

NTT IndyCar Series News Conference

Saturday, August 15, 2020
Indianapolis, Indiana, USA



Marco Andretti

Andretti Autosport

Alexander Rossi

Andretti Autosport

Press Conference

THE MODERATOR: We are joined by Alexander Rossi. Thanks for joining us. You finished third today and compete tomorrow in the Fast Nine for the pole. Talk about your laps today, what you're expecting for tomorrow.

ALEXANDER ROSSI: Yeah, they were great. Obviously the whole Andretti Autosport was spectacular today. That's a huge testament to the team. To get that many cars that fast is a big undertaking, a big challenge. It was a good day for all of us.

Obviously it's going to be critical tomorrow to put four even quicker laps down if you want to get the pole. But nonetheless, it's great to be in the Fast Nine. Honda has done a phenomenal job this year. It's all coming to fruition here at the biggest race in the world.

Pleased with today and looking forward to the challenge tomorrow.

THE MODERATOR: We'll take questions from the media for Alexander.

Q. Can you describe a bit about the temperatures on track today and also have you had any issues with the Aeroscreen in terms of overheating?

ALEXANDER ROSSI: No, I mean, not here. Indianapolis from a physicality standpoint is pretty low on the list. It's been totally fine. If you're going this quick, you have a lot of forced air going in your helmet at 230 miles an hour.

The Aeroscreen has been great from a visibility standpoint. It's been pretty invisible in terms of car balance. It changes a little bit, but ultimately it's not that big of a deal.

I think the biggest thing is in traffic you can definitely feel there's a bigger weight from the car. It will be interesting

how that races here in a week. For qualifying it's all good.

Yeah, I mean, we've been steadily kind of progressing through the week, going through our program. We always knew we were in a good position from a speed standpoint. It was good to execute that today.

Q. How beneficial is it to have James Hinchcliffe in the field with you as well?

ALEXANDER ROSSI: We have a lot of data points now with six cars. James has been very successful here in the past, obviously pole in 2016. Yeah, it's been great. He's been a great addition. Obviously brings a lot of energy and excitement to the engineering room.

THE MODERATOR: We've been joined by Marco Andretti. Marco, you've been fast all week. You ended up on top of the board today and will compete in tomorrow's Fast Nine. Tell us about your day today.

MARCO ANDRETTI: It was a steady day. I mean, the one-and-done things are always nice. It was tough to see Colton have to do what I had to do a couple years ago, or last year, too. Dixon kept trying. It's not fun to have to go do this a few times. We executed on the first time, so my goal is to do the same thing tomorrow.

THE MODERATOR: We'll continue with questions.

Q. What does it say about Andretti Autosport that you guys were pretty consistent, especially the four of you at the top?

ALEXANDER ROSSI: As I kind of alluded to before, it's crazy to have this many cars and have all of them be competitive. Obviously we had some teammates that had little issues here and there. To be one through four after day one of qualifying is pretty unheard of.

Huge shout out to the team, everyone here, back at the shop. It's a huge effort to get this done. They got it done today. And Honda as well.

Very excited about what this potentially means tomorrow.

Q. Do you go tomorrow as teammates or is it one for all tomorrow?

ASAP sports . . . when all is said, we're done.®

MARCO ANDRETTI: I told Ryan, don't even come to my side of the garage (laughter).

No, we got to work together because there's other guys we have to beat as well. It's going to be about little things. It's going to be about getting every downshift right, every shift right, everything we have to do inside the car, the balance. It's going to be what it's going to be.

Q. Alex, this hasn't been the season that Andretti has wanted. You're winless. I know it's just qualifying, but Michael Andretti was on earlier talking about how encouraging it was to see everybody working together. Is this kind of a marker maybe in the season?

ALEXANDER ROSSI: Indy is very independent of every other race for a lot of different reasons. I think some of our struggles this year won't necessarily show up at Indianapolis. I think this team's always been incredibly strong here regardless of the circumstances. At least since I've joined the team, that's been a standout feature.

I think it's awesome in terms of motivation for all of us. We need to make sure that we use that tomorrow and next weekend, make sure an Andretti car wins the race for sure.

But then it's immediately to Gateway and we still have our own issues and stuff to resolve. Just because we have hopefully a good month of August here at Indy doesn't necessarily mean everything is going to be perfect for St. Louis.

Q. Marco, your dad was talking about he was blown away by your first lap, but almost as impressed by your last two laps. Walk us through what those laps were like.

MARCO ANDRETTI: Yeah, no, I think the first one it's always what Honda is going to bring, whatever we can do when the tires are new. The last two, it's what we get paid to do. We were all over the tools. We were a bit neutral in the last two laps. I think there's speed in that if we can fix the balance, slide a little bit less the last two laps. Might be some speed in that as well.

Hopefully we can make the right move when it counts.

Q. Marco, when we had the draw for qualifying spots yesterday, you ended up 28th. Were you surprised to be able to put down the fastest time of the day given where you ran?

MARCO ANDRETTI: Yeah, I mean, I wasn't worried. I knew if we executed we would be top nine contenders,

which is the goal of today. After tonight, ninth place is equal to me. But then I think P1, I'm not sure about that.

It made me feel good. Made me feel if we can replicate it tomorrow, find a little bit, we can capitalize.

Q. Marco, how surprised were you that not only your Honda was dominant, but most everybody in a Honda was dominant?

MARCO ANDRETTI: I don't think 'surprised' is the word. I'm impressed. Shows the hard work they've been doing. It's a lot of credit to them really because horsepower means a lot around this place. That's always the first hurdle of I want to say May, but of August, is having speed. From there it's about making yourself comfortable and everything like that and circumstances.

