

# NTT IndyCar Series News Conference

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## Alexander Rossi

Andretti Autosport  
Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: Alexander Rossi is here, driver of the No. 27 NAPA Auto Parts Auto Nation Honda fielded by Andretti Autosport. Alex, welcome. Thanks for joining us. How are things looking for you for 2021 based on not only your expectations but also preseason testing so far?

ALEXANDER ROSSI: Yeah, I mean, testing has been good. I think that the last kind of 20 percent of last year, things had turned a corner and we had identified a lot of issues and had a lot of tough conversations and made some changes, so I think we went into the off-season with quite a bit of optimism, and we've continued that progression all the way through the winter.

The team is in a really strong place right now, so I'm excited to get down to Barber. The tests that we have had have gone smoothly, and we've done a lot of -- we've accomplished a lot of what we've been trying to do. So we've got a couple more times in the car before Barber, but yeah, I feel good right now. I'll let you know in about a month.

**Q. Can you enlighten us at all on some of those tough conversations, what they included or what they addressed?**

ALEXANDER ROSSI: No, I just think we sucked globally. Like there wasn't anything we were doing right, whether it was qualifying performance, whether it was race performance, pit stops, my driving. None of it was good.

I think Indianapolis was quite an eye opener for everyone in terms of how fast all the Andretti Autosport cars, and to come away with really nothing was not good. It wasn't a good Monday.

We just all were honest with each other, and we all kind of discussed things that were good and things that were not good, and we took 2020 as an opportunity to learn from our mistakes. I think there's an advantage and so many positives we can take out of it, and like I said, I think the

end of the year went really well for us for the most part, minus St. Pete, which is on me.

There you go. I'm not going to get into the details of it because it's not necessary, but I think we're operating at a really high level right now, and I'm excited to get on track in Barber.

**Q. Were any changes made to your team specifically?**

ALEXANDER ROSSI: Nope. Same team.

**Q. The Rolex victory, I'm wondering what sort of -- now you're a Rolex winner, you're an Indy 500 winner. What sort of momentum you might have.**

ALEXANDER ROSSI: I don't know. I mean, obviously it's nice to start the season out with a win. I think that I'm driving well right now. I think everything is kind of coming naturally at this point.

Yeah, we've just got to keep it up. It's one thing to have an event go well and whatever, but like to win this championship, you've got to be pretty much perfect for nine months. We're starting that journey now, and I can't wait. I'm ready. I'm more motivated than you can believe, and I'm really excited. I have a lot of points to prove, I think.

**Q. Is championship the next line item on your list?**

ALEXANDER ROSSI: Oh, yeah. Like -- yeah. There's a lot of adjectives that I could use to describe how --

**Q. Give them to me. Go ahead.**

ALEXANDER ROSSI: Nope. There's a lot of words that I probably should not say. I'm ready to redeem myself I think is the big one. Last year just sucked. It sucked on track, it sucked off track. It was a terrible year for everyone except for Scott and Takuma, so good for them.

Ultimately I'm just thrilled that we have the opportunity to get back to racing, that the calendar is what it is, that the continuity on the 27 team is what it is. I think everyone is pushing really, really hard to make sure that there's no repeats of last year, and we'll just let the on track do the rest of the talking.

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**Q. A year ago I think you had told us that you had expressed some concern as a team about overextending when Andretti went to five cars. I'm wondering now a year later do you feel like that had some impact on last season? Do you feel like the team is better positioned now that you're back to four full-time cars?**

ALEXANDER ROSSI: I don't think that -- did it help anything last year? Maybe not. I think the biggest thing that hurt us at the beginning of last year was really the reduced track time going into the actual qualifying/races. I think if you look back at 2018-2019, we were never great on Fridays, and we would kind of do a lot of work Friday night and come back Saturday for final practice and be there and qualify up front and the rest was kind of history.

When you have that many cars and it's such a condensed one-hour practice with a two-hour break, into qualifying, you can't use the advantage of all those cars. Like it's not possible. You don't have enough people and enough time to go through that amount of information and make educated decisions. I think once we got our kind of off-line correlation and our deltas right with the aeroscreen and the effect that it had on the car, I think once we kind of got that in line with the on-track reality -- the other thing is when COVID happens, all the wind tunnel, the shaker rig, the simulator time, it all disappeared.

We didn't have any tools available to us to kind of figure out what our problems were, address them and solve them. We had to do it all on track. I think that's a lot of what you saw the first half, the first 70 percent, 60 percent of last year.

I think the one big thing that we wanted to accomplish in preseason testing this year was making sure that our offline simulation was correlating to the on-track stuff, and we did a lot of really cool things this winter. Honda and HPD have played a pretty big role in that, and we've progressed forward quite a lot.

Like I said, I think the team is operating at a level that they haven't before. I'm more motivated than ever, and yeah, I think it's all -- everything is lining up as it should. We just have to go out and do it now.

**Q. When you talk about sucking globally and putting the onus on yourself to improve on the driving side, aside from the obvious of wiping out in front at St. Pete, are there any areas where you feel like you are addressing improvement on your driving for 2021?**

ALEXANDER ROSSI: All of it. It's never good enough. I

think at the end of the day as much as we as a team struggled with the minimal practice time, I did, as well. Like I wasn't doing a good enough job getting up to speed quick enough, which was putting us on the back foot and having to take pretty big risks in qualifying. Sometimes it was okay, sometimes we qualified -- quite honestly we qualified all right all throughout the beginning of the year. We were just never kind of in the top three, which is where you've got to be these days. It's where you've got to be to go out and win races.

