

# NTT IndyCar Series News Conference

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## Ryan Hunter-Reay

Andretti Autosport  
Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: Ryan, welcome, driver of the No. 28 DHL Honda for Andretti Autosport. What are the expectations? How are things shaping up for 2021?

RYAN HUNTER-REAY: Things are shaping up well. Hopefully there's some normalcy back. Last year being kind of a half season, truncated season, we didn't go to a lot of the tracks that have been historically strong for Andretti Autosport, for our team. Really looking forward to having the opportunity to get back to some of my favorite racetracks.

Yeah, definitely I'm looking forward to that kind of makeup, what feels like a makeup season almost. Hopefully we can do that, barring any variants of COVID that might derail that. Looking good right now.

THE MODERATOR: Your impressions after testing so far? You have been quick.

RYAN HUNTER-REAY: Yeah, we've had two Sebring tests. Everybody is off on their own agenda there. We were off trying some left-field stuff at our test and didn't really try and dial the car into Sebring. We're heading to Texas in a couple weeks, so that's going to be different from the majority of the grid. Looking forward to getting back on a superspeedway.

THE MODERATOR: We'll open it up for questions.

**Q. Your deal was announced late. Was it touch-and-go? Were you nervous at all?**

RYAN HUNTER-REAY: No, it was done for a while. We were waiting for budgetary reasons for some of our partners to allocate that into a date calendar year-wise. Got to make sure that the check is there before you announce the deal. Yeah, that was the reason for the delay in that.

I had no problem with it. Take as long as you want, no

problem.

**Q. Your streak of Rolexes came to an end this year. Are you going to be able to get into a sports car at all?**

RYAN HUNTER-REAY: Yeah, I hope so. Man, with these years between, we seem to have a really strong prototype field there, and now it tends to be kind of kiltering off because we're waiting for 2023 LMDh, right? It's kind of like we have these I don't want to call them lame duck years, but Mazda, I had a great home at Mazda. We just won the 12 Hours of Sebring; when do you win the 12 Hours of Sebring, and two months later you're outside looking in? That's my career, so...

We'll keep going. It's strange, but the Mazda went down to one car, which they eliminated our half of the team. Now they announced they're on the way out. I don't know. Keep knocking. I've got a lot of experience there. When the music stopped, there were no chairs, so...

**Q. This is Roger's second year owning the series. What good things did you see from him last year and where can things go this year?**

RYAN HUNTER-REAY: I'm just so thankful that we got to race last year. I remember being completely shocked that St. Pete was canceled. All of a sudden you start thinking, wow, I'm hearing rumors about this, complete closures, isolation and this, that and the other. We were all thinking are we even going to get to race.

In the big picture, there are priorities that come before racing. We're entertainment. I was really worried about that. Very, very thankful we got to race last year. We got to have a 2020 season, although abbreviated. Big thanks to Penske on that. I'm not sure that would be possible without him and the organization.

**Q. Speaking of last season, I know going into it I think you and Alex had kind of expressed some concern about if Andretti had expanded too much. Looking at 2021, knowing you scaled back a little bit, do you feel like the team is in a better position this year than last year?**

RYAN HUNTER-REAY: Yeah, I mean, we'll still have 14

... when all is said, we're done.®



cars at Indy. But, yes, I'm very happy with the fact we're coming down and we're focusing.

I mean, I'm going to miss Marco. I am. I've been his teammate since 2010. Great friend of mine. It feels the same still. I mean, we haven't done a race without him. It still feels like the same large team, so to speak. Hinch coming back is awesome. It's like he's coming home. He's one of my good friends, one of my great teammates, great working relationship and all that stuff. Him coming back is a natural fit. It's going to be awkward not to have Marco there.

The team feels somewhat similar.

**Q. When you look back at last year, you were joking about the way your career goes, just the way things kind of got off on the wrong foot at Texas, after that it just never got on track. Do you have to write off 2020 the way everybody does?**

RYAN HUNTER-REAY: Yeah, we came out of the iRacing stuff, then there we were finding ourselves at Texas leading for the first half of the race. Unfortunately that was not the right way to go. Finally had a good, fast superspeedway car, which is a big change for us coming off of 2019. We were looking for that fast superspeedway car. We found it. We were leading the race, had a great thing going, and yeah, we were a pit stop shy on it, a pit stop long on it I should say.

Yeah, it's unfortunate. We had some strong results here and there, like Mid-Ohio finished third and fourth whatever, third and fifth. You look at that weekend, and that was just another string of errors that should have been a much better weekend. So we know those issues. Hopefully we can nail them down.

**Q. Michael mentioned they know the pit stops is something they need to work on. Is that something you're confident the game has been upped in that department?**

RYAN HUNTER-REAY: I think the guys have been working really hard on that. That's the thing; we practice really well. They've been putting a lot of work into it, working out, things like that. That stuff ebbs and flows. You just have to have that chemistry with the group you're with. Everybody has to kind of just, boom, boom, boom. They get it done, the confidence rolls, and everything starts streaming. It's just like racing on track. Yeah, it's hit and miss here and there, and it's not anybody's fault. We're a big team. I don't do things right 110% of the time. When I get home, I make sure I don't do that again, whatever it is. We're working on that. It's a group effort.

**Q. What do you need to do to improve the race performance or outcomes?**

RYAN HUNTER-REAY: We just need to be more consistent as a team. We look at, like I was saying, Mid-Ohio should have been two podiums, and one should have been contending for a race win. We can all talk about the things that we missed. The 2016 Indy 500 says "the one I should have won" next to it, things like that.

You know what it takes to win. I do. We do. We know what we need to do to execute. Those parameters are there. We need to operate within that. Very simple.

**Q. You mentioned Marco. When you heard the news about him taking a little bit of a step back, what do you sense from him about how this may help him moving forward in his racing career to take a step back from the full-time calendar, focus on the 500 and pursue some other racing passions?**

RYAN HUNTER-REAY: Yeah, he's been in the grind since '06, a long time for sure. I think it's time. Sometimes people just need a change-up, whether it be a different team, whether it be working with a different engineer, racing a different car, racing a different series, whatever. He just needed a bit of a switch-up. He needed to turn the page. It's a good refresh for him.

We'll see him back for the 500 this year. I'm certain we'll be seeing him back a lot more in the future for that race as well. Maybe even more. Who knows.

Yeah, it's something that I think he'll enjoy. Hopefully the fundraising side of it, he can have options on what he wants to race in the future.

**Q. Your newest deal with Andretti was announced as a one-year program. If that's correct, do you view this season as somewhere where you really have to perform and put down some serious results to continue to be able to stay?**

RYAN HUNTER-REAY: No. My whole career has been that way. It's been, Hey, here is your opportunity. Get in the car, we'll let you know if you're going to be in the car the next race. That's how it always has been for me. That's why I've always had that grab-it-by-the-neck mentality. Even when I had a three-year deal, if I had a bad weekend, it was the end of the year. I have to make sure I'm performing next weekend, otherwise somebody with a big smile is getting ready to jump into my seat. It's just part of my mentality, part of my makeup. No, that's how I've been operating for 20 years, man. Right at home

for me.

THE MODERATOR: Ryan, thank you. We appreciate you taking the time. Best of luck to you this year.

RYAN HUNTER-REAY: You guys have a great day.

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