



IndyCar – Tony Cotman Leaves IRL, Kinda

Posted by mike

New Zealand native Tony Cotman has left his position with the IndyCar Series as Vice President of Competition to start his own company, NZR Consulting.

Tony was second in command behind Brian Barnhart in the IRL and his race weekend responsibilities included race direction of the Indy Lights series. Before joining the IRL in 2008, Tony became widely respected for his role in the Champ Car World Series as Executive Vice President of Operations and Race Director. Tony was instrumental in bringing the cost effective Panoz DP01 program forward in CCWS, as well as instituting standing starts, push to pass and option tire rules, some of which have been imitated in F1 and the IndyCar series.

Tony will not be leaving the series entirely though. He has agreed to work for the League as a private contractor. He will still serve as race director for the Indy Lights series. Further, NZR Consulting will be heavily involved with the Sao Paulo race since Tony designed the track.

According to SpeedTV, Tony will be on the ground in Brazil quite a bit over the next 9 weeks as they prepare the circuit. Tony said "I've designed a track that will both challenge the drivers and create excitement for the fans. It's a massive job in a short period of time but the city of Sao Paulo has been exceptional to work with. I'll spend a lot of time in Brazil between now and the race and NZR will have somebody there from this Wednesday until race day."

NZR will look to do further race track designs for the IRL with possible upcoming projects in Baltimore and around the New England Patriot's home field in Foxboro which have long been reported to be on the IRL's long term road map.

We here at the Paddock would like to make the following observations on this situation. Brian Barnhart and Tony Cotman seem to have different ideas on the future of the IndyCar series, at least if you listen to Robin Miller. Robin has long been campaigning for Tony to take over the reigns as President of Competition for the IRL in place of Barnhart.



This move seems to solidify Brian in his position for now, which many fans will not be happy with. This even though Brian is now in a bit of a bad situation since several of the team owners are championing the Delta Wing car that Brian reportedly does not like. Again, if you believe Robin Miller, Brian has been a hindrance to cost cutting and innovation at Indianapolis and now the owners are in open revolt, as displayed by them forming Delta Wing LLC.

Regardless of that situation (that may only be the machinations of a certain ex-Indianapolis Star reporter) Tony is plotting a new trajectory as the Herman Tilke of the IndyCar series. Certainly his role on the FIA Circuit Commission, along with his experience in circuit design in Champ Car and now IndyCar make it far more lucrative for him to work for his own company, than to render the same services to the IRL for a flat salary (while completing the other tasks of his position within the League).

One thing that sticks out though is that this new track layout in Sao Paulo has had very little time to go from napkin to execution. This is certainly not the way that Tony would have liked to do things. This first race at Sao Paulo has all the potential to be as bad as A1GP's visit to China (where the cars could not steer tight enough to take the hairpin). If so, it is Tony's reputation that will be harmed because he was forced into a bad situation by the IRL. Maybe that is part of the reason he wants to work for himself.