

# Indianapolis Motor Speedway Media Conference

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Indianapolis, Indiana, USA

**Mark Miles**

**J. Douglas Boles**

**Jay Frye**

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: Good afternoon. Thank you for joining us. Welcome to today's Penske Entertainment Corporation leadership Zoom call.

Joining us today, the president and CEO of Penske Entertainment Corp, we say good afternoon to Mark Miles; also the president of the Indianapolis Motor Speedway, J. Douglas Boles joins us this afternoon; and he's the president of INDYCAR, good afternoon to Jay Frye.

An important announcement made just about an hour ago with approval by the Marion County Public Health Department, the 105th running of the Indianapolis 500 presented by Gainbridge will be able to welcome 40 percent of venue capacity, totaling approximately 135,000 fans. It'll happen with a number of requirements, including face coverings throughout the venue, temperature checks and spacing in the grandstands, again, throughout the venue.

We'll begin with Mark. Mark Miles, certainly a lot of work. Take us, if you will, kind of behind the scenes. How did you arrive at this decision and why is this the right outcome?

MARK MILES: Well, our objective, obviously, was to take all of our responsibilities seriously. We feel a great responsibility to our fans, to the traditions of this place, to the generational way that our fans love the place and participate in the place, and yet we always try to be really good citizens and to do what's in the best interest of the community.

I hope we show that in a lot of ways, from being open to food banks and memorial services and all the other things we've done more recently related to COVID.

That's sort of our general philosophy. We've got to find a way to be true to our principles for both our fans and for the

general public.

More specifically, in many respects we've been planning for this for probably 13 months because it was March in 2020 that we began thinking about COVID and how we could run our events, including the 500 for last year, under constantly changing circumstances. Our team here has done an incredible amount of work, thousands of hours of planning, for every imaginable contingency or scenario, and that was pretty much true last year.

Then we come to this year, and a big step for us, not specifically related to what May would look like, but more generally was to say to the state and local authorities, Indianapolis Motor Speedway is here to help. So whether it's COVID testing or vaccinations, we're here and we want to be helpful, and you know that story. All of you have covered it, and we've done both.

We've vaccinated a lot of people here, and one of the things that we can tell you today is that we asked our partners for these vaccination programs at the state board of health and IU Health to join with us again and to extend the vaccination program here at IMS. It will go on many days. I don't yet know exactly which, up through May 27th.

So listen, if you get vaccinated on May 27th, that doesn't really affect your health status much for the race on May 30th, but it's indicative of the fact that we want to do all we can to help people in our community and our region be in the best possible place from a healthcare perspective.

Another aspect of that is Jay, who will comment later, and the remarkable job they did to keep the paddock healthy last year, the continuation of that and the level, I think, of over 90 percent of the teams that are already vaccinated at this moment in time.

We do projections every day that are not meant to cook the books. They're meant to use the existing public data. We forecast before our extra efforts throughout May that something approximating 60 percent of the fans in the stands are likely to be vaccinated, and I hope that we can push that up more through the ongoing efforts and the advertising and public service campaign that we're going to run that you haven't seen yet, the public hasn't seen yet, that will start probably end of next week to really get the message out and keep driving vaccinations here.

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So that's part of it. The planning that's been going on forever is part of it. The sense of responsibility both to our fans who really want to be here, who choose to be here, at a time when there is literally in Indiana more vaccine available than people signing up to take it. If you are of an age where you're eligible to take the vaccine, you have had the opportunity and you'll continue to have the opportunity to get yourself vaccinated.

That's really different. If I had to say one key difference between where we are today as a community and a city and state and therefore our own sense of the responsible results of our planning and a year ago, it's the vaccinations. We are quite certain that more than half the people here, I hope north of 60 percent will have been vaccinated, and that's fans.

When you talk about the paddock, I just mentioned, when you talk about all the people who come together to work to pull off the event, the numbers will be even higher. That's kind of the background.

I would just conclude by saying enormous thanks to the governor and the state board of health and the mayor and the Kennedy Board of Health locally. They've been willing to engage with us throughout this whole process.

