

# NTT INDYCAR SERIES

## News Conference

Sunday, May 31, 2026

### Graham Rahal

#### Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: Joined by Graham Rahal, driver of the No. 15 Fifth Third Bank Honda for Rahal Letterman Lanigan Racing. He started 12th today, came home third, best finish in Detroit since back-to-back wins over at the old Belle Isle days in 2017. Third podium of the season, and that's the most since 2020 for Graham. It seemed like everybody was taking shots at you out there on the track. How proud are you to come home third here today?

GRAHAM RAHAL: Yeah, it was good. A good battle, I should say. I don't think overall I was not very pleased in the early phase with Kyffin. Battling hard there in the top 7, 8, 9, but it's early in the race. You've got to let it kind of come to you.

I felt like -- I don't even know what happened. All I know is I got hit hard in the back, and that was very frustrating, kind of put me on the back foot.

But as much as you want everything to go smooth, this is a race that I think you're often predicting issues, and we knew that the last stop we wanted to be on the early side of the window no matter what and bank on yellows. Bank on that Honda fuel mileage, number one, but number two, on the yellows. Both came through for us today, so we'll take it. We'll move on to St. Louis now and hopefully have a good run there.

#### **Q. As a proud Ohio boy, does it always feel good to have success here in Michigan?**

GRAHAM RAHAL: You got that right. Yeah, you got that right. I'm not going to lie.

Yeah, it's enemy territory up here. You've got to be careful. Luckily I've got Indiana license plates.

But no, honestly, yeah, I just over the years have had a lot of podiums in Detroit, and I can't really tell you why. But as an American, as a car guy, there's no greater city for car culture and for everything that's been done for the automotive industry than Detroit. So it is a proud moment for me to have success here, and hopefully next year we

can come back and keep this rolling. That's the objective.

#### **Q. You mentioned Kyffin and you were still able to battle back --**

GRAHAM RAHAL: Well, I was fast today, and I knew that. That's what pissed me off the most. That's what made me most mad was that I was able to truly motor through some guys early, and like, I felt really good. So when I got hit, I was just like, ticked.

But at the end of the race we were, too. I didn't have overtake at all for any of the last restarts, and so I knew with Pato behind me, I was going to have to give it everything I possibly could. I had a great run on Kyle, but because I had no overtake, you just disappeared off into the distance.

That was a challenge for me today, but we were able to work really good, have great pit stops. I don't know where we ended up, but the boys did a phenomenal job in pit lane again. We had good in and out laps, and it kind of all came together. We'll take it.

I'm not going to sit here and say we weren't a little bit lucky today but I'm not going to say this happened by luck because we had the speed and we played the strategy for exactly what happened and we weren't the only ones. A lot of people did it because they knew.

We were able to keep clean at the end. You had Power and McLaughlin going 10 rounds with Tyson out there with each other and finally got each other, and Mick and Malukas and everything else, so you just had to keep yourself somewhat clean of all that, and we were able to do that.

#### **Q. We came into the 500 talking about how much momentum you had. How gratifying is it to kind of rezoom that and get back on the podium here?**

GRAHAM RAHAL: Yeah, it's nice. It's nice to just keep -- it's nice in years like this when weekends like yesterday where I did not feel great, like the car did not feel great to me -- Long Beach it wasn't very good, and we finished



eighth. Those are the weekends you want. If you want to be a contender -- maybe not with Alex because he's in a league of his own, but if you want to be in a league with the rest of the guys, that's what you need. The bad weekends need to be better. It didn't feel great yesterday. We made some changes today, we had great race pace and it all came together, but 100 percent we'll take this.

**Q. You mentioned playing it right as far as the cautions went. As one of your thoughts on the new procedure, if you think it's right, and how you guys tried to adjust to it coming into today?**

GRAHAM RAHAL: I thought the procedure was good in my case, particularly because I was behind a blind corner and I really did not know -- I backed up. I was kind of guessing. I was just looking to my left just waiting to be T-boned, to be honest. So I was okay with -- I thought all the flags were appropriate today, to be honest. There was one in Turn 5 I didn't see. It came and went really fast. But sometimes that happens.

The thing I can tell you here, this place exaggerates the margin for error from the standpoint that it makes all the scenarios worse. It's so easy to lock up and hit the wall here. It's so easy, even if you're going easier, under yellow flag conditions, honestly. It's slipperier than hell. Anything can happen. You can lock a front and miss a corner.

I think Kyle and the team played it right today.

**Q. I know it's tight quarters here, but a lot of contact, even more than usual --**

GRAHAM RAHAL: We wanted you to feel at home.

**Q. Is that Detroit, or is that drivers either feeling the pressure and just kind to perform?**

GRAHAM RAHAL: I think it's this track. Well, it's a combination of a couple things. The cars are too strong, frankly. Now the cars are very durable. You can hit things quite hard, and they don't really break that much.

Then the second thing is people know here that you just have to be a bulldog. The thing is the guys that keep doing it, and I'm not going to name names, but some of them have a lot of experience, and it hasn't worked out for them once. So I'm not really sure why they keep making the moves of desperation that they do.

But in the end, I took advantage of that, a couple of them, this afternoon. You've just got to be smart and take it as it comes.

But I think that this track, because of how narrow it is, it breeds -- it also goes back to my point of how slippery it is because you want to maximize the brake zone but literally sometimes it feels like you go two feet too far and all tires lock. Well, they do, and you're going to hit. It exaggerates everything for everybody. That's why the restarts -- you see those restarts? They're wild in the car. Just hanging on to zero grip.

You want to push every brake zone but you're just waiting to lock up and miss a corner. I think it's a combination of all those things lead to the aggression that you see.

**Q. Graham, after the incident with Kyffin Simpson, there were some exasperated words on the radio, and then Brian Barnhart told you, reset. What's the process trying to reset after a collision like that when you're running higher up in the field and then all of a sudden you're in the back?**

GRAHAM RAHAL: First off, I've always had a lot of respect for Kiff, but I was pissed. I'm not going to lie because it was completely unnecessary, particularly at that stage in the race. Completely unnecessary.

When you see two guys battling like Ericsson and I were, there's no reason for the third man in to be the guy that causes the problem. I mean, zero reason for it.

I had that early in the race, too. I was behind Sting Ray and somebody else, and I had a couple of runs on Sting Ray I had to bail out because basically I had to let him finish his job first, but then get whoever it was and then go back after Sting Ray.

You've got to race with a little more clear mind, and that's what really upset me, because we all know that results -- things like that don't help any positive result.

But yeah, like I said, I've always had a lot of respect for Kiff, but it bothered me today because we were so strong, and I just expected to -- I treat everybody with respect on track, and I didn't hit a single person today. Every pass I made was clean. Every battle I was in, clean. I expect the same in return. Most guys do that. Kirkwood and myself, zero -- never a close moment. Pato and myself, clean, no problem.

I was just very disappointed in the move. That's what it comes down to.

**Q. With you having your third podium of the year, Louis finished seventh, is the team fully back, or is there a little bit more you still have to get going?**

GRAHAM RAHAL: Yeah, I mean, we're getting there. We're getting there. I tried some stuff today. I ran some things on the car that were development sets of dampers. I was different than the other boys on purpose to kind of take one for the team, good or bad, to see what the tire degradation on my car would be like compared to theirs, try to improve our street course package.

So it's great to see both cars run up front, and it's a real bummer for Mick because honestly he was in the catbird seat to have a great result today. I don't know if he got in a little too deep into 3 or 4 and hit the fence, but I feel for him because he needs all the laps he can get, and I was bummed for him for sure.

**Q. You mentioned that Alex is in a league of his own. Is that frustrating for you as a driver? Is it good for the sport? How do you view this?**

GRAHAM RAHAL: Yeah, it's frustrating in some ways, but you've got to respect it. It's impressive. It's absolutely impressive.

The team, it's not like they're -- today it's not like he blew anybody's doors off, but he does everything extremely well. The pit stops are extremely good. The strategy is always on par, and it's hard to beat people that operate like that.

Obviously when you start up front, it's easier to do, but they obviously made the right pit decision to pit about the same time I did on the early side of the window, and it played out for them, as well.

They just do everything to a very, very high level, and you've got to respect that tremendously.

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