

NTT IndyCar Series News Conference

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Felix Rosenqvist

Arrow McLaren SP
Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: Felix Rosenqvist, last but certainly not least. Felix is driver of the No. 7 Arrow McLaren SP Chevrolet. A new spot for him.

Felix, last year you got the first win in INDYCAR. That was a box checked. What's the box you want to tick this year with the new team?

FELIX ROSENQVIST: Yeah, it was good to get that win out of the way, for sure. It's not so many goals to tick off the list, except two big ones: that's the championship and the 500. Certainly not easy things to do. Naturally that becomes the next target.

I think as a team this year we kind of want to break into the top spot of the big four, as we hopefully can call it now. I think that's everyone's ambition. You never really know how it's going to go sitting here, but we're all pretty confident. We made some steps. Yeah, we'll look forward to see where we are in Barber.

THE MODERATOR: Let's open it up for questions.

Q. How did you feel testing? What were the fundamental differences between how the team operates, but also how they set up the cars? Even though I realize the cars are spec, there seems to be quite a big variation in teams to what the default setup is. Have you found a substantial difference?

FELIX ROSENQVIST: It's certainly been a difference. It's always different philosophies in different teams. Already in Barber, I got a taste of that. I think it's probably not in the place where I want it to be yet. I think Laguna felt pretty good, and it's definitely getting nearer where I want the car to be.

It's a spec series. You'd be surprised how different the car can feel if you put in different kind of setup philosophies into it. It's the same chassis, almost the same engines between Chevrolet and Honda, but the dampers I think is a

pretty big place where you can make a difference on the car, on how it handles. That's probably the biggest difference you're going to see between teams.

Yeah, our car is certainly really fast. I think it's been fastest like every test we've done, or second in Barber. I haven't really been there yet. I think I'm still kind of looking to break into the last couple of 10ths. We know the car is fast, and that's the main thing.

Q. Given your previous experience in other series, learning new tracks, would you highlight the Nashville track as one of the ones that you would expect to excel given your speed at learning new courses?

FELIX ROSENQVIST: I think it could be a good one for me, for sure. I think that kind of reminds me a little bit about the Formula E days where you have a new track for everyone that everyone needs to learn in a very short time. It's a street track. Hopefully a fun track. It looks like it.

Yeah, hopefully that can be a benefit to me. But these days in INDYCAR, everyone's really good at getting up to speed. There won't be any shortcuts anywhere once practice is done. I think everyone is pretty much going to be there.

That's definitely one I really look forward to anyways. Regarding if I have an advantage or not, I think that's going to be a really cool event.

Q. Your teammate Pato O'Ward, what is it like now for you in this new environment working together with him?

FELIX ROSENQVIST: It's been really good actually. Me and Pato get along really well. We're a two-man team or two-car team, which is obviously a different dynamic than having three or four cars. I think it's really important that you need to work in the same direction, you need to be able to share everything between you and not really hold any doors closed in terms of information or any ego trips or anything like that. I feel like we're really good like that. I feel the whole team is really good like that.

It's a very tight team that's only focused on INDYCAR. There's nothing else going on. We have two cars and



that's it. That's everyone's focus.

Yeah, Pato has been great fun. He's a really good energy source to the whole team, including to me. He's a happy guy. He has lot of energy. That just shows that, yeah, it gives a lot back to the team.

Q. Do you think you are a happy guy, too? Do you think can you find room to develop and take further wins because there will be less attention to you?

FELIX ROSENQVIST: I mean, I don't think that stuff matters so much. I think the main thing is that I'm in a team where I feel like I have a good future with. We have good plans for the future, what we want to do in terms of car setup and so on. I feel like we have, yeah, good stuff in the pipeline for what's about to come.

INDYCAR these days is pretty tricky. You cannot do a lot of testing and stuff. Every step you make is going to take a bit of time. But I feel like I'm really in a good place for this season and next year. I feel like I'm in a team where I feel really happy, yeah, just can't wait to get going.

Q. One of the big storylines going into the 2021 season is all these drivers coming from elsewhere. You made that leap a couple of years ago. Back to 2019, what did you know about INDYCAR before you came to the series? Did it meet or surpass what you were expecting?

FELIX ROSENQVIST: Yeah, I mean, I wish I could talk to myself now back in '19. It's a tough series. I haven't done anything else that is as difficult. I know many other people that came from F1 says the same thing.

You look at it from the outside, you think it's going to be like a simpler form of racing. But the simplicity is actually what makes it hard. There's not so much to do on the cars. The tracks are pretty rough and brutal physically and on the cars. Driving style-wise, it's pretty raw.

Coming in from F1, for Romain, or Jimmie in NASCAR, I think it's going to be very different and very tough. But I believe all of them, they're winners. They will figure it out eventually. I think even Romain has looked really quick in testing, as well.

But, yeah, I mean, that's only part of it. Then comes the whole racing part of it which is super different with yellows. We don't have blue flags. You have to take into consideration all the lap traffic. That's a big thing that I had to learn when I came here in '19.

In general I think it's a great championship. It's good fun.

Proper racing.

Q. Are those the types of things you would have told yourself, technical, procedural stuff?

FELIX ROSENQVIST: Yeah, just everything, man. Yeah, blue flags, the changes from track to track, how you set up the car, how you need to really dial in the car every session, just how aggressive you need to be in the races because otherwise you're going to lose a spot immediately. Ovals, we haven't even talked about that. That's obviously not something Romain will do, Jimmie either. Yeah, that's probably the most tricky thing of all.

Q. Every driver makes a team move based on many different reasons, specific to the driver. You've left the team that won the championship last year and moved to a different team. How intense is the motivation to kind of make that move work?

FELIX ROSENQVIST: Yeah, obviously it's my ambition to make it work. Otherwise I wouldn't do it. I'm confident it's the right move. I'm really impressed by Ganassi's operation. It's a super good team. They did a lot of things.

When I started talking to Arrow McLaren SP, I think their interest in me is how much they've improved in the last couple of seasons, what they have in the pipeline, direct relationship to McLaren, things like that. It makes a difference.

I think with a couple of years, this team is going to be really, really strong. That's something I wanted to be part of. I've been in INDYCAR now for two years, and I was ready to kind of find where I want to be, find a family where I feel at home. I feel like I have the right tools to go and finish my goals, which is to win the championship and the 500.

Yeah, I feel like I'm in a good spot for that.

Q. You've not really felt how the team works over a race weekend. What have your initial feelings been? You mentioned the McLaren element. Interesting model the team uses with different elements helping to drive the team forward. How has your experience been? How confident has that made you looking at the season?

FELIX ROSENQVIST: It's a lot of new things happening at the team, which is really exciting. But I think the team is also clever enough to not let it become a Formula 1 team, so to say. You can always copy things from F1, but it would never work in INDYCAR because it's such a different platform. There's many people that tried it before. They

hired Formula 1 engineers, think that they're going to blow everyone away, and it just never works.

I think that's why it's really good to have the knowledge from the people that's been at the team for a long time in an INDYCAR, like Taylor leading the team. He's the one who can judge that whole balance between how much new stuff are we going to do and how much are we going to keep to the basics and the roots.

What impressed me, though, is there's a lot of -- when it comes to the engineering side, there's very high efficiency in the team. Whatever data comes in, that data will then be directed down to a millions of different things. There's a lot of time saving, in that makes sense, in the team. I think some of the partnerships with Arrow and McLaren have made the team efficient on the engineering side. That really impressed me when I came here. That was on a very high level.

Again, there's a lot of new stuff. Everything kind of needs to settle. I think last year it was just how are we going to do this. This year things are falling a bit more into place. So definitely following the plan.

Q. You worked hard on the 500. Juan Pablo is coming into the team. How confident are you and how happy are you he's aboard for the 500?

FELIX ROSENQVIST: Juan Pablo is someone you cannot count out. He was joining us at a test in Laguna. He was super fast. He had a lot of valuable comments, as well, about the car to the engineers. I kind of wish he was with us for the whole season because he's a fun guy to have along.

I think every time I get the chance to work with someone like that, learn a lot. You think, This guy has been to F1, he's won 500s, championships. It's for a reason. So when he's talking, you listen. Yeah, really valuable to our team.

Hopefully we can get him along for full-time next year.

Q. I heard you say about the Formula E. Came to my mind that this format on racing in Formula E, you have very close sessions between all the day. Do you think this help in any way to prepare in this pandemic situation, these close sessions, you need to avoid all the crashes, don't make mistakes in that short time?

FELIX ROSENQVIST: Yes, I mean, I think most racing categories are kind of following the same trim. Before we went into the pandemic, I would say INDYCAR and F1 were the only ones where you had, like, three practices, a lot of practice before the race weekend starts. This kind of

feels like more back to basic. It's more equal to Formula E, as you said, but even to everything else I raced where you normally only get one or two practices, then you're off to qualifying.

But I think it's good. It's the same for everyone. It might hurt the rookies a little bit. INDYCAR did a pretty good job last year to give them some extra time in some new places. But, yeah, I think it's a good way to move the championship in the right direction and makes everything a bit more compact.

Pandemic or not, I think it's a fun thing also from a preparation standpoint and also physically. It's a big physical challenge to just show up and get it done in two days. It's a lot of driving in a short time.

Q. Obviously Montoya has worked with McLaren before. He's only with you for the Indy 500. What do you think he can bring to the team for the rest of the season?

FELIX ROSENQVIST: He already brought us a lot with test day we did in Laguna. He's doing a lot of hard work with aero stuff like that. At the end of the day he was going for proper runs. His feedback was very accurate, pretty similar to mine and Pato's. I felt like he gave something more because he had experience. He's actually driven this car without the Aeroscreen. That experience means a lot for us to listen to and learn.

I think especially on the ovals, I'm really curious to hear what he can say. If there's anything setup-wise he can advise us to go in a specific direction. That's the fun thing with INDYCAR. Even if you have all the resources in the world, guys like Juan Pablo can still be the key to make a breakthrough on making the car faster because it's just really back to basics.

Sometimes, yeah, you don't need to look that far to go forward where you think you need to spend millions, like in Formula 1 for example, everything is about the money. INDYCAR you can actually go really quick with a small budget.

I think the hard thing in INDYCAR is to be quick every weekend, knowing track conditions, how is this track going to be different from that. Everyone can get it right every now and then. That's a cool thing. It's just about getting it right all the time.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you, Felix.

FELIX ROSENQVIST: Thank you.

