to leave from the Indianapolis Motor Speedway parking lot, so inside or outside, because there are just so many people on the streets, and our first priority is to make sure that those customers who have been here can get to their vehicles safely. If we had the cars exiting at the same time, it becomes a significant challenge.

So a lot of the frustration we hear from fans is, hey, I've been sitting in my car for half an hour, the race has been over for 45 minutes, because it took me 15 minutes to get there, and I haven't moved. Part of the reason likely you haven't moved is because we are holding traffic until we can get as many people safely out of the area as possible.

At some level, as I said, if you spent a little more time walking further away, you're likely to get in your car and get

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moving quicker. That goes back to the patience element.

One of the things I remind people is even after the race, have a sandwich or a water or something at your car, just talk about your day and the fun you had here. So, again, patience is important.

On the plan ahead front, IMS.com/plan-ahead is the website we have had for several years, so you can go to that, and it has all the information that our fans need. Again, that's IMS.com/plan-ahead, whether it's parking, schedule, gate locations.

Then we've partnered the last few years with NTT and what they have is it's like a real city format where they can tell us what's going on. So if you download our IMS app, you can actually tell how long the waits are going to be at each gate. We have between 22, 23 gates here, and oftentimes you can go to a gate, and the line will be really long, and just 100 yards away there could be a gate with either no line or a significantly less line.

So I encourage people to download that app and look at the gates, and it might be able to help you get in easier. I also understand as a traditionalist oftentimes we don't care how long we wait, because this is the gate we've always gone in, and we're going to continue that tradition.

I appreciate that, but just know if that's not what you want to do, there are ways to see where we are gate-wise. That app gets updated every 30 seconds, so that's pretty helpful.

When you're here, we try and give folks as much opportunity to do things when they're here. Try and encourage them to get here early. Gates are going to be at 6 a.m. here at the Indianapolis Motor Speedway. Our exterior parking lots open at 5. Interior parking lots open at 6. Then the gates open at 6.

So obviously the cannon and the fireworks that we've added the last couple of years to get things kicked off, the music. We'll have a lot of videos throughout the morning on the video board to try and entertain folks in venue and obviously pre-race.

My favorite time of the year is pre-race and the lead-up to the Indianapolis 500. I love the race, but there really isn't anything like pre-race and that celebration of our country, "Back Home Again in Indiana," and ultimately the command to start engines. A lot of that taking place.

Sam's Club is our partner in the midway. Lots more activity in our midway this year. Our big merch store in the infield is twice as big as last year, if people are interested in just

walking around. We have some cool partnerships with brands like Lululemon and others for folks to do when they're here.

As I said, pre-race super important. Excited about our pre-race talent. Obviously Jim C coming back to do "Back Home Again in Indiana." We've got an Indiana native singing. We've got Jordin Sparks singing. A whole bunch of that.

We have not announced the fly-over yet, but we will be doing that soon. I'm hoping we have the double flyover again, which has become a tradition here at the speedway as we go forward.

A couple of other housekeeping items. We are cashless here, so we just remind people bring a credit card. We've been doing that now I think this is the seventh season -- sixth or seventh season that we've been cashless. It just makes life a lot easier for the volunteer groups who work the concession stands to keep track of what kind of revenue comes in. We pay them by the work that they do in those stands, so it really works out well.

For folks that tend to carry cash like my dad and not a card, we do have reverse ATM machines in the plaza where you can take that cash and get a card that's good to use here, but also use anywhere outside of the facility at other places if you don't spend all that you put on it while you're here.

I mentioned the public parking is sold out. One of the things that we've done that kind of alleviates that, we've got this Bike to the 500 program that you can get on our website. You can register to ride to the Indianapolis 500 with a lot of friends through a police escort ride.

There aren't a lot of people that ride on their own. A former Colts quarterback used to ride to the Indy 500, which was a lot of fun, when Andrew Luck was here. That continues to be a popular way to get to the speedway, and you can park your bikes at gate one, gate six, and gate nine. Then you can ride home and avoid a lot of the traffic, but it's become a big thing. It's amazing to me how many people actually do that.

If you are choosing Rideshare, Rideshare is going -- so Uber or Lyft -- they're going to bring you to 10 and Polco. Polco is basically the street that's right outside the front gate here at tunnel two. So if you go down the 10th Street, that's where Rideshare will drop people off. It's also where Rideshare will pick people up.

When you get in a Rideshare, they're not going to be able to bring you to the round-about. They're not going to be

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able to bring you to the speedway, but they'll bring you to 10th and Polco where they'll drop you off, and you can pick back up there.

