

NATIONAL PRESS CLUB LUNCHEON WITH DANICA PATRICK

SUBJECT: NASCAR DRIVER DANICA PATRICK SPEAKS TO THE NATIONAL PRESS CLUB.

MODERATOR: THERESA WERNER, PRESIDENT, NATIONAL PRESS CLUB

LOCATION: NATIONAL PRESS CLUB BALLROOM, WASHINGTON, D.C.

TIME: 12:30 P.M. EDT

DATE: TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 21, 2012

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THERESA WERNER: (Sounds gavel.) Good afternoon, and welcome to the National Press Club. My name is Theresa Werner, and I am the 105th president of the National Press Club. We are the world's leading professional organization for journalists, committed to our profession's future through our programming events, such as these, while fostering a free press worldwide. For more information about the National Press Club, please visit our website at www.press.org. To donate to programs offered to the public through the non-profit National Press Club Journalism Institute, please visit www.press.org/institute.

[applause]

On behalf of our members worldwide, I'd like to welcome our speaker and those of you attending today's event. Our head table includes guests of our speaker as well as working journalists who are Club members. And, if you do hear applause in our audience, we would like to make note that the general public is attending. So it's not necessarily evidence of a lack of journalism objectivity.

I'd also like to welcome our C-SPAN audience and our Public Radio audience. Our luncheons are also featured on our member-produced weekly Podcast from the National Press Club, available on iTunes. You can also follow the action on Twitter using the hashtag #NPCLunch. After our guest speech concludes, we'll have a Q and A. I will ask as many questions as time permits.

Now I'd like to introduce our head table guests. And I would ask each of you here to stand up briefly as your name is announced. From your right, Ken Molestina, news reporter, WUSA-TV, Rachel Ray, culture writer, *Daily Telegraph London*, John Klobucar, broadcast sports supervisor, Associated Press, Louis Mattioli McNally, President of Pocono Raceway and a guest of our speaker, Nikki Schwab, Yeas and Nays columnist of the *Washington Examiner*, Brian France, Chairman and Chief Executive Officer, NASCAR, and a guest of our speaker, Allison Fitzgerald, Speakers Committee. I'm going to skip our speaker for a moment.

Matt Mlynarczyk, President, Advocated Group, LLC, and Speakers Committee member who organized today's event, Lisa France Kennedy, Chief Executive Officer and Vice-Chairperson, International Speedway Corporation, and Vice-Chairperson, NASCAR, Suzanne Struglinski, Press Secretary for Legislative Affairs, Natural Resource Defense Council, and an NPC board member, Maureen Groppe, Washington correspondent, *Indianapolis Star*, and David Shepherdson, Washington Bureau Chief, *Detroit News*.

In just seven years, Danica Patrick has evolved from an Indy Car Rookie of the Year to a racing sensation, whose appeal, according to ESPN.com, hits just about every demographic. Her 2010 NASCAR nationwide series debut at Daytona resulted in a 35 percent increase in television viewership. She is considered, by many, to be the most successful woman in the history of American open wheel racing. She is the only woman ever to win an Indy Car Series race and holds the highest finish by a woman at the Indianapolis 500, 3rd place. She has also been named the Indy Car Series most popular driver four times.

Danica was raised in Illinois, began competing in go-cart racing at an early age, subsequently winning three World Carting Association Grand National Championships. In 1998, she moved to Europe to compete on the European Road Racing Circuit. In 2000, she finished second in the prestigious Formula Ford Festival in England, the highest finish ever for an American.

She returned to North America to race in 2002, where she became the first woman in the history of the Toyota Atlantic Series to have a top three finish and the first woman to win a major league open wheel race in a North American series. But most people probably first heard of Danica Patrick in May of 2005, during her Indianapolis 500 debut, where she set several records.

Her practice lap of 229.88 miles per hour on poll day was the fastest by any woman in the history of the Indianapolis Motor Speedway. She qualified fourth for the race, the best-ever starting position for a woman, and also led the race for 19 laps, and finished in fourth place, another first for a woman. She received Rookie of the Year honors for her efforts. At the 2009 Indianapolis 500, she finished third, the best result ever for a woman. And, in 2010, she made her NASCAR debut, racing part-time in the nationwide series.

Last year she continued to drive in the Indy Series and the NASCAR nationwide series. This year, she shifts from Indy Car Series to a full-time stock car schedule, competing in the NASCAR nationwide series for JOR Motor Sports, and in 10 NASCAR Sprint Cup Series race for Stewart Hoff Racing. Her first Sprint Cup Series race will be this Sunday's season opening Daytona 500.

Today, Danica will discuss her transition from Indy Car Series to full-time NASCAR racing, and share her thoughts on how she plans to become the first woman ever to win a NASCAR sanctioned event, and add another chapter to her list of firsts. Please join me in welcoming to the National Press Club Danica Patrick.

[applause]

DANICA PATRICK: Thank you for having me here today. This is a real honor. I have pretty much just crossed out all of my note cards after all of that. That's really all I was going to cover. [laughter] I now will, in fact, just have to shed a lot more detail onto it. But really, I'm very honored to be here. I think the last NASCAR driver to speak to the National Press Club was Jimmy Johnson. He since has been nicknamed "Five Time," in case you guys don't know that. He had only won two championships at that point. But he's up to five now. So his situation has greatly improved.

And then, I actually just heard on the way here that the last driver to speak to the Press Club in this format at a luncheon was Dale Earnhardt, Sr. So this is some pretty, pretty steep company, given the fact that I haven't even done a Sprint Cup Race yet. So thank you very much for all showing up, and showing what I would say is maybe some confidence in me. I very much appreciate that.

I thought I'd-- Like I said, I thought I might start from the beginning and start from how did I get into racing. Well, once upon a time, there was a family with my mom Bev, my dad TJ, my sister Brooke, and myself. And we were just looking for a way to spend some time together as a family. My dad was a glazer, and my mom was lucky enough to be able to stay home with my sister and I. And my parents recognized that I didn't really know my dad very well. He was gone at work before we got up, and he was coming home after we went to bed already.

So their first thought was to explore the option of buying a pontoon boat and floating down the river. [laughter] So, when they found a boat they liked, they called a certain fellow-- I have no idea what his name is. And he didn't call us back. So, no pontoon boat. No good pontoon boat to buy. What do we do?

My dad has a lot of history in racing. He raced snowmobiles, midgets, motocross, all kinds of forms of motor sports. Never met a guy that loves racing this much. And so there was somebody in our neighborhood that raced go-carts. So we took a trip down the street and went into their little shed, checked out the go-carts. Went out to our local track and watched them race in Broadhead, Wisconsin. And actually, a track called Sugar River Raceway. They love it when I say their name. So, Sugar River Raceway. [laughter]

And it looked like fun. There was like lots of kids, and, you know, my dad was into it. And it was really my sister who wanted to do it. And I just, like if any of you have kids, you can't let one do it and not the other. So I was the other one in this situation. And I just didn't want to get left out. So I said I would do it too.

And so, I was go-cart #10. That was the number I picked from day one in go-carting, which is why it's so cool and why I picked the number 10 in Sprint Cut with Stewart Hoff. So that's the significance there. So we got the go-carts together. And we went out the back of my parents' shop. And there's a big parking lot. So we took every can we could find, spray can, coke can, you name it. And we set it all up in a big circle. And my sister and I went out for a ride.

So we're going around, going around, it's really fun. Waved at a camera-- probably not, keep going. And, all of a sudden, I went to go hit the brake, and I have no brake. So, without boring you on technical details, given my 10 year old inexperience, what did I do? I went straight. I decided to not continue to turn or stand or do something that would have been far less damaging. I went straight. And I was headed straight for a trailer, which would have taken my head off.

So I veered to the left and went straight into a concrete building. Hit the wall, cart up in the air, twisted, bruises all over. And I guess, if there was any point in time that I could have said, "I'm scared and I don't want to do this," that would have been a pretty good one, I think. But I didn't. I didn't want to quit. I wanted to keep going. Dad bought another go-cart. So, thank you dad for spending the money for another go-cart, which is actually where my mom picked up racing.

But anyway, so I got out there. And we started racing right away. And man, I was terrible. My sister and I couldn't even keep up on the parade laps, which is those ones where you go really slow at the beginning. But I just kept practicing and practicing. And my dad tells me the story now-- I don't remember this-- But all I wanted to do was go out on the weekdays. There was a Wednesday practice. And I just-- I wanted to go out every single Wednesday and go testing.

And I just loved to see the improvement. And it's very easy with racing, because it's the last time. And you're getting better is quite obvious, which is probably why I like to do other things that cause instant gratification, like ironing and cleaning up. [laughter] But not like dieting. That's not instant gratification.

And I got really good. And, by the end of my first year, I almost won the championship in my first year, even with those first few races that were, I'm sure, spectacular. [laughter] And that progression and that hard work continued. And, by the end of seven years of go-carting, you actually found some stats that I could not find on the Internet. I was trying like heck to find how many races have I won in go-carting? How many championships did I win? And so, I had to make a guess. And I figure I probably won-- I don't know. One year I won almost 40 in one year. So I'm betting I

probably won at least over 100 races. And I'm betting between 10 and 15 regional and national championships. So I had some incredible success.

But something that also started to happen was, I was starting to get some media attention. So it was pretty, pretty fun for a little kid to have cameras following her down the halls of her high school. So the first program that I was on was this show for ABC called *Passion to Play: Making of a Champion*. And you might be familiar with some other names that were in it. It was myself-- we were 14 years old. It was myself, a figure skater named Tara Lipinski, and a certain girl named Anna Kournikova. [laughter]

And so, I remember being 14 and having a Sunday party for Danica's show. And all my friends rode their bicycles over. It was awesome. [laughter] And there I was, on Sunday afternoon special primetime TV. Then, not far after that, MTV was following me down the halls of my high school. And I felt pretty cool. But, at no point did I really think that it was because I was a girl. Because I was always taught to just strive to be the best. It wasn't about being the best girl, it was about being the best. And that's what I was doing.

And, since I didn't want to be a professional go-cart driver, I wanted to be a professional racecar driver, I wanted to get moving right away. So, at 16 years old, based on some of the people that I had met over the years, I had the opportunity to move to England and race cars. And this was a place that I was told all the best racecar drivers go from all over Europe. And I could learn more in one year in England than five years in the States. And I said, "Well sign me up. You mean I have to leave high school? Sign me up again!" [laughter] "You mean my parents aren't going to be living with me? Double-sign me up."

But that novelty did wear off. And it was-- it became really hard. When I first moved over there, I was sleeping on a couch and racing on the weekends. And it just wasn't going that well. And why? Why? I had come from such success. Was it because I was the newest driver on a race team? Was it because I was an American on a British team? Or was it because I was a girl, maybe? Maybe it was because I was a girl in a boys' sport.

And it was really the first time that I started to feel different or out of place. And it really started to make me doubt myself, doubt my abilities. It made me really sad and really depressed, as if the lack of sun wasn't enough to do that. [laughter] And it was a difficult time for me, for sure. It was very character-building. But I stuck with it and hung in there. And you touched on it, but the Formula Ford Festival is a race in England that's held every year. And there are over 100 or so entries every year in this race. And it's the best Formula Ford drivers from all over Europe, not just the ones that are racing in the British championship, everyone. And they all come together for this event.

