

NTT INDYCAR SERIES

News Conference

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Marcus Ericsson

Rinus VeeKay

Pato O'Ward

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: Welcome, everyone, to the post race press conference for the Chevrolet Detroit Grand Prix. We are joined by our third-place finisher, Pato O'Ward, driver of the No. 5 AMSP Chevy. This is his best finish at Belle Isle, his third podium finish of 2020.

Pato, tell us about today's race. It was crazy.

PATO O'WARD: Yeah, it was good. The main point for me today is Felix is okay. That was a nasty crash. Nothing he could have done there. He was just a passenger, it was out of his control. I'm really happy that he's okay. He's getting evaluated further. But he's good from what we're seeing.

Yeah, I mean, we started on pole. We've never won from pole. We went backwards. I guess that's a disappointment. If you go back into the first red, we got hosed by that really bad. Everybody in our strategy I don't even think finished within the top -- I can't remember who was in our strategy. We really had to fight for this podium. Bummer for Will. I feel for him, not starting up the last few laps.

But, yeah, I mean, I think we salvaged a lot of points from where we, like, could have finished, which was further back just considering how hard it was to pass. But the guys did a great job in the pits. I did my job on the track. Made it through. I think we passed like eight people on track, seven people on track, in three or two in the pits. That was fantastic.

We just get to come do it all over again tomorrow. Hopefully we get another pole. Hopefully we actually win it then.

THE MODERATOR: Tell us about the battle with Rinus at the end.

PATO O'WARD: I was nursing a front left flat spot. I have a lot more to lose than they do. I could just tell, whenever they race you and stuff, not that it's wrong, they're being smart with their own racing. They know if I'm stupid about it, then I'm the one coming out losing out of it.

I had to give in quite a few times there just battling Sato, Rinus, McLaughlin. I had to be cautious because it's so tight around here, it just takes one little bump, you go straight into the wall. I didn't want to do that because the guys I'm fighting for the championship with were behind me. I think it was a job well done today.

THE MODERATOR: We can take questions.

Q. You looked like you were mad at Sato. What was wrong with him?

PATO O'WARD: Well, the guy basically just left his front wing there. If I took the corner, I go into the wall and I spin, and he's fine, or I let him by. I had to let him by. I know him. He won't back out of that, so...

Q. How did you handle the heat today? Will was dying in the car.

PATO O'WARD: Was he? I was fine. Honestly we had a lot of breaks today. If it would have been a full green flag race, I think a lot more of us would have been destroyed after it.

Honestly today was kind of easy in terms of what it could have been. Tomorrow is going to be a heavy one.

Q. Did you need a fan in that second restart, second red flag?

PATO O'WARD: Oh, yes. Just imagine like a sauna at maybe 125, 130 degrees inside. And nothing gets in there, only sand and dirt. So, yeah, I needed a fan.

Q. Fun sauna.

PATO O'WARD: Hot Yoga.

Q. What about the long red flag, what did you do then



to hydrate and stay cool?

PATO O'WARD: I went to my bus and had avocado toast, get some food in me. I didn't have a chance to eat a lot before the race because of stuff we were doing. I had to get some more fuel into me. Just drank some water, hydