

NTT IndyCar Series News Conference

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Dalton Kellett

A.J. Foyt Enterprises
Press Conference

THE MODERATOR: Good afternoon, everybody. Welcome to another NTT INDYCAR Series video teleconference with a driver from the series. We are joined today by the driver of the No. 14 K-Line USA for A.J. Foyt Racing, Dalton Kellett.

Dalton, welcome to the call.

DALTON KELLETT: Thanks, Arni.

THE MODERATOR: We're headed to a place you're pretty familiar with, the Mid-Ohio Sports Car Course. Raced there a lot in the Road to Indy, maybe an IMSA race there. How excited are you to get back to a road course?

DALTON KELLETT: Yeah, I'm really excited. The pacing of this year has been a bit different, right, with big breaks, the staccato rhythm of how the races have been going. A big focus was the 500. We're through that.

At least on my calendar, we have two doubleheaders left. Pretty exciting to get back to developing the road course car, working on that again.

I didn't do the IMSA race. I did Mosport, Laguna.

THE MODERATOR: What do you find as the biggest challenge to a track like Mid-Ohio? There's a lot of undulations, some of the corners are pretty technical.

DALTON KELLETT: Yeah, I think in and of itself the layout is quite technical and challenging. There's a lot of rhythm sections where you have the setup and entry at the start of the section affects the entire string of corners. An example would be turn five through turn nine. You can even make the case that turn four through turn nine is really one big rhythm section. If you kind of make a mistake in that turn five or six area, it's going to affect you all the way out of turn nine.

I think that makes it challenging, but it makes it really fun. I

tend to prefer tracks like that. I'll take a Mid-Ohio that's go, go, go, no break, over Road America. I just prefer that flow. This weekend, especially with the doubleheader, it's going to be physically challenging, as well.

THE MODERATOR: Difficult season for you anyway with the way the schedule worked out with you and Sebastien and Tony sharing the 14 car. You really haven't had a chance to drive the 14 car much since June when Road America happened. How have you been preparing yourself for road course racing?

DALTON KELLETT: Staying up to date with the home sim right there. Staying up to date with the sim on iRacing. Been on the training side physically preparing really hard with the Pit.Fit guys, mentally kind of doing some visualization, looking at old onboard, going over stuff with the team. Kind of that standard quiver of tools that we have to stay sharp.

Without testing, obviously it's a challenging season. Looking forward to getting on track.

THE MODERATOR: We have some media on the call with questions. We'll open it up for questions for Dalton Kellett.

Q. Obviously with the truncated schedule this season, what have you learnt this year that you can take forward for the rest of the season but also into next year? In terms of the road courses, what are you most looking forward to about the challenges of Mid-Ohio this weekend?

DALTON KELLETT: So I think, yeah, the answer to the first part of your question, what I learnt the most, kind of a nod to the condensed schedule, it's really highlighted the importance of being accurate and kind of correct with your feedback with the engineers because we don't have the time to develop the car as we normally would on a race weekend. We practically have no testing. The importance of being kind of correct and giving good, honest feedback has been highlighted, for sure.

As far as what I think, the second part of your question, what am I looking forward to this race?

Q. In relation to Mid-Ohio.

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DALTON KELLETT: Yeah, so as far as Mid-Ohio is concerned, I really like the flow of the track. It's fast-paced. You don't really get much of a break, maybe between the keyhole and turn four, take a bit of a breather. The rest of the track is go, go, go. I really like that. For me, this is one of my favorite road courses.

On a normal year, there's a lot of fans camping here, the atmosphere of the race. Being back with 6,000 fans per day, it will be exciting to reconnect with the race fans and see that coming back, as well.

Q. In terms of the car, what are you expecting this weekend?

DALTON KELLETT: In terms of the car, obviously it's been a while since we've been on a road course. The engineers have been doing a lot of work on the setup side, dampers, suspension package, all that. I think we'll start the weekend pretty similar on the 4 and 14 cars, then we each have some testing items to work through, kind of decide on the balance we want for the race.

I'm hoping that we'll roll off with a good package. Matheus has some quick times with practice last year, so I'm optimistic.

Q. This is your first year in INDYCAR full-time. You've had many experiences through the years with different teams. What is interesting or new that you're finding out being with A.J. Foyt?

DALTON KELLETT: So for A.J. specifically, the first race that he came to this year was Indy. Obviously that's a place where he has a lot of experience, more so than I think anybody else. He had lots of great advice to give, especially as a rookie at the Speedway. That was really useful.