And I had the ability to-- I got a great hand-me-down. The guy who won the championship was on our team, and he was getting a new race car for the Formula Ford Festival. So, I acquired the championship car and made the most of it. And I went out,

and I finished second in the festival, which was not only the highest for an American, not only highest for a girl, but it was the highest for an American. I did this in the year 2000, and the previous-- the previous owner of that title was a guy named Danny Sullivan. And he did it in 1974.

So things had started to turn well for me. And I came back the next year for the championship, and everything just fell apart. I ended up leaving the U.K. and coming back to the States. And I didn't have a ride. And I thought, "I accomplished so much. This should be-- Should be pretty straightforward to get a ride." I could learn more in one year in England than five years in the States. And I've been gone for three years. It's got to earn me something, right? Not so much.

So my dad and I would absolutely pound the streets, and walk around every race track, and talk to every owner and every driver and every mechanic, and absolutely anyone that would just talk to us, because we were that bored. [laughter] We used to take little fieldtrips to the bathroom for something to do. I'm not kidding you. So we were pretty lost. And it was definitely a tough time. But we kept working hard. And it's something that I'm used to doing.

And one day, I put a guy named Bobby Rahal on the spot. And he's a past Indy 500 champion, past champion in Indy Car. I put him on the spot. And I said, "Hey, would you be willing to run me in a racecar on your team? Would you be willing to start up a team for me?" And he said, "Yes." I thought, "Gosh, why didn't I try this earlier?" [laughter]

So he started up a race team for me. And we started to have some-- We started to have some success. We started to start to make a good impression out there. But, what really started to kick into high gear was the media. And so, all of a sudden, what seemed to be something I didn't even notice to something that might be hurting me, is now helping me. And now it seems like being a girl is actually a really awesome thing. So I'm glad I was patient. [laughter]

And it was-- The media started asking me this one question about who my role model was, or who my idol was. And that was a weird question for me, because I never really had one. I always wanted to be the first me, not the next somebody else. And I guess maybe I kind of always knew I was different.

And so I was finally grateful to be a girl. I was finally able to use it to my advantage. And, in the second year of the Formula Atlantic Championship, which is a feeder series to the Indy Car Series, I finished third in the championship. And my boss Bobby moved me up. And I was going Indy Car racing. So finally, my dreams were coming true.

And we started off the season fairly well. The third race I was in was the Japan 300, which I would go on to later win. And I was-- I found myself vying for the pole

position in Japan. And I just missed it by the littlest bit to an old friend from go-carting named Sam Hornish, Jr. I went on to finish fourth at that race.

And then we'd pick up at the Indy 500, which is my fourth Indy Car race. It really was like a fairytale month. Every single time I came in from the track, I mean every time, including rookie orientation, when there was only about five cars out there running, there was a huge cheering section for me. I could see them cheering for me when I'd pull in down the back straight and go inside-- go on the pit lane in turns three and four, everybody pumping their fists in the air. And I'd come into my pit stall, and let's face it, it's got about 700-plus horsepower. And it's pretty loud. So, when people ask if I heard the crowd, I heard the crowd when I stopped the car in my pit box. So I just got such a warm welcoming.

And the media-- The media blitz started. And they followed me everywhere. And the opportunities just kept popping up every single day at Indy. And so, it was very exciting. And, to nearly have the pole position, if not for a little hiccup in turn one, which could have easily been in the wall, I saved it and managed to start fourth for the Indy 500. And then, to keep that going, and to lead just right up until the final laps of the Indianapolis 500, if it would have been just a little warmer in qualifying, and it wouldn't have been so slippery, and if I had just had another gallon of gas [laughter] well maybe I wouldn't be here today. [laughter] And that wouldn't be good either.

So I believe that everything happens for a reason. And so, the Indy 500 came and went. And, all of a sudden, Danica-mania was born. And it's been an amazing ride of everybody dissecting, analyzing, loving, hating, judging, you name it, everything that I do is broken down.

But I've learned to really embrace all of it, embrace all that I am, all that I am, being a girl, being different, being unique, and, let's face it, if somebody is different and unique, it's a story. Just ask Jeremy Lind or Tim Tebow. But it's really great, and I'm very fortunate. And I no longer was just Danica Patrick the driver, I'm Danica Patrick the girl driver. And that's okay. People ask if I like being called Danica Patrick a girl driver. And I said, "Well, whether you call me Danica Patrick the driver that's a girl or Danica Patrick the girl driver, you're saying all the same words. And you mean all the same thing."

And it's about intention. If you say it in a mean way, then you know what? I can't help you. But I love everything that it stands for. And I love being unique. And I love being different. And so, you know, I always encourage everyone to embrace all that's different about them. And that really is what you need to use. You need to not hide that. You need to use it and take advantage of it and give all that you have to offer. And I've never asked for special treatment along the way. And I'm never going to hide the fact that I'm a girl, ever. That's obvious, isn't it?

But, as I move into my new chapter of racing, being a full-time NASCAR driver, I'm going to do it with the same will and energy and the same Danica that I am when I

was in go-carting, to when I was in England, to when I was in Indy Car. I'm going to be the best Danica that I can be. Thank you.

[applause]

THERESA WERNER: Did you realize all of your goals in open wheel racing?

DANICA PATRICK: Yeah, I think as an athlete, you are always-- you want to win every single time you take part in the event. I think that's natural for an athlete to want. But my goal was to win in Indy Car and I did. So, in a simple word, I suppose you could say yes.

THERESA WERNER: What changes would you make in open wheel racing if you were in charge of the Indy Car Series?