Obviously we had three failures in a row, got taken out of a race before the green flag even dropped. There was a lot of things that happened out of our control, as well. But I think even without those things, it's not like we were really in the top two to five anyways at that point.

Yeah, like I said, it was a lot of self-reflection from all involved, and we've all made efforts to get better and get stronger.

**Q. I wanted to ask about -- two things, actually. How different a shape of season would you have had if the street courses hadn't gone? Is there one area that the team had got right and it was just misfortune that they all got scrubbed from the calendar with the exception of St. Pete?**

ALEXANDER ROSSI: Yeah, at the end of the day one of our cars should have won St. Pete whether it was me or Colton or James and we all threw it away in one way or another. Yeah, street courses are Andretti Autosport's strength. I think that's pretty obvious, that and the Speedway.

I think we're close on road courses. Fortunately short ovals really aren't a huge factor anymore, so yay for that. Too bad, Josef, get over it. (Laughter.) I'm happy that the calendar is what it is. Hopefully it can stay that way. Obviously there's still some -- we're a long ways away from some of them.

Ultimately, yeah, I think street courses followed by the superspeedways followed by road courses are Andretti Autosport's strong suits and we only had one of those last year which we did not capitalize on whatsoever.

**Q. Colton has said that your driving style is very aggressive on steering inputs. Is that something that you think benefits you in terms of getting tires up to temperature quickly on out laps and that kind of thing, or do you think it's also sometimes hurt you in that it hasn't given you a second flier to get the job done in qualifying?**

ALEXANDER ROSSI: No. I mean -- no. I don't think it comes down to qualifying at all. If there's any disadvantage it can be a bit harder on rear tires. It's funny he says that because I'm usually better than him on certain tire combinations, so whatever. Him and I, we do drive completely different for sure. I'm more aggressive with the car.

But you've just got to tune for it. Him and I don't drive the same setup. Ryan and I are probably closer. Yeah, I mean, that's part of the challenge, right. It's part of why the relationship with the engineers is so important and you've got to have that trust and that communication flow that allows you to get what you need out of the car to suit your individual driving style.

**Q. When you started snooping around here in 2015 and then came over in 2016, INDYCAR was kind of an interesting series, a place where international drivers such as yourself could make a career. What have you seen as being the big difference between when you showed up and what has made INDYCAR a destination series today?**

ALEXANDER ROSSI: I think what you said is I started the trend. So you're welcome.

**Q. Elaborate, please.**

ALEXANDER ROSSI: No, I think it's the competition. It's the guys -- you can watch the races and you can see how close it is, how hard it is to win, how awesome it is when you do win, the diversity of the tracks, the fact that there's -- man, there's over 10 cars every weekend that can win the race. It's pretty awesome from a driving standpoint, and I think that that's attractive to a lot of guys.

**Q. I was going to call I a trendsetter, but from the time you've been involved in the series, have you ever seen it from top to bottom this deep?**

ALEXANDER ROSSI: I mean, yeah. I mean, I think we always say, oh, my God, it's the most competitive year ever. It's like, well, yeah, but so was last year, so was the year before. As long as Scott Dixon is here it's going to be pretty hard to win, right, at the end of the day, so it doesn't matter if there's one Scott Dixon or four Scott Dixons, you've got to beat Scott Dixon.

I think it's always competitive. But yeah, a lot of good guys. It's great to see it. I love the passion that Scotty has for this series. I've briefly spoken to Romain about it. He's already loving it. They all are having the same kind of first impressions that I had in the fact that it's a hell of a series and we're all very fortunate to be able to race here.

**Q. I was curious, I don't know if you've talked to Marco a whole lot this off-season, but curious to know how you think his absence might affect the team. I know he'll be around for the 500 and that certainly will probably be very valuable, but do you have any indication of what you feel like he will get from stepping away or stepping back from the series a little bit and what you guys will miss from not having him around quite as much?**

ALEXANDER ROSSI: I was actually with him in Florida two days, three days -- I don't know, on Monday. We had lunch together. I think what he's looking for from this year is exactly what he's going to get. He's kind of refreshing himself. He's racing in different cars. He's doing a lot of different things that he's always wanted to do but couldn't because of conflicts or whatever.

I think me being able to kind of see it from his side of going and doing the DPi program, of going and racing V-8s in Australia and racing Baja and the Honda Ridgeline, those things bring just pure joy, and it doesn't necessarily come with the stress and pressures of your everyday job, which for him was INDYCAR.

I think it renews your excitement, your passion, your just level of desire for racing, so I think that's awesome for him.

In terms of his contribution to the team, like he's fantastic at Indianapolis. Obviously with what he did last year and putting on pole in the way that he did, he's still one of the best guys to go around the speedway. It's great that he's still going to be there for the month of May, that we're going to have him to lean on and to be able to work with him.

In terms of what we'll miss, I can't answer that yet. We haven't really done anything -- even the first test of the year he was still there. I don't know that any of us can quite quantify what we'll be missing without him.

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