We have we have shuttles that leave from downtown and the airport. Those are completely sold-out. For those folks that are on those shuttles, that will drop you off at the main gate, and they'll pick you up and shuttle you back to your location where you started after the 500 from the main gate as well.

When fans come into the speedway, the last several years we've had these open gate security systems. We were one of the first really to adopt that, but as you go to events around the country now, you see them a lot more often. It's becoming really the way to get into the facility.

The beauty of it is they are very, very sensitive, and they can tell what's going on, but they can also differentiate between something in your purse that isn't an issue and something in your purse that might be an issue.

So as you walk through those gates, you don't have to take anything out of your pockets. You can walk in with that. If it's a rainy day, which we hope it's not, umbrellas could be a problem. So we're going to have to think through umbrellas.

If you have a cooler, which shouldn't be any bigger than 18-by-15-by-15 -- I did see a fun post that somebody got in one day with one bigger and then posted they didn't get the next day. We will make sure that we can try and continue to be spot-on in terms of what we're letting in and letting out.

If you have a cooler that's on wheels, those little cart wheels, sometimes those metal wheels will set it off. Just be prepared for that. If you are coming in with a regular cooler, not an umbrella, you should be in pretty good shape.

Sometimes we have sunglasses case will go off because of the hinges in the sunglasses case. So those are just a handful of things, but for the most part you just walk right through. Your keys and those kind of things are not an issue.

Road closures, just obviously we close some of the roads here to get people in and out. We also have some one-way streets that aren't one-way in a normal situation.

Upon exit, we divide the facility up into four quadrants. So if you're parked on the northwest side of the speedway, you're going to go the way that the police route sends you. I know sometimes if you park there and you want to go

south, it seems frustrating, but just go with the flow. Once you get out to the interstates and get moving, that's at the point which you can turn around and go back a different direction.

I promise you that will be faster than trying to cut through and go a different way back through a different quadrant. Kind of pay attention to that.

On the post-race side, I think it's important for people to know just have patience. I think I've told this story before, but I'll tell it because it's kind of funny, and I hope my mom doesn't hear this.

In 2024 was the year we had the rain. We had 163,000 people that were in the facility when we asked them to leave because of the lightning and the storm that was coming. It was amazing how basically everybody came back.

Well, that race got pushed, as all know, into almost sunset. As people were leaving, some of the officers that had been with us since midnight -- they come from all over the state, State Troopers, IMPD, Sheriff's Department, Local Speedway Police Department -- had to get back home. So we had fewer numbers in the streets than we might have liked because you're not expecting to be sending 350,000 people home in the middle of the night.

We were working. Mike was up there with me. We were working at Pagoda Command on nine trying to think through the traffic patterns, and my mom, who had parked over here outside the racetrack, decided she ought to call her son and tell him that she wasn't moving. I explained to her that that's -- I understand that, Mom.

Then ten minutes later I got a text that says, I've moved five feet in the last ten minutes. It was literally an entire evening of my mom disciplining me as if I was a teenager because I wasn't doing traffic well.

My only point in that is just patience. A lot of people have my phone number, because I call customers and don't block my phone. So that night I did get a lot of text messages from random numbers.

We're going to do the best we can. It is a lot of people in one location. We've made some changes in the traffic exit plan this year that we think will help expedite that a bit, so we're looking forward to seeing how that works.

Again, it's just about being patient, tell the stories of why you had such a great time at the Indianapolis Motor Speedway, and just know that if you are frustrated, then I'm probably hearing from my mom on behalf of you, so you

don't need to worry about getting on top of me. I will definitely hear it from Mom.

Mike, I don't know if you want to talk a little bit about safety, or, Dave, if you had a question specifically. Sorry that took so long. I just wanted to walk through all of the things that we have going between now and five days from now.

THE MODERATOR: Your mom sounds fun.

J. DOUGLAS BOLES: My mom is awesome. I love my mom. One of my favorite things to do is write the letter every year that I write in the program. I do it myself. I don't use AI. I sit down, and it's something I've taken a lot of pride in because I remember as a kid, my mom was an English teacher. So one of the fun things I do is once I write it, I send it to me mom for her editing. It's become one of those cool bonding moments.

My mom is very fun, and I think she was just picking on me a little bit. Just like when I started working here and one of my first jobs was to remind people that coolers -- back then it was 18-by-14-by-14. We are now 18-by-15-by-15. I can remember one day my mom calling and saying: Hey, I saw you on TV again. Did we pay for college so you could just talk about coolers (laughing)?

