

# NTT INDYCAR SERIES

## News Conference

Thursday, May 21, 2026

Indianapolis, Indiana, USA

**Graham Rahal**

**Mick Schumacher**

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: Starting on the inside of row 10, 19th Indy 500, Graham Rahal. Starting 27th, making his Indy 500 debut, Mick Schumacher.

Great to have you both. Did you stripe it out there today?

GRAHAM RAHAL: Yeah, man. Good day.

THE MODERATOR: Do you know who won yet?

GRAHAM RAHAL: I think we finished P2. You can't win your own tournament, so our score gets erased no matter what.

But we had fun. It was freezing initially. Scotty Mac was with us, but then he bailed because he was being a wimp and said it was too cold. Disappeared.

We had a lot of fun. Record-breaking crowd. Too big of a crowd probably. A great day. So thank you to everybody for supporting this.

THE MODERATOR: How many years has this been now?

GRAHAM RAHAL: I actually don't know, but a lot. I think maybe we brought it back 2017, somewhere around that. We had done it for a few years prior.

As you know, none of those sorts of charitable things happen without sponsors. United Rentals is why we brought it back. Prior to that we were having a hard enough time finding sponsorship to keep it going. Shut it down for a couple years.

It's a great way to kick things off with all of the sponsors that come in from out of town.

THE MODERATOR: How is your golf game?

MICK SCHUMACHER: Lacking a little bit. I'm learning

from Graham.

THE MODERATOR: How crucial is Carb Day tomorrow for you guys?

MICK SCHUMACHER: I mean, it will be definitely good for us, getting some running in. Obviously Monday was cut short a little bit with weather. Hopefully weather will stay away for Carb Day. That was the first time I came here, was Carb Day last year.

THE MODERATOR: Full circle.

MICK SCHUMACHER: Closing a loop a little bit here. It's going to be great to kick it off and feel like we're marching towards Sunday.

THE MODERATOR: How is the car?

GRAHAM RAHAL: Yeah, not good on Monday. I'm not going to sugarcoat it and give you some story. We need tomorrow. I think all of us do. On Monday I think there was quite a lot of confusion as to how we finished Wednesday, which I understand a lot changes in that time.

I finished the day feeling so strong and confident with the race car. Then you run the exact same car Monday, of course, hotter temperatures and everything else, but you adjust the downforce levels for the ambients, and it was a train wreck.

We did make it a lot better at the end, but as Mick said, with everything cut short, we only ran one set of tires. The car was improving during that period of time. I would like the time tomorrow to improve.

We'll see. It's been an interesting last couple of weeks, for sure.

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

**Q. Graham, this is the first time we're not going to have Andretti in the field. Almost trading the Andretti name for the Schumacher name. The value that it brings to this race?**

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GRAHAM RAHAL: Yeah, it's strange for sure to not have Andretti here. God, I'm just thinking the last time that probably was. Many, many, many years before, prior to the split.

I actually texted with Marco quite a bit in the off-season, spit-balling about trying to do something with him. As it is for anybody, it's hard right now to get here with the engine situation and everything else.

But certainly it's one of the most iconic if not the most iconic name in American motor racing. It's strange not to have one of them here at least participating on the driving side.

That will be the case I assume, unless Marco comes back next year, for an extended period of time.

Yeah, it's great to have this guy here. I'm excited for him to get out there Sunday and see what it's like. He's sort of seen it before. Living it and experiencing it on Sunday will be a completely new thing. Ultimately, look, generationally things change. I don't have any plans of going anywhere anytime soon, I know everybody thinks I am, in the not-too-distant future there won't be a Rahal in it either.

It changes. That's the changing of the times. There are guys like Alex, they'll probably be here for the next 50 years. Kind of the way it goes.

**Q. You may have seen it, but not experienced it as a driver, you grew up around it, but you probably felt a little bit different your first time driving it. What do you share in terms of how to rein in those emotions?**

GRAHAM RAHAL: Racing in the 500 is a lot like getting married except you do it every year, and if you did that getting married, it would be extremely expensive. Although racing in the 500 is expensive, too.

To me, the emotions of it. I remember my wedding day. Honestly, it's hard to remember everything. You're so wrapped up, things are like a blur. All the details that you had spent months or weeks or whatever trying to figure out. The color of your napkins, this and that, you don't recall whatsoever.

That's all I would say. It's the same. I tell all my friends and people that get married, slow it down, take it in, try to enjoy it. Same with the 500. Try to slow it down. When you walk out, don't rush to get to the green room. Walk slowly, enjoy that, see what's going on, enjoy it for a minute. When you get up there for intros, look around.