The timing had to be now because the city needed to get through March Madness and assess that from a public health point of view. I think they can look back on it now and believe that it was not a superspreader event, and so that I think gives us all more confidence. They needed to have that insight before it was time to make these key decisions going forward, and all of that came together so that we can be here today to make these announcements.

THE MODERATOR: Mark, thanks. So much hard work has gone into this moment. For Doug Boles, perhaps, Doug, walk us through some of the particulars that you want fans to be aware of heading into the month of May, certainly when it comes to the Indy 500 on race day.

DOUG BOLES: Well, first I want to echo what Mark said. Mark and I are blessed every day to walk in and work alongside an unbelievable team here at the Indianapolis Motor Speedway, and really over the last 13 months, our team, in particular our ticketing team and our operations team, has gone through dozens and dozens of different scenarios, and I can't tell you how many times we've had to sort of re-seat the facility to understand how to meet projected thoughts on where we were going to be in terms of numbers and protocols and things.

We are thankful for the efforts, and I had a moment a few

minutes ago just to go down to the ticketing team who's already fielding calls from our passionate fans. That's the second thing I'd like to say, thank you to all of our fans who have been patient with us, especially through a really difficult time last year.

The Indianapolis Motor Speedway and in particular the Indianapolis 500 is about not just a race but the experiences in and around it, and the number of times people have come in a row and where they sit and how they get there are all part of that experience, and last year was a devastating year for all of our fans, and for them to walk alongside us, understand the challenges we faced, understand the challenges our community and our country and our global landscape faced and to really support us through last year is really, really thankful. We can't wait -- we're really thankful for that. We cannot wait to host people back here at the Indianapolis Motor Speedway.

Mark and Roger both have said all along as we've been navigating through this, the most important thing is the Indianapolis 500, race day for the 500. We want to welcome folks back. We'd like to welcome as many as want to be here for the 105th running on May 30th, and I think the number that was announced today is going to get us pretty close to those folks that want to be here.

So some of the protocols that folks will be seeing in the emails they'll get and what we'll be talking about over the next several weeks as get ready for the Indianapolis 500 that are really important, Mark touched on one of them, we want everybody to get vaccinated. So we're encouraging you -- we're not requiring you but we're encouraging you, if you have a chance to get vaccinated, whether you're in California or whether you're here in Indiana or anywhere else before you come to the Indianapolis Motor Speedway. We want you to get that done. I think it makes your neighbors feel safer. It makes us all feel safer as we come into the venue.

As we negotiated with our city officials and state officials on how to do this in a safe manner, some other things came out of that. Obviously we want to be careful that we're not gathering too many people in one location, so our concerts, those three mega concerts that we have that really jam people in front of the stage, we're going to cancel those for this year and hope to bring those back in 2022 under normal circumstances.

We're going to require folks to have masks when they come in the gates at all times. And I know people have different opinions on masks, and I just ask our fans to look at it this way: Whether you believe a mask works or not, we certainly believe it does here at the Indianapolis Motor Speedway, and we want you to wear it so that we can have

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a safe Indianapolis 500 and everybody that's here feels like they're here in a safe way. We're really going to make that a sticking point, so if you're coming to the Indianapolis Motor Speedway and you walk through those gates, you're going to need to wear those masks.

In addition, we're going to have some seat spacing requirements, so you'll be seeing more about those, and it's basically in your customer groups on either side of your customer group, not top and bottom but either side, so you'll see that as those ticket communications start coming out.

We also see a lot of the things that we're used to now over the last year in events, hand sanitizers, we're going to encourage you to space out as you're standing in line at concession stands. So those are the things I think that people can expect to see.

One of the biggest changes for our practice days, those days where you just typically show up to the Indianapolis Motor Speedway and come in the gate, there will not be any parking in the infield except for participants and a handful of folks who have suites inside the venue. So you'll be parking outside the speedway. The mounds will be closed. So if you want to come, we're going to have you park on the west side of the racetrack, sit in the outside grandstands. Some of those will be open. The Tower Terrace inside will be open, but you'll have to come under tunnel 6 or tunnel 7, which are those tunnels along the front straightaway to access that. Hopefully some of you will get a chance to come in and see the new big board in the Pagoda Plaza.

We'll have more information on our website. We've got a great frequently asked questions page on the website to help you work through that.

At the end of the day, we just can't wait to host fans back here. It's 39 days away for the 105th running of the Indy 500 presented by Gainbridge. Back that up by two weeks, we'll be seeing folks here on that Friday for the GMR Grand Prix, kicking things off with the NTT INDYCAR Series on our 14-turn road course here in the middle of May.

THE MODERATOR: Again, INDYCAR president Jay Frye is with us, as well. We've seen fans at other NTT INDYCAR Series events and certainly it's been tremendous. Why does having fans back at the Indy 500 mean so much to this series?

JAY FRYE: To me the No. 1 element to how we function or how our entire ecosystem functions is based on our fans and our fan edge engagement, so it's very difficult to

operate without them. From a personal perspective, I tried to put this into words the best way I could come up with it, with having them or not, it's almost like you go to have a closed scrimmage versus game day or race day. It's still very intense, but fans bring a whole 'nother level of intensity at the venues and at the racetrack.

We've been fortunate to run with them some, last year into this year already, Barber last weekend. We're certainly glad to have them back. Again, the intensity level is much different, and we're just really excited about today's announcement.

THE MODERATOR: Mark, there's more to this equation in May. Vaccinations will continue through the month. Tell us a little bit more about that, Mark.

MARK MILES: Well, I won't belabor it. I mentioned it. We're going to start really an advertising and public service announcement campaign I hope by late next week that will encourage everybody to get vaccinated if they haven't, and I think it's going to be really cool to see the people who we're asking our folks to get vaccinated if they haven't. There will be an emphasis on racing in it, but it's certainly a message meant to be relevant more broadly than just our fans.

And then up through the 27th, the Thursday before the race, on some schedule yet to be finalized, but it will be soon, there will be on going drive-through vaccinations available on whatever days for the rest of May.

And frankly, we're working on another idea which I'm pretty sure we're going to be able to do on some basis. If you are a fan and you're here for practice or hopefully Grand Prix race day or qualifying or what have you, there will be some places inside the grounds, so you don't have to get back in your car and go out and drive through, where you can, without an appointment, show up and get vaccinated. So we're really trying to make it convenient. We're orienting it towards our fans at the same time that we're trying to reach people all over the region.

**Q. This question is for Doug. A couple of years ago when you went to the bag searches, some of the lines to get in were pretty backed up, to the point where some people may not have gotten to their seats in time to see some of the opening ceremonies and everything. Even though there's 40 percent capacity, there's another layer here of admittance. How much of a logistic challenge will that be for spectators?**

DOUG BOLES: Well, you're referring to 2013 when we had gates back up. We learned an awful lot in 2013, and as folks will recall we were the first major event other than

the Kentucky Derby after the Boston bombing, so the world changed in those few weeks following the Boston bombing in the way that we let people in our venues. So we were underprepared, and we sat down literally that evening and the entire next day, Memorial Day, trying to figure out how to make sure that didn't happen again.

We will have virtually the same number of gates open for our spectators and 125 or so lanes of access for our spectators. We feel really comfortable that we'll be able to get people in without backing them up.

One of the things we've done over the last several years, and our fans really have helped us do this, is we've just encouraged people to come a little bit early, make sure they're patient when they come, and we'll do the same thing again this year.

But I think with the number of lanes that we'll have and the number of gates that we'll have, we should be in pretty good shape as it relates to getting people in in the timely manner that they're expecting. I wouldn't anticipate waits longer than five or ten minutes, depending on what time you show up. The later you wait to come to the race, the more time you can expect to wait in line, so that's why we encourage folks to come a little bit early.

**Q. A couple of weeks ago you and I spoke at the open test and you said we're going to announce when we can have the most fans possible, and you said if we made the announcement on that day, it probably wouldn't be the number that the fans would like. How much did that change?**

DOUG BOLES: Well, I don't know that it changed at all, and I think that's one of the things that Mark and Roger and Jay and all of us have said, it's so important to have fans here, and we were asking for patience so that we could get as close as we could to having as many fans as we could. Mark mentioned for our city it was important for them to see how March Madness took hold here over the few weeks that we had thousands of people inside our community using our hotels, using our restaurants to understand if there was any impact on that, and that was important to them.

Had we made a decision before March Madness and how it worked, we would probably be having a different conversation today.

Definitely waiting until now helps us. We are also at a point where we need to make a decision because we have customers all over the country who are trying to figure out how to travel, how to get here or whether or not they're even going to come, and we wanted to at least give them a

reasonable amount of time to make that decision. So I don't know that we could have gone much beyond today, regardless of where we are, in order to give our fans time to make the right decision for them.

**Q. For Mark, over this time period you and the Penske officials met every day, numerous times a day, for hours on end. When you see the starting point that you began with, how much did it change?**

MARK MILES: Well, it's a great question. I'm not sure where my mind goes for picking a starting point because really as I tried to say, I think this feels like it started March of '20, when the world figured out there was a thing called COVID and a pandemic became real.

So we've been dealing with it in one form or another, whether it's for the INDYCAR Series, through all of our promoters and the teams and the paddock or here at IMS it seems like now for a very long time.

Most of it, the issues you have to deal with, are very similar, whether it was a year ago or last August or the Harvest Grand Prix or today. As I tried to say, the biggest difference really is vaccinations. That's the game changer. Everybody will have their own view, and I don't purport to be an epidemiologist, but when you get to the place where everybody who wants to be vaccinated can be vaccinated and you say everybody is going to wear a mask, we feel like it's responsible and appropriate to let people choose to come, and if that ends up being 135,000 people, that will be the biggest crowd probably on the planet for a sports event in 2021, and we will have done all we could for the largest number of our fans and particularly for the fans that wanted to be here.

**Q. We obviously know fans are so important to the sport. The other part that isn't mentioned is the sponsors and the partners. Is there a plan on how hospitality is going to work? I know that's so important for so many speedway partners, INDYCAR partners, team partners. Do you guys know how that'll work or is that something that's still being worked through?**

DOUG BOLES: I'll talk from the speedway standpoint and then maybe Mark or Jay can talk a little bit because when you say "hospitality," there's a whole bunch of varieties of hospitality. So here at the speedway we have suite holders, so there will be some protocols related to suites that will allow them a percentage of access in their suites, depending on the size of the suite and depending on whether that suite has indoor-outdoor seating or how it's situated, so we've communicated to those suite holders and given them some options as they go forward.

We also have folks that use the Pagoda Plaza area, some of the temporary facilities that we have there. Same thing with those customers; we will likely reduce the number that they can have, either that or we'll expand the space that they were originally going to have to take care of them.

There will be protocols in and around them, but you're absolutely right, without sponsors as well as fans, this race doesn't work well. The series doesn't work well. We're going to do everything we can to give those partners who are part of the blood that keeps the series going and the track going an opportunity to use the Indianapolis Motor Speedway like they're used to using it.

On the team side, and Mark can touch on this, they've also got their own hospitality, and I think we've worked out some opportunities to make sure that teams can do the same thing that the track can.

**Q. Apologies for a narrow and maybe selfish question: What is media access going to look like? There's reports in NASCAR things are opening up a little more for their Darlington race. Will we be able to go into the pits or the garages? What's the status? I'm sure it'll change in the next 40 days.**

DOUG BOLES: You will be getting some communication from Alex and the team on the PR side as well as Kate and the folks on the INDYCAR side, but you will have access. We will have more access than we had in the media center this year than we did last. There will still be the requirements in there for face coverings. There will still be some distancing, limiting the number of folks on elevators, but you will absolutely have access.

The difference will be how do we give access to the garage areas, so you will get some protocols on what needs to be done there so that you can have that access. But we too, just like NASCAR, are trying to make sure that we're making it easier for your jobs and giving you more access in a safe way.

**Q. When roughly can fans expect to begin to receive their tickets in the mail?**

DOUG BOLES: That's a great question. We've sort of back-timed from when the Indianapolis 500 is, and then kind of back-timed how long we think it might or might not take the post office to deliver some of those tickets.

I think we will start sending those probably not next week but the beginning of the following week. What we're trying to tell all our customers is they'll definitely get an email

from the ticket team that says your tickets have been mailed, so they don't need to worry about it. Nobody's tickets have been mailed yet so nobody needs to worry about did I get my tickets and have lost them.

Right now the biggest confusion is we have customers that think that the tickets from last year are the tickets that they should use from this year, and that in fact is not the case.

A customer should be getting a notice from us in about 10 days and they'll get a notice when their tickets have been shipped so that they know that they're coming.

**Q. Doug and Mark, this question can go to either of you. Really first I wanted to clarify, for the Grand Prix, what is the capacity limit? Is it the same as the Indy 500, and how many fans are you expecting for that? And then secondly, could you talk a little bit about the discussions that happened with the health department for this? I know Doug hit on this a little bit earlier, but was there any sense of compromise or like feeling you have to compromise at all for the number of fans that are allowed given the hopes of tons of fans and even Mr. Penske saying that he'd love to have 250,000 fans in the venue for this race?**

DOUG BOLES: I'll touch on the capacity issue and then I'll let Mark, who really led communications for all of us with our local authorities.

Really the protocols that have been announced will be applied across all days, so theoretically I guess we can have that 135,000 people on our GMR Grand Prix day. Obviously that number is not one that we'll have there.

We'll just ensure as customers come in that they're spaced appropriately and we'll go through the same masking protocols and otherwise on practice qualifying and the GMR Grand Prix days, and I appreciate you trying to get us to commit to a number, but at this point in time we're not going to do that.

MARK MILES: Well done, Doug. Look, I wouldn't characterize it as a negotiation really with the healthcare authorities. It's a discussion. It was iterative. It went on for months. We've explained why it came to the conclusion as late as it did related to March Madness.

You know, we and they -- they are in touch with the federal authorities and international authorities related to COVID. We were in touch with a whole lot of other major events that have happened so far this year and will happen yet and maybe even between today and the Indianapolis 500-mile race. We're looking for good ideas and best practices and how to find that place to keep our fans and

our community as healthy as possible at a time when there are some risks.

At the same time, to keep the traditions of the Indianapolis 500-mile race alive and prospering.

I would just take the opportunity again in answering your question that I don't think it was ever contentious. I think it was always constructive. It can't be a secret that the officials of the state of Indiana and the city of Indianapolis want to see the Indianapolis Motor Speedway and the 500 be successful, and they, I hope, understand that we want to be good citizens. It was a long process that we think ended in a really good place.

**Q. I think this is a question probably for Doug or for Mark. Roger Penske said last month that over 170,000 tickets had been sold for the Indy 500. Can you guys help reconcile that with the 135,000 number? Does that mean roughly 40,000 tickets were returned? How does that work?**

DOUG BOLES: I think the number we settled on with the city for the right number of fans to be here was really based on what's the safest way that we can manage our outdoor event. Obviously we're a huge facility, and that was a number that I think with the vaccinations and all of the things that are going on felt like was the right place to be.

We had sold 170,000 tickets prior to when Roger talked about that, and we sent a letter out to our fans last week letting fans know that we hadn't come to a conclusion on what exactly May was going to look like, but we knew people were wondering, and we gave people an opportunity to take a credit on this year's event and apply it to 2022 if they wanted to not come or if they wanted to use a portion of and not all of their tickets.

We had roughly 33,000 of those tickets that were returned for a credit, and that puts us down close to that 140,000 number. We anticipate that there will be others even after this announcement now that will say, you know what, I'd like to take a credit for 2022.