DANICA PATRICK: Oh, that's such a loaded question. [laughter] I see no gain here, because I don't drive there anymore. I'll talk about the real positives, because there are some. Indy Car has a new car, and I've always thought that, for them to create some competition within manufacturers is something that is very good for the sport. It generates new money, new interest, and storylines.

And also, from a racing perspective, which is the product you have, and in fact-- look at this, I'm going to get NASCAR in too-- to look at, let's say, the Bud shootout the other night, was awesome racing. And the fans loved it. And that's what keeps people coming back. So, when you can create some competition out there that makes the racing more exciting, then that's good for the spot. So I think that they're on a good track. And I think that the new car is going to serve them well and create great storylines and great racing.

THERESA WERNER: Do you ever plan to compete in the Indy 500 again?

DANICA PATRICK: Yeah. The answer is yeah. I do plan to. Whether or not it's going to happen or not is always a whole 'nothing thing, as I did plan to participate in this Indy 500 this year. But I think that, in the future, there's going to be more opportunities and more time to hopefully plan for it. I love that race. It's the greatest race. It's where I came from. It's what made me who I am, the brand that I am, the girl that I am. And so, I would love to go back and win that. I always really felt like I was going to win the Indy 500. And I came close a couple of times. But I would love to have another shot at it.

THERESA WERNER: What is the biggest difference between open wheel and NASCAR racing?

DANICA PATRICK: Where do I begin? [laughter] Obviously, the cars are different. The cars are-- open wheel cars in Indy Car, which just means literally the wheels are exposed. So it took me a while before I ever learned that one. [laughter] Sad,

right? And stock cars obviously look more like traditional road cars. So the cars are very different. The Indy cars are very low and rigid and fast.

NASCAR is fast as well, but the car is a little bit bigger. They're less aero-dependent on the wings, which is also what produces the close racing that we're able to have, bumper to bumper. It was something that took some adjusting for me as a driver to be used to being really close to somebody, but maybe being three or four cars back, to coming to Daytona, and having my spotters say, "One car back, half back. You still got room." And I'm thinking, "I must be underneath him at this point in time." So that ability to run close is a product of the fact that, you know, Indy cars work off of those wings to keep the car on the ground.

And then you've got the difference in language, everything from the way that we describe the car-- In Indy Car it's under-steer/over-steer. And in NASCAR it's tight and loose. And perhaps even the way that it's said. Southern accents? No. [laughter] So I enjoyed it. NASCAR racing very much reminds me of being a kid and growing up in go-carts. And there's lots of southerners involved. And we use tight and loose as our ways to describe the race cars. So I feel at home.

THERESA WERNER: Which driving skills do you feel you need to improve on the most to accomplish your NASCAR goals?

DANICA PATRICK: I think the most important thing for me is just seat time. I mean, I've obviously been involved in NASCAR for the last two years, to some degree. But those two years that I've been involved, I still haven't done enough races that would equal one whole season in a stock car. So I just need seat time. I need to go to these race tracks and keep going back to them.

And I really feel like the learning process will be quick, to start with, to get going on the season. It's always tougher when you get to the top, of course, those last few spots. But I think that the learning curve will hopefully be pretty quick in the beginning here, just being able to be in the car every single weekend. So I need to just work on getting familiar with the car, getting comfortable, getting up to speed fast and qualifying. You know, for you guys that watch and just think we go out and do an ordinary lap, they do things to the racecar for qualifying that make the car handle in a way that it hasn't done all weekend.

So, for me to be on the limit of that grip level, and have the faith in that car, literally the first lap I hit the track, green flag comes as soon as you cross the straight/finish line, that takes some real confidence. And that takes some real faith in the car and trust, and some history with the car, so that I know what it's going to do. So, just seat time is something that I really need.

THERESA WERNER: For the last two years, was it a challenge to transition from the Indy Car Series race one week and a NASCAR race the next?

DANICA PATRICK: I definitely got this question a lot the last couple of years. And my first answer is no. It's like driving a van and driving a Lamborghini. And I like driving the van. I chose to drive the van. So please don't take-- please don't take offense to it. [laughter] But I didn't think it was very different. I didn't think it was hard. It was a lot of scheduling and travel and things like that.

But, more than anything, I mean my NASCAR venture suffered as me doing it-- when I did Indy Car. I wouldn't say my Indy Car racing suffered for doing NASCAR, because I was doing it consistently all the time. But in NASCAR, it was like I would do a couple races in February, and then I wouldn't do any racing until June. And then I'd do one a month until the end of the season. And then I'd have a few races at the end of the season. So, it was very spread out.

I'm glad I did it the way I did it, though, because it allowed me the opportunity to say yes or no. I had never driven a stock car when I said yes to driving stock cars for on a limited time basis. So I'm glad that I took that time and started slow.

THERESA WERNER: If you had never driven stock cars before, why did you decide to make this your transition and do that full-time?

DANICA PATRICK: Well, we work in deals. So I had a two-year deal to do part-time NASCAR, part-time/full-time Indy Car. And, after those two years, it had really proven to me that I love driving stock cars. I really get excited when I get in the car. And I look forward to racing it. I am nervous, but I'm-- I'd say that it's gone from, like, this much excited and this much nervous to, like, this much nervous and this much excited. So, it's a much more of a-- to me it's more of an excited feeling.

And the racing is a lot of fun. I feel like I'm tapping into my childhood again when I go back to the years when I had bumpers. And I could get aggressive. And I feel like it gets my blood boiling in a good way.

THERESA WERNER: What's the biggest difference between the lead-in weekends to the Daytona 500 and the Indianapolis 500?

DANICA PATRICK: They're very similar, in the sense that they're both really enormous events. Indy, the Indy 500 is not the first race of the year, which obviously, this is our first race of the year. But we would be there for a couple of weeks. And we didn't kick off the month with a bunch of media like we do here. But there was definitely a lot of media throughout.

And there was probably a little bit more track activity at the Indy 500 than we might get here. But we get more opportunities to race and learn about the car in NASCAR. So that's really nice, because that's what we're actually going to be doing on Sunday is racing. But they're huge events. And what you feel is the long tradition. You feel the history. You feel the importance, the significance.

And just, it really gets every driver to a point that they really, really want to win the race, more than just showing up on a Thursday or Friday and doing the race weekend. Whenever you put a lot into something, I feel like I want to do well even more. And this is one of those events.

THERESA WERNER: How do you prepare physically and mentally for the rigors of driving in a race?

DANICA PATRICK: I just sleep a lot. [laughter] Sleep is good though. I'm pretty good at it. I'd say like eight or nine hours minimum, every night. You're going to say that's why I look so young, right? [laughter] I'm 40. No-- It's-- You know, it's always important. You know, diet and working out is important. I was up early in the gym this morning. And it's part of my life. It's good to feel at your best. And what I never want to happen is to get in the car and get tired at any point, because there's so little that we can control as drivers, that the last thing that I want to do is let myself down in an area that I am able to control.

And I do it to feel good about myself, too. It makes me feel better to be healthy and to be fit. And it makes me look better in the Go Daddy commercials. [laughter]

THERESA WERNER: You said you got up this morning and worked out. So what is an example of your everyday workout routine?

DANICA PATRICK: I lift weights about three or four days a week. And I do sort of anywhere from 20 to 45 minutes of cardio, pretty much every day. So this morning I did 30 minutes of cardio. And I did a lower body lift today. So it was pretty quick. It only took about 10 minutes. And with the lower body, if you keep after it, it keeps the heart rate up pretty good. So I was-- I needed to hurry and get pretty for you guys. So I could have drawn it out a little longer, but I didn't.

THERESA WERNER: How much weight do you lose in a typical race?

DANICA PATRICK: Not enough. [laughter] It's funny. I hear from some drivers that they get out of the car and take the suit off, and they're like, "Man!" They're all lean and ripped. And I'm like, "I don't get that at all." [laughter] So maybe I'm drinking too much fluids. I know you sweat a lot. These cars are much hotter than what I'm used to. Obviously, with Indy Cars, it's open cockpit. Now, I mean, if you go outside and go running around and working out, which is kind of what we're doing in the car, you're going to sweat.

But, in a stock car, I've heard it's 140 or so degrees. Does anyone really know what the stat is? Should I get a thermometer? My watch has a thermometer. I should put it in the car. Is that about right, 140? So I think it's been at least 200 at times for me. But, if you say 140, fine. [laughter]

THERESA WERNER: You mentioned your image and looking good for the Go Daddy commercials, and never worrying about you are a woman, and you want that to be known. Do you find it hard being taken seriously in a man's world, when you're using your sex appeal to promote your career?

DANICA PATRICK: Well, in this day and age-- and I've said this for a long time-- it's about the package. It's about, can you drive? Can you speak? I guess the jury is out on that today, isn't it? [laughter] Can you talk to media? Can you meet sponsors? Can you meet CEOs and Presidents of companies? And, can you be featured in ad campaigns and on commercials?

And it's a whole package deal. And so, I am going to use the package. I am going to use it for all that I-- all that I can, and all that I am. And the things that I do are never outside of my comfort zone. If they are, I say, "I'm not doing it." And so, I'm really fortunate that, for me, I am able to show different sides of my personality through different kinds of things that I'm able to do as a racecar driver, outside of the car.

And so, for me, that's a lot of fun. I very much enjoy shooting commercials and getting made up all pretty. And it takes the team at least two hours, but I would rather you see me in photo shop than right here, right now, in real life. But it's something that I like to do. I enjoy being a girl, and that's probably what some people don't know about me, is how much I like being a girl away from the track, and that I can dress up a little bit. But, at the track, I'm usually pretty minimal, because that's the environment. I'm there to drive a racecar. I'm not there to show you my techniques on putting mascara on, and how nice it stays all day. I'm there to drive the car.

THERESA WERNER: You have broken into a male dominated sport. What lessons have you learned in breaking the racing glass ceiling?

DANICA PATRICK: I never set out to break any ceilings, to be honest. I was taught, from a young age, as I said, to be the best, and to work hard for that. And so, I never set any of those intentions of being the first girl to do things. About the only stat that I ever knew was that no woman's won an Indy Car. And I know no woman has won a NASCAR. But I would like those.

But, other than that, the things that just tend to happen as I go along, I had no idea that, when I finished fourth at Las Vegas last year, that that was the highest female in NASCAR history. I didn't know that. I find out about these things after. Because my goal is not to be the best girl, my goal is to be the best driver.

THERESA WERNER: Are you friendly with any other women drivers that are currently racing in NASCAR's other divisions? And do you feel that you are a mentor to them?

DANICA PATRICK: Yeah. I mean I think some girls are friendly, some are probably less friendly. I mean, I might be one that's less friendly, who knows. So I think

that, in passing, sometimes there are girls that you get to know. But let's face it, there's not a ton of them. So, when you go to the race track on the weekends, as a driver, I show up for what I need to show up at the beginning of the day, which is usually a rookie meeting these days for me. And then, I get in the car, and I go out and race. And I talk to my crew chief at the end of the day, and then I go back to my bus and get ready for the next day.

So, I have a hard time, sometimes, even seeing my teammates. But there are a lot of drivers that I get along well with, whether they're a guy or a girl, to be honest. I've been exposed to men my whole life. I feel like they're nothing-- they're nothing uncommon or difficult for me to deal with.