My mom is absolutely fantastic, but I just tell that story because it's -- I got it, Mom. I know traffic flow.

THE MODERATOR: Exactly, drilled down, we got it. Mike, want to add on to that and maybe introduce your new friend here?

MICHAEL BATES: Absolutely. As a security piece, obviously it takes a lot of resources to secure and make the race safe every year. You know, we have that same -- basically we have the same footprint plus a few extra surprises this year in the security, but you know, it's still a city, state, and a federal group that comes together.

We have a lot of public safety support out here on race day, and again, like Doug had mentioned, a lot of it you'll see, a lot of it you won't see. That's okay, too. Just to make sure that people understand that it's a great plan. I feel very comfortable with it.

Actually today, I'm sure everybody has noticed here, our friend here relaxing out in front of Doug and I. That's just another -- I guess another piece, another layer of the security plan, the overall plan that we have.

It's a fabulous company. It's our third year, I believe, with you guys working with it. We have a couple of representatives, Liz, up here.

But, again, I don't want to get into the details as far as what it's going to do, but just know you will probably see it somewhat if you are out here on race day and looking around, but it's a fantastic piece. The capabilities, you know, night, day vision. It can be operated remotely from pretty much anywhere as far as that goes, but the abilities it has -- you can also add features to it if you want to, depending on what specifically you're looking for as far as the mission, what type of job you have.

I'm certainly not an expert at it. That's why the folks are sitting right there. So if you have questions afterward, specific questions as far as the technology, they would definitely be the people to do. Obviously it's a really cool piece of equipment. It's what we want.

I want one, Doug.

J. DOUGLAS BOLES: Brent and Liz, maybe -- one of my traditions has become going out. I walk through the campgrounds at night because I don't sleep, and there's a group of folks at 25th and Georgetown who have had a lot to drink. By the time I get there midnight, we sing "Back Home in Indiana," and then we walk the streets.

Maybe a drone dog could spend some time walking along with me and enjoying some of the sights of the night before the Indy 500.

MICHAEL BATES: Well, that will get some attention. I can assure you of that. One of the cool features is he actually has a doghouse. He actually goes into his doghouse, and that's where he's charged at each night. So we have a drone doghouse, which is pretty cool concept if you think about it.

They'll be here obviously with us this weekend performing some different security functions and certainly adding to our overall plan to keep everybody safe. Appreciate you guys arriving and helping us out again for the third year. I think it's a great partnership.

J. DOUGLAS BOLES: I'll add to Mike's preparation. We really start preparing for next year's Indianapolis 500 two or three months ago, so even before this one.

Towards the end of the year leading into, we will start our meetings with law enforcement to start thinking about the planning for next year's race on a regular basis. We get to the point where we have monthly meetings. We have a table top exercise here with all the law enforcement and our folks at the speedway and our folks at NTT INDYCAR SERIES and our media folks, our broadcast partner, and radio folks to think through challenges and how we

communicate. That becomes a weekly cadence.

We do have a unified command here that takes into account, as Mike said, so many federal agencies and local and state agencies to make sure that we're communicating. We communicate almost on a daily basis right now monitoring all the different things we can monitor so we can be ahead of anything that we think might be coming.

At this point in time we have a total green light, no issues, but we are fully prepared. Between now and the next five days it is really a constant communication between all law enforcement to make sure that when those 350,000 guests come here and when those 350,000 guests leave they're as safe as can be.

So a big shout-out to all of the law enforcement and first responders and the different agencies that help make this event happen.

MICHAEL BATES: Absolutely.

THE MODERATOR: We'll open it up for any questions that you may have, although I feel like we need a name for the dog.

MICHAEL BATES: We don't have a name for it. We'll have to think through that, won't we, Liz? We'll have to figure that out.

THE MODERATOR: We can workshop some things. Questions?

**Q. Can you talk a little more about what you do prior, because 8 miles before rain may even be here, it may not be raining here is, and people in the stands may be, like, why are they making us leave? Can you talk about what you do for safety on that?**

MICHAEL BATES: We have a very robust weather plan that we've really honed in on the last several years. It's very, you know, very involved as far as that goes. Yeah, we have a 30-mile, 20-mile and an 8-mile radius.

Most tracks around the country are 8 miles. If you get a lightning strike within 8 miles of the track, you would obviously pull your resources out, including TV. TV is normally the first one, because they're typically up top on a boom. The last thing we want is them up there when there's lightning involved, so that's important.

Yeah, when we get to 20 miles out as far as severe weather, mostly lightning, it just depends, you know, we'll send out notifications that go out onto our video boards,

our PA system. We have an Everbridge mass notification system internally that we utilize in addition to we have FOX Sports also has a very robust weather format as far as how they plan to do that. We'll send that notice 20 miles out.

Then if it gets to 8 miles, that's when we actually would request fans to exit the grandstands and just seek shelter. At that time all the cars are pulled in and everything else, so there's really no reason, because like we have mentioned before, if cars are still out, fans aren't going to leave the grandstands. It's really important to do that.

But probably the most important feature, at least it makes myself and Doug feel best, we have the National Weather Service support. I travel to, as Doug does, to a lot of the other INDYCAR races, and you have very few National Weather Service people actually onsite at those events.

I'm not saying that's good or bad, but for us we have them embedded up in Pagoda Command with us. We defer to those guys a lot when they're here.

They have the most latest models. They tell us, Hey, you're going to have a lightning strike, it's 10 miles out. It's just been a great partnership for years.

Yeah, I feel really comfortable about how we handle the notifications on weather and how actually we do things as far as evacuating people. I think it seems the last few years are we've been ahead of the curve on that.

**Q. I had two questions. I know in the past you guys have done the text system where fans can sign up to get a text if there's anything that's going on. Are you doing that again?**

MICHAEL BATES: That would be through the city through the Indianapolis Homeland Security. Yes, that will be made available also. They can send that out. I don't have the number.

J. DOUGLAS BOLES: It's in my notes. I didn't talk about it, but we can definitely -- it will be in the release you all have. We have that.

You can sign up for that, and then you can I think either automatically get unassigned after an event, because you sign up for a specific event, and then have you to resign up again, but we'll have that again.

MICHAEL BATES: It's a good feature, and I would encourage people to do it.

**Q. My other question was, Doug, I know you talked a little bit about restricting the traffic leaving inside the**



**track. Is that the vehicle traffic, correct, and then the foot traffic --**

J. DOUGLAS BOLES: Foot traffic can leave. It's just vehicle traffic that we don't allow to leave. We're trying to trying to get people out safely.

**Q. We are coming from Spain, and we would like to ask what are the actions that the EMS are taking in order, for example, with the Katherine -- the double this year that she's trying to do the double and how the impact of the weather delay can make an action of it? And what you were talking about the law enforcement's communication, has the Indianapolis Motor Speedway done some action plans for that as well?**

J. DOUGLAS BOLES: So we have -- I think I understand what you're asking. We have worked with Katherine's team on what she needs to do, the movements that she has to make to get from her car through her garage to her helicopter that will take her out.

We think it's about a 12-minute from the time she gets out of the car to the time her helicopter would leave. Then her helicopter would get her to her plane at Indianapolis International Airport then to get her there.

In terms of any weather delays, unfortunately, we will just make a decision upon the race based on the weather and not really considering Katherine or her challenges just because we need to get the race in, and she's aware of that. It's the same way we dealt with Kyle.

So hopefully we'll have good weather, and it will all work out smoothly for her, but when we're working through weather, our focus is just to get the race in. Even delaying by a few minutes or one way or the other could impact the race, so we are just going to focus on getting the race done.

We've done everything we can with her team that when she's done at the end of 500 miles, we're going to get her as quickly as she can to her helicopter so she can get to Charlotte.

THE MODERATOR: Any final thoughts, guys?

J. DOUGLAS BOLES: No, just thank you all for helping to get the message across. I will add on the weather, if we are in a situation with weather on race day, we'll likely handle it like we did in 2024 with a really early presser availability kind of explaining what the current thinking is, and we'll work our way through that.

So as we see the weather coming and those markers come, the 30-, the 20-, the 8-mile radius that Mike talked about, we won't be surprising fans, I hope, so that they're prepared for being prepared to leave if they have to leave or if we delay the race.

We will have the Air Titans here again, the NASCAR units that go to all the NASCAR races that we've had for the last several years. We rent those from NASCAR to help with our seven jet dryers we have here.

We were able to dry the track in about 57 minutes last year or the year before when we had the Air Titans and the jet dryers here. So we're going to do everything we can if a window does appear that we can use as little time drying the track and as much time racing on the track.

So those Air Titans will get back here. Actually they'll be ready for Carb Day, so if we need them to Carb Day, we can use them as well. We'll do everything we can do to get the race in for fans, and bringing something in like the Air Titans I think helps do that.

We will be working to make sure we communicate with everybody if there are weather challenges so that nobody is really surprised.

THE MODERATOR: We'll leave it there for now. Thanks, everyone, for being here and helping get the word out.

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