It's a spectacular event that you are so blessed every year that you get to participate and be here. For somebody like Mick, I think that will drive his love for it as you go. Some of us, when you're born here, born with a dad who is a past winner, a family who has been engaged in it for a long time, you have that appreciation, love and understanding from the get-go. I think guys like Alex Rossi, they didn't have that when they first showed up. Alex probably didn't have it when he won it.

It comes with time. You start to realize the importance of this place, just how special everything that we're seeing here now on Sunday be completely full of people. That's a thrilling experience. This guy has done a lot of great things in his career. I told him this morning, just wait till Sunday. You drive through turn two, you see the suites packed, all the stands slammed full, all the kids who probably don't even know a race is going on in turn three. All of those things are part of it.

I think his love will grow with time. For me it's been a challenge for 19 years. It's not been easy, that's for sure. Hopefully magic can strike this Sunday and we'll have a great day.

THE MODERATOR: You might have another Wheldon in the 500 if you stick around long enough.

**Q. Mick, the last two years you've done Le Mans and seen how that town embraced that race. What has been your experience seeing how the city of Indianapolis, of Speedway, how they've embraced the event?**

MICK SCHUMACHER: Yeah, I mean, obviously I think if I'm not wrong, Saturday there's festivities inside the city?

THE MODERATOR: There's a parade downtown.

MICK SCHUMACHER: I'm excited for that. Obviously we did something similar in Le Mans. I would say here you definitely see the decoration outside of houses. It's really great to see that. People support this race so much. They love it. I think that just shows how special it is.

Graham has been talking about this to me about the whole year about this one event pretty much. I'm very excited to be here. Very excited to live it. Definitely will take what Graham just said and take it in and maybe slow down a little bit, not get married to it, but...

GRAHAM RAHAL: You're young (smiling).

MICK SCHUMACHER: Slow down and enjoy it. It's very great to have the experience of essentially those three big

events in the world, Monaco in F1, Le Mans, and this one here will be a great one, too.

**Q. Has the buildup and all that been what you expected?**

MICK SCHUMACHER: I mean, definitely comparing to Le Mans, I'm very happy there's a consistent schedule to it. It's like noon to 6:00. In Le Mans, you had those night sessions and stuff. Your sleep is disrupted the whole time. Here you kind of get a consistency going, a rhythm going. I guess emotionally trying to make sure you're consistent throughout the two weeks really helps.

I guess you kind of arrive to the race day less drained as I was in Le Mans.

**Q. Mick, I would imagine four or five years ago you weren't thinking you would be competing in the Indianapolis 500, but talk about how special this is. Are you relying on anyone in particular to kind of talk through things?**

MICK SCHUMACHER: Yeah, I mean, obviously five years ago I didn't really know where I would be. I think who does? It's really hard to predict what life will give you, where the path leads you down.

I think who am I relying most on is probably the team. Graham is part of that team. I have Ryan Briscoe who is really helpful. Just as simple as also saying like Andy Brown and Gavin Ward on my stand. Those people have so much experience. Even Bobby. Bobby, he's always telling us, texting us before the session saying, Go out there and have fun.

These things really mean a lot. That is something that's very new to me in a sense where you feel so much support from every angle and every aspect from the team but also outside the team. People have been so generously saying, Whatever you need, I'll share my info with you. That has been really, really helpful to me.

Yeah, just excited to go out there and experience that first time for me. Come back and exactly know what questions I'll have to ask next year.

**Q. Mick, I know you may be more used to it, but rookies can say they can be overwhelmed by the commitments they have during the month of May. Is there an approach you have gone into this month with?**

MICK SCHUMACHER: Yeah, I mean, I remember Kathy was saying, It's going to be bloody full with activities and

stuff.

I found it was pretty chill so far. Not saying I want more next year.

GRAHAM RAHAL: You just signed yourself up (smiling). Kath is sitting right there.

MICK SCHUMACHER: Honestly, it's been really good. I feel like the team has made a great effort trying to keep everything in check, make sure we have the time for ourselves as well.

That's also been the way of racing here so far this year. In all honesty, it's been really focused on making sure the driver is as happy as possible, to then be performing at his best, right? Because the championship and everything is so tightly packed out here, you really have to do that; otherwise, you might be lacking performance. That lack in performance might mean you're all the way in the back.

Emotionally I feel really good, full of energy, ready to go racing.