THERESA WERNER: Of all the NASCAR tracks you have not raced on, which one do you look most forward to competing on, and why?

DANICA PATRICK: Well, I can tell you one I'm not really looking forward to, and that's Darlington. I have a feeling that's going to be a handful. And maybe I'm speaking like I'm-- this one might be blowing over the heads. But apparently, that's a really tough track. So who knows? Maybe I'll get on with it.

I'm looking forward to going to Indy in a stock car, to be honest. I think that's going to be really cool. I'm really excited to see how an Indy-- how it feels versus an Indy Car. So I'm looking forward to that. I'm actually looking forward to going to Talladega. I don't know if any of you guys are race fans and you go to Talladega. But, apparently, it's a pretty great fanfest. So I might have to throw a hat on and drive the golf cart around outside and check out the tiki bars. But it's always fun to be a part of big events that have lots of fans there. Because, at the end of the day, as I learned from my Visa to go to Japan, under job it said "entertainer." So we are entertainers. [laughter] So hope you're entertained.

THERESA WERNER: Your racing career has taken you to some incredible places. Do you have a favorite?

DANICA PATRICK: I've always loved Japan. My husband and I, he goes with me to every race. And we just love going over there, the culture, the people, the food even-- not all of it, but most of it. And obviously, I've had great success there. And so, I love Japan. I love Indy. I mean, that's a great track. And I love Daytona. I just love big events, to be honest with you. It just brings out an extra something, I feel like, in me, just knowing how much is on the line that weekend.

THERESA WERNER: Indy cars are much faster than NASCAR. Will you miss that speed?

DANICA PATRICK: When I'm side-by-side with somebody and can't pull away from them, heck yeah, I'm going to miss that speed. [laughter] But no, I think there's other things. For me, I've never raced for speed. Some people, you know, I think a

common answer, they maybe love to go fast. I do love to go fast. But, as long as it's just faster than the rest of them. So, if we were doing 100, I'd be glad to do that, if everyone else was doing 99. So speed has never been my thing. So I don't mind going fast. But just my goal is to be faster than the rest, whatever that is.

THERESA WERNER: What would constitute a success for you in NASCAR?

DANICA PATRICK: Winning. [laughter] Hopefully-- You didn't think I was going to answer any differently on that one. I know it's a process, and I know it takes time. And I know that-- I know I have a lot to learn. And I'm still going to make plenty of beautiful mistakes, I'm sure. But it's about getting to victory lane, and it's about running up front, and it's about earning the respect of my peers and competitors around me. And, as I learned from a young age, I do better when I have more fun. So, to have fun-- why not, right? I can have fun, even though it's my job.

THERESA WERNER: And you talked about the other drivers. Who do you think are the three most talented drivers you'll compete against in the Sprint Cup Series this year?

DANICA PATRICK: There's a lot more than three. Well, I mean, I think the first name that has to be said must be Tony Stewart, who is my boss on the Sprint Cup side of things. He won the championship last year in high style. So, if anybody watched the championship, I doubt you will have been bored at any of that. So I think that obviously, he's pretty good.

Kyle Bush is pretty good. He won the other night in the Bud shootout. And he did it in style as well, almost crashing the car a couple of times, to come back. And, unfortunately, slingshot right by my boss and teammate, Tony Stewart. And then, I mean, I guess he got-- I mean, there are lots of them. So please, drivers, don't get mad if I didn't say your name. But obviously, Carl Edwards is pretty good too. He ran with Tony Stewart for the championship last year, and came up a little short.

THERESA WERNER: You talked about, in your go-cart, your very first experience of crashing into a concrete building. What are some of the other scariest crashes you have been in?

DANICA PATRICK: I kind of purposely left it out of the story of my first year in Indy Car, because it didn't make the story flow real pretty. But, my first race in Indy Cars had quite a big accident. I was running top ten in my first Indy Car race. And things were going fine. And there was a restart at the end of the race that turned into quite a bit of crashing. And I was going underneath the accident to miss it, and a car had a broken suspension and was slowly coming down the track, and just clipped my right rear corner, and shot me up into the wall head first.

And, from that point on, I don't really remember much. I just remember waking up in the medical center to an absolutely blaringly bright light, and looking up. And my

mom came up over my head, and a priest came up over my head. [laughter] And I looked over at my mom, and I said, “Mom, what happened?” She said, “You just had a little accident, honey. You're going to be fine.” And then I went to feel my legs, to make sure I could feel them. And I took a trip to the hospital. So there was-- I was very redundant. I was asking the same question over and over again on the ride over to the hospital. So I shut up, and then I got to go home.

THERESA WERNER: How do you decide which sponsors to accept?

DANICA PATRICK: Good question. There are always lots of factors that come into a partnership with somebody. First and foremost, does the brand fit? There's plenty of times that I have said no to brands that just don't fit and just aren't me. And I don't think it's believable to my fan base that I would be partners with somebody. So, I have definitely said no, much to my agent's disappointment. But that is always the first thing to consider.

Then, it's, you know, some people want the moon. And they want you to work lots and lots and lots and lots of days for them. And, unfortunately, sometimes there's just not time. There's really just not time to do as much as a sponsor needs, to justify their partnership.

And then, for me, it's always-- I've always found, and I've learned this through experience, is having partners that are ready to do an ad campaign, and ready to do a print campaign or a commercial, and ready to use me. Because, if they don't use me, one, that's a waste, because you're buying the opportunity to do that. And so, when you don't, then you don't get ROI. (Look at that. I slipped in a smart word. Or letters, I should say.) [laughter] So, you know, they don't have any return on their investment. And, all of a sudden, the sponsor goes away.

So the best partnerships are the ones where they have a plan for media and for advertising. And then, they start to get some return on their investment based on using my platform and my brand and my followers and fans to generate more business for them. So, having great partners is very important.

THERESA WERNER: Do you have any funny stories to go with your Go Daddy.com commercial shoots?

DANICA PATRICK: It's all funny. I don't know. I'll tell you what. These girls are troopers that are not wearing what Jillian and I are wearing. No, you know, we always try and have a good time. Bob always shows up, Bob Parsons, who owns the company, recently has investors involved. But I always said that we should do a little funny thing where you, like, “Find Bob” like “Where's Waldo,” because he's in every commercial at some point in time.

But, you know, the commercial where we were doing a contract, and it wasn't the first contract one last year, which is where we had to have these big Go Daddy balloons

on us, basically, and we had to do a funny dance. It was the one after that, where he was trying to get me into a bikini bull riding and all kinds of really funny things. I just couldn't stop laughing. That guy was so funny. So I just have a lot of fun with the people that they get involved for their commercials. They're genuinely funny.

THERESA WERNER: Have you and Jillian become friends?

DANICA PATRICK: Yeah, yeah. Jillian is a really cool, really nice girl. She's pretty intense, as you could guess. But she's really nice. And my husband and I recently went to South Africa for a vacation. And so, she had just come back from South Africa. And she had gone to a lot of the places that we went. So I got some advice from her on where to go and what to do. But she's a good character.

Her and I, I think, play well together in the commercials. And we recognize the ability to-- how great it is when we have a little fun with it and try and get you to laugh a little.

THERESA WERNER: You talked a lot about the media role in your career. Have you felt they've been fair or unfair in your career?

DANICA PATRICK: A whole lot of both, I think. And I think that's probably typical in every company and every brand and with every-- with any kind of situation, really, anything unique. There's always going to be people that are going to focus on the positive. And there's always going to be people that are going to focus on the negative. And people are going to build it up, and some people are going to try and break it down.

And I think that's exciting. I don't mind it at all. We can-- Freedom of speech. So, if you want to write an article that's negative, well I might not give you a one-on-one interview, and do an interview for you. But I recognize that it's part of what's great about our country, and part of what makes it interesting for the general public to read.

Not everyone is a fan of me, and I get that. And that's fine. You don't have to be a fan of me. I do like it if you're a fan of racing, because then you're involved. But, you know, I like to see somebody with a Danica Patrick shirt on up in the stands, standing next to a Carl Edwards shirt or a Tony Stewart shirt, that they can have some fun banter up in the stands and cheer for their driver. And that's what makes it interesting.

THERESA WERNER: Do you hope to go into films or TV one day? And, if you did, would you do a serious film or a spoof like *Talladega Nights*? [laughter]

DANICA PATRICK: Well, I'm not really very funny. And I'm not super-duper pretty. So I think that I-- I don't know. I think I'd rather be on the other side of the camera. I think, for me, I always, especially with the-- I mostly get exposed to commercials-- I love being on the other side of the camera, and seeing it from their perspective, and looking at the image and the whole set together, and how it comes together. And the balance of it, and the delivery of lines. And I'd probably get too

involved, according to some. But I enjoy that part of it. I don't know, I almost feel like it's a little bit more artistic.

But, would I like to do a little walk-on part or something like that? Yeah, sure. I was in *CSI: New York*, I think it was last year or the year before, as I was-- I played a racecar driver, as you could imagine, which was nice. It was nice. There's a lot of standing around, a lot of standing around, and then go. And a lot of standing around, and then go. And they're long days. But I think that the more things that we can get exposed to as people, the more well-rounded we are, and better perspective we have for all of it.

THERESA WERNER: Did you play any other sports growing up?

DANICA PATRICK: Yeah, I did. I played a lot of different sports. Some of them weren't even sports. I was a cheerleader. I played basketball, volleyball, band, choir, track, tumbling. I played tee ball when I was a kid, then coach pitch. So I played a lot of different sports when I was a kid. But obviously, you know, and I think that's part of what got me to where I am today, is that my parents were open to me trying new things.

And they weren't scared for me. I mean, Lord knows, they could have been scared for me being a racecar driver, right. And I used to hear that lot when I was a kid, about a kid's mom not wanting them to be out there. And they thought it was dangerous. But I didn't get that from my parents. So I'm really fortunate. I came from a very open-minded family and a family that thought it was good to try new things. So I'm sure that that's why I'm-- partly because I'm a racecar driver.

THERESA WERNER: Okay, so you kind of mentioned it. There are some questions about whether NASCAR or racecar drivers are real athletes. What do you have to say to that?

DANICA PATRICK: [laughter] Are we trying to see who can lift the heaviest dumbbell? No. Are we seeing who can sprint the fastest? No. But, do we need to be in shape so it doesn't take away from our driving and our focus because it does end up getting to your focus? Yeah, absolutely. Obviously, it's very hot in the car. Your heart rate is elevated the whole time. So, you know, you need to be on your toes, and you need to be sharp. And you can't let anything take away from that.

So, I've heard stories about drivers in NASCAR having their power steering going out. And I fear for that day, because when I went out here at Daytona for qualifying, I'm like, "The steering is really heavy. Is that normal?" And they're like, "Oh, it'll be easier again for the race." So I thought, "Good, because that would be hard to deal with."

But yeah, I mean Indy Car was a little bit of a different physical demand. There's no power steering in that. So, if anybody has ever ran out of gas, you know what that feels like, as your power steering goes out. So it's a handful. So there was a little bit more peak physical strength needed in an Indy Car. But in stock cars, you need some more

endurance, as these races are at least three days long, sometimes I think, at least that's what they seem like. So, you know, they're going to be anywhere from two and a half hours to, I suppose, four and a half hours or so, maybe even five at times.

THERESA WERNER: After a race, which parts of you ache the most?

DANICA PATRICK: Usually my ego. [laughter] That takes the biggest hit first. And then, after that, I suppose that you could always go to the back. I'm usually like, "Hey Hun," actually this morning, "Babe, my neck is pinching a little. Can you just rub on that a little bit?" So, we obviously have a lot of sort of this movement right here. So I really hope that doesn't get taken out of context or anything, but a funny picture. [laughter] I should stop doing it. But we have a lot of repetitive motion. And obviously, your forearms, from the death grip, are another thing that gets a little bit fatigued. So you do have to take care of those things with regular massages, weekly. [laughter]

THERESA WERNER: Do you feel you have an unfair advantage because you're smaller than your male racing counterparts, so that your car can go faster?

DANICA PATRICK: Do you see how small I am? [laughter] How can that be great? They actually always say that drivers being small made it so much better to be a racecar driver. And I really haven't found a lot of those kinds of opportunities. It is a pain in the butt to fit me in a car. I am like just that little bit too small, that the pedals don't quite reach me. And the gear shifter doesn't quite reach me.

And then, I can't see over the wheel. So, you know, where I get into a car, and it's pretty much in its most-- I'm talking about a rental or anything-- The car is about as high as it can go and about as far forward as it can go. So fitting cars is always quite a challenge.

And beyond that, if there was really an unfair advantage to being lighter, then you know, I would have gone out and won every race in Indy Car. So, you know, that didn't happen. So, it boils down to a lot more than just carrying an extra few pounds or so. And it comes down to how you-- how you are on restarts, how you are at getting through traffic, how your team performs on the pit stop. I suppose whether or not I pull into my pit box straight, and having that fire to get through the pack and try and win the race.

THERESA WERNER: How involved are you in the business aspect of racing and your brand?

DANICA PATRICK: I'm very involved. I mean, I will say that I'm told that I'm one of those athletes that wants to be involved. Now my agents would probably know better, but that's who it comes from. Some athletes don't want to know anything. And some people want to know a lot. And apparently, I'm one of those that want to know a lot. It's important. I have always prided myself on authenticity and being real. And so, for me, if I'm not doing things that are believable, and partnering up with the right people,

and doing the right kinds of events, then to me it's not doing any favors for my brand. So I like to be very involved probably bother my agents too much.

THERESA WERNER: How are you preparing for Sunday's Daytona 500? Do you have any pre-race rituals?

DANICA PATRICK: I'm usually really nervous before a race. So I never want to eat. I tell you, for those of you who think about eating when you're nervous, no, it's not good. Chicken doesn't look good. It just doesn't look good. So I usually eat eggs and toast. That's the most common meal, probably, before a race, as it's easy on the stomach. Think about when we're sick, that's what we eat.

So, but for the most part, it's a pretty, pretty similar routine. I try to not break it. I mean, I sleep about the same amount every night. And I don't try and go to bed any earlier. And I drink my standard two cups of coffee in the morning, and have my traditional breakfast or lunch, and get out there. You know, for me, it's about preparing throughout the weekend and working with my crew chief, or watching some old in-car races to see what it looks like from a driver's perspective, or some old race broadcasts. But, you know, I think when you're not prepared is when you get the most nervous. And so, I just try and prepare as best as possible.

THERESA WERNER: Do you have a prediction for one, two and three on Sunday?

DANICA PATRICK: Well, I sure as heck hope I'm one. I know it's my first Sprint Cup Race. So I don't want to set expectations too high. But I think that-- I think it's going to be interesting. Obviously, those of you-- Did you guys watch last year? Or watch? Never mind. [laughter] We're bringing back some old style racing, which is going to make it exciting for you. So, go ahead and watch this Sunday. And, you know, it's brought back big packs of racing, lots of cars packed into a very small amount of space.

And so, you're more likely to have bigger accidents when that happens, because you can't get the heck out of the way quick enough. So, you know, something might happen to you on race day that was out of your control. And you just weren't able to avoid it. And you might have been the fastest car in the race that was going to win at the end. But guess what. Your day is over.

So, on these kinds of races, where a lot can happen, and a lot of drivers have an opportunity to do well, it's-- you never really know who's going to do it. Obviously, last year we had a surprise win from Trevor Bane, who just had his 21st birthday the other day. And he kind of rocked the world and won the Daytona 500. So I think that's what's so exciting about this race, is that anything can happen.

THERESA WERNER: Well, before we get to the last question, we want to present you with our official National Press Club coffee mug, so that it can help you get started in the morning for your races.

DANICA PATRICK: This will be my new coffee cup. Thank you. [laughter]

THERESA WERNER: And I want to let you know about upcoming speakers that we have coming to the National Press Club. On April 4th we have Deepak Chopra will be speaking. On April the 19th we have Alec Baldwin coming. And I want to thank the National Press Club staff, the broadcast center, and the National Press Club Institute for all their help in organizing this luncheon.

And I do have one more quick question for Danica. I want to know if you've ever had a speeding ticket or if you find it difficult to drive slowly on the interstate. [laughter]

DANICA PATRICK: You know, I've got this question a couple of times lately. And I was doing some events for Nationwide Insurance, which is my insurance carrier. So I thought this was a very difficult question to answer. The answer is yes, obviously. And I think that it qualifies me for the job even more. [laughter]

[applause]

THERESA WERNER: Thanks all of you for joining us today. And I want to thank Danica Patrick and wish her good luck on Sunday. We are adjourned.

[gavel]

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