We also think that there's an opportunity when that's done, we've continued to have customers reach out, and while we aren't directly selling tickets right now, there are customers that can go on our website and say I'd like to buy a ticket and I'd like to buy a ticket in this general area, and those folks, once we know what the venue looks like as we set it up and we're likely to give some of those folks an opportunity to purchase some tickets with the idea that we'll cap ourselves at 135,000.

**Q. I have a quick one for Jay. I know you probably saw the Ryan Hunter-Reay tweet from Barber a couple of days ago. Just wondering as INDYCAR studied that crash, do you have any reaction to that and what you guys might be doing if anything for St. Pete?**

JAY FRYE: We obviously studied it very thoroughly and continue to. The aeroscreen did an amazing job. It did what it was designed to do. I think if you look at the magnitude of what happened and the condition that the current screen is in, it basically was untouched. There was some marks on the tear-offs, there was a wicker that goes down the front that was sheared off. Other than that it was basically unscathed. I think how quickly the incident happened, right, there was not really recognition of how big it was until after the event, when we did our post-race debrief, so we're really proud of how it worked, and it certainly did its job.

**Q. This is for Doug or Mark. Just wondering, how does it feel to be hosting, I guess, the largest in-person sporting event since the start of this pandemic? Just getting your thoughts there.**

DOUG BOLES: Well, I'll give you my thoughts and Mark can give you his. As a Hoosier, one of the things I looked forward to, even before I worked at the Indianapolis Motor Speedway, was that moment in May when the state of Indiana and the city of Indianapolis was on an international stage at the Indianapolis Motor Speedway, and when "Back Home Again in Indiana" was performed for 90 seconds, everybody in the venue no matter where they're from, they're a Hoosier.

It's just an opportunity for us to show what Hoosiers can do. We can put on the world's largest sporting event. How we honor our men and women who have served and especially those men and women who have paid the ultimate sacrifice, it is a really important for us Memorial Day weekend to remember those things, and the idea that we can do it again alongside some of our fans who want to be there and understand how important that is, certainly excited to put Indiana back on the map on Memorial Day Sunday in a way that we can show our Hoosier pride and really thank those men and women who have allowed us to continue to be free and continue to fight for us every day.

MARK MILES: I share Doug's sentiments about what it means to the fans, but I would just add that it's incredibly important to our community and our economy. This is a big event that has a big impact, even at this kind of a level, something reduced.

I was proud of the way the city performed for March Madness. We have an economy in central Indiana,

particularly in Indianapolis, that relies in no small part on our hospitality industry, and a big part of hospitality is sports driven. So March Madness was really important. This is the next and bigger, at least, single-day opportunity. You don't have to spend a lot of time listening to the people who are hoteliers or restaurateurs or the people who work there, make a living in our hospitality industry to know that this is a really important next big step toward some level of normalcy. We're proud to be part of that.

**Q. Has there been conversations with the limited attendance about local viewing opportunities then for those who are able to be one of the 135,000 approximately people able to attend?**

MARK MILES: Well, the short answer is we have not yet decided and really focused on whether we'll continue the delay. More to follow on that as we think more about it.

**Q. Mark, I'm curious, did the fact that the Indy paddock has such a high vaccination rate, did that impact any of your talks about health officials as far as how much of an attendance they would allow?**

MARK MILES: I don't know that there was a direct correlation between our fan size and the precautions and the preparedness in the paddock, but I do think it was an indication to them about our seriousness, so maybe it had an attitudinal influence.

In that way it would be helpful, but really I'm not saying it's a "bubble" as we've come to see bubbles in other sports, but Jay and the paddock have been very careful and diligent really throughout the season last year and again last weekend in getting to Indianapolis this May. The paddock adapted quickly to make themselves as safe as possible through vaccinations, which is the best with masks that anybody can do right now. We're doing the same, really stressing it for our work force, which is all the other people that come together to put on these events, and it's all part of doing everything we can to take the best possible precautions.

THE MODERATOR: Thanks to everyone for Zooming in today.

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