**Q. You've had experience in traffic, alone with the boost as well. In terms of some of the sensations you felt in the car, what have you enjoyed around this place? What have you found most challenging?**

MICK SCHUMACHER: Yeah, I mean, on Fast Friday, I would have said it feels great to be out there on your own because you're always putting new tires on, trying to be as smooth as possible.

Race running, I feel like I'm only really going to feel how it is once we go out there. I remember in Phoenix we did a couple race runs here and there beforehand, and none of those sessions I've learned as much as going out in the race and trying it out there. I'm sure it's going to be the same here.

Luckily I'm going to have great teammates and people around me that have experienced it before. I think feeding off their information, I have a little advantage going into the race. Nonetheless I will still have to make my own experiences. I'm just really excited for that.

**Q. I'm blind, and I want to actually understand, Mick, what is the difference between the two cockpits, a Formula 1 race car and the machines that will run on Sunday? Graham, I've been seeing a good range of ages on the track. What is maybe a suggestion or what is the words to our future drivers coming in? What is your wisdom to new drivers?**

MICK SCHUMACHER: That's a great question actually. I haven't heard that one before.

The two cockpits are very different. For one, F1 will change with every year. Obviously different obligations, different expectations from the team. That's very much also if they have a consistent pairing of drivers, that will most likely stay more consistent. Once the fit is good for both drivers, they'll find a medium and a mid way that will suit everybody.

For example, in Mercedes, with George and Lewis, we had two very different groups of heights. For George, it was always very difficult to fit in the car. When I was racing in Haas, the first year Mazepin and myself, we were similar in heights. For '22, they built a chassis that would work for both of us really well.

In general I would say as you don't have to pack in so many people, like in that case in '22 the chassis was very small, had very little room. Here, we have to put people in the car like Graham, who obviously is pretty tall. Therefore, the chassis has to just kind of acquaint for multiple drivers of different sizes and shapes. The chassis feels a little larger, it feels more, yeah, stock essentially.

The good thing is you have so many good opportunities to make it fit well for yourself. There are a couple different things we can do to help that.

But let's say from where I came from, I'm used to having a little less room in the car. From here it's pretty free.

GRAHAM RAHAL: To finish on Mick's point, right now we're working on the next generation INDYCAR. I'm the big guy, so I do all the big-guy seat fits. I think maybe it's Santino. We've both been sitting in the new tub. You have to make it work for everybody that's -- it could be -- I don't know, what is Santino? A foot shorter than me? Close. You have to make it work for all those different people. That is a challenge.

As far as wisdom, I mean, look, I suppose the biggest thing I think kids need to understand, I think both of us sitting up here would be the first to say this, is that I don't really care what your last name is, I don't really care what you accomplish in go-karting, I don't care if you grew up with money or not. Racing is a hard-edge community. It is an area in a world that you have to work extremely hard if you want to be here because everybody is pushing, everybody is vying for a minimal amount of opportunities that exist.

It's not like a football team where it's a 53-man roster and there's 20 of them, which is still minimal. In racing, there's 20-some INDYCARs and 20 Formula 1 cars. That's it

really. If you want to be at the pinnacle of open-wheel racing, you have to on a worldwide scale fit into those seats.

I think Mick is a prime example of that with Formula 1. With a name like his, you'd think it's a shoo-in. It's not. It doesn't necessarily mean you're going to be granted those opportunities. Had to bust his butt to continue to keep his career going. I had to do the same and have to do the same for many years.

If there's one thing I learned from my dad, I'll never forget, I've told this story before, when I was a little kid there were photos of guys in his gym. Wheel-to-wheel battles of guys like Michael and others. He would always tell me there were so many guys in this world that had more talent than me, but the one thing is they never out-worked me. That stuck with me from the time I was five or six years old to where I am today.

If I could say anything, I don't necessarily run around here thinking I'm the most talented guy in the room all the time. When it comes to all of the sadly more importantly the off-track items, you've got to work your tail off. If anything in society today that's a general problem with kids these days. I will say that, it's an issue.

To me the young ones that are coming up, I don't care if you're winning races. At this level everybody's won races, everybody's won a lot of races. What is going to make the difference is how hard you're going to work at it and how much you want it.

Also even when you get here, that's what makes the difference in how long you'll be here. There's been a lot of great talent that has come and gone because of a lack thereof.

That's my opinion. A lot of people think the assumption of me. I'm sure they assume the same with Mick. You have two guys up here that probably everybody thinks we're guys that everything has been handed to. That's what I would say.

THE MODERATOR: Your daughters are going to be prepared to work hard when they grow up, right?

GRAHAM RAHAL: They're going to know what it's about, trust me.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you.

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