For the rest of the team, the rest of the races, we have not just A.J., but between T.K., Charlie, Seb at the start of the year, the rest of the organization, there's a lot of experience there. It's been very useful for me to kind of lean on the more experienced guys to help me get up to speed.

Q. What new or interesting things have you learned from A.J. Foyt Enterprises over Andretti Autosport or other teams? Is there one new thing?

DALTON KELLETT: Obviously with Andretti, I didn't really have too much experience on the INDYCAR side, aside from a couple half-day tests. It's hard to comment on their workflow, base structure things. I know the size of the team probably lent itself to a bit more, like, communal

debriefs. They have an engineering truck and all that, whereas we're operating out of our two trailers.

The way the team works, it's a bit different, a bit smaller feeling overall, more time spent with me and my engineer, just me and Charlie, as opposed to a big group. I've enjoyed that.

I think one thing that we're doing really well this year is the engineering team that Larry and Scott have put together for the two cars, for the three at the 500, has been very strong. There's been no egos, no team driver drama on the inside. We're all just working really hard to make the cars better, kind of raise all of our tides kind of thing. It's been a great working environment so far.

Q. You've been working with Darren Manning for a few years now. Tell us how that relationship came about and how he helped you become a better driver.

DALTON KELLETT: The start of Darren and I working together goes back to when I was at Andretti. At the time Poppy - not my dog - Dave Popielarz at Andretti was managing Lights the team. It was Shelby and I and Dean Stoneman that year. We were basically looking to kind of bring on a team driver coach, like a third set of eyes kind of thing. We tried out a few different guys.

Poppy suggested we check out Darren's sim facility. Darren, Shelby and I hit it off. We asked him to come onboard. That's kind of how that relationship began.

Since then, Darren has stayed on working with me on the open-wheel side. His philosophy and kind of what we're really working toward is getting the most out of having a kind of consistent driving style that we're approaching every track with, then optimizing the car so that I can get the most out of it. I think that's been the biggest help to my driving, right?

Going from team to team, sometimes you can get lost, just driving to what that team's engineer wants you to do, how they want you to drive. That can be a bit confusing I think for a young guy.

I think it was a good decision to kind of bring someone on to help guide that, what are we actually looking for out of the driving, and build the car setup out of that.

Q. With this part of the schedule so heavily loaded with road courses, your ability to be in the car for all these races, how important is that going to be to putting something together to show some teams for 2021?

DALTON KELLETT: Yeah, as we get to the end of the season, obviously everyone's thinking about what's happening for next year. A good performance in these closing races would go a long way solidifying plans, getting everything figured out. That's the goal.

We're not going to change our process of how we're going about it, right? We're still focusing on getting the most out of me and the car, letting the results come from that. That's still going to be the approach.

Obviously we're looking to end the season strong here.

Q. How difficult has it been for you since the July race at Road America? You did have the Indy 500, so that takes up two weeks there, but having that long stretch where you were not in a car?

DALTON KELLETT: It's challenging being out of the car for this long. I've been thinking about it the last couple weeks as we're getting back into road course mode. It's made more so challenging by the fact we have a condensed schedule. We do have a doubleheader, that's two chances to get it right. Basically going to have to look at every session as an opportunity to learn and keep making myself and the car better.

That's kind of how we're going to be going about it.

Q. You came from Indy Lights. How beneficial and important has Indy Lights been to helping you prepare for your rookie season in INDYCAR?

DALTON KELLETT: Yeah, I think the experience in Indy Lights, not just there but in the whole Road to Indy, is a great development program to bring guys up. If you look at the stats, they speak for themselves. A large majority of the field came through Lights or Road to Indy. It's a very impressive record for that program.

I think the big thing is you get to race at the same tracks as INDYCAR does. You're racing against guys that you're going to move up with. You know some of the competition coming up. You're at the same events so you get the opportunity to meet the teams, kind of see how the INDYCAR side of the business works.

All in all it's a great training ground for guys that are looking to make that jump.

Q. We've talked about the rookie season. The rookie class has been pretty impressive between what Rinus, Oliver and Alex Palou have done. Would it be nice to have success like they've had in one of these final three events?

DALTON KELLETT: Definitely. I'm looking to end the season on a strong note. I think we were having a great month of May. I think that was going really well. I think obviously it was unfortunate that we didn't go the full 200 laps in the race. I think we were looking pretty good there.

I think as we close up the season, it will just be really about focusing on trying to hit our marks, minimize mistakes, get things done in the race.

THE MODERATOR: Dalton, we appreciate your time, wish you the best of luck this weekend at Mid-Ohio.

DALTON KELLETT: Thank you, everybody. Appreciate it.

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