Q. Alex, there's a lot of big names that we're used to seeing qualifying in the Fast Nine, running up front at Indy that are mired very deep in the back of the field. How surprised are you by that? Some of the Team Penske drivers, they're going to be coming up from the back of the pack.

ALEXANDER ROSSI: Yeah, I mean, I'd like them to be further back, to be honest. I think they're really strong cars. Qualifying is a completely separate challenge to the race. In some ways it's harder, in some ways it's easier.

I think we've obviously shown our strength. I think they're good racecars, obviously great drivers, a team more than capable of winning the event.

Just because we're starting up front doesn't mean we have an easy race day ahead of us by any means. It definitely makes your life a little bit easier.

For sure it's good to start up front, but we can't rest on our laurels. 500 miles, seven pit stops. A lot of work.

Q. How confident are you in your race setups?

MARCO ANDRETTI: I think I'm one change away from being really good. But it's just about the formula. I think it's going to come down to track position and qualifying, in-and-out laps, pit stops, everything you can do to stay up front. To get up front first, we don't want to qualify ninth. We have to execute one day at a time. If we can do that, hopefully we can stay there.

ALEXANDER ROSSI: I'm not at all yet (smiling). But we'll get there. We're dealing with qualifying first. We'll cross the traffic running tomorrow afternoon, deal with that when the time comes.

We've struggled to get into the window we need to. We've got about three and a half hours, four hours left to get it done. I'm more than confident among the six cars that we have here at Andretti Autosport, we'll be able to piece it together.

Q. Marco, what kind of bounce in your step does it add to be the fastest guy on the lot today as you leave?

MARCO ANDRETTI: It's one day. I know how this place is, right? It's almost like starting over every day. That's what we'll do. We'll start over tomorrow and we'll hopefully just continue the speed and continue to improve.

Yeah, it's always good to be quick. Horsepower is a big thing around here, right? The good thing about today is the pit selection, we get to pick first. That actually makes a difference in the race, if you pick the right position.

Q. Your dad made a comment today that he really believes if you get the lead, anybody who gets the lead, it's going to be hard for somebody to run you down. Do you agree with that?

MARCO ANDRETTI: It's more track position, like I said earlier. It's going to be tougher to pass than in years past. I don't know. It's track position. We're going to have to execute on everything else other than just staying up front.

Q. With the condensed schedules, it's been hard to communicate between sessions. Three days of practice pretty much. There's more time in between sessions to share data. Have you been able to take advantage of that?

ALEXANDER ROSSI: It's been a lot more practice than we've had at all the other events. It's been great actually. I don't know.

Indy, yes, it's one day less than we've had in years past, but ultimately it's long days. You have six hours of track time. It's more than enough to kind of overlay everything and kind of learn and talk to the others. I don't think that's been an issue for us at all.

Q. Same for you, Marco?

ALEXANDER ROSSI: Say yes (laughter).

MARCO ANDRETTI: I can't hear anything (laughter).

Q. Has the buildup to qualifying been something you picked out and made an effort on in the shop?

Obviously you want to be quick in qualifying, but a specific effort on it this year, more than usual?

MARCO ANDRETTI: I think we have to give some credit to Honda. You have to look at the split right there. That makes our life a lot easier when we roll off with the roll-off speed. I think it's that in combination with rubbing on the cars as much as they've been doing.

Yeah, the shop preparation, as Alex touched on. It's a combination of a lot of things. It's not just one thing.

Q. Alex, rolling the cars out of the garage today, seeing the pace all four of you had, did you think this was possible today?

ALEXANDER ROSSI: Yeah, 100%. I think we were getting a lot of questions Wednesday, Friday night, about where we were on the time sheets. This team only looks at one thing, and that's the no tow report. We knew we had fast racecars, were getting to our test plan as we wanted to, just making improvements every day.

We knew it was possible. It's always a challenge to actually go out and do it for four laps. I wasn't surprised. I was glad that as many of us were able to get it done as we did, I guess I'd say.

Q. Do you think pole is possible for yourself tomorrow?

ALEXANDER ROSSI: Yeah, I think we have a shot at it, for sure.

Q. Marco, looking at Scott Dixon towards the end of today, looked like he was on his way to a pretty monstrous final miles-an-hour time. Any worry on your side from that?

MARCO ANDRETTI: No. I mean, he kind of showed us. He showed us what you can do if you trim it out, right?

I've been saying it since we started: lap three and four, that's going to make the difference. Yeah, I think we can lay the wing down and go fast the first couple laps. But I think it's about all four obviously, the average.

Yeah, I mean, he's going to be one to beat of course tomorrow.

Q. Marco, as much success as your family has had here, how much is it weighing on you you haven't had a win since 2011?

MARCO ANDRETTI: Yeah, I mean, I don't know. Alex



kind of said it. This race is like a championship in itself. We've run well here, excluding last year basically.

Yeah, I mean, does it weigh on me? Absolutely. I'm a competitor. I don't like not being victorious. Yeah, I mean, that's not what I wake up in the morning and think about. Tomorrow I'm going to try to get the pole at the Indy 500.

Q. Marco, you did your run earlier, about 1:15, about the same time as the Fast Nine tomorrow. Scott Dixon is the only other one that ran at that time. Does that give you confidence for tomorrow?

MARCO ANDRETTI: It was only five degrees track temp off of mine. It was a very respectable run. It's going to come down to execution across our cars, really the top nine. Whoever puts it together is going to be looking good.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you so much Marco Andretti and Alexander Rossi for joining us this afternoon. Good luck in the Fast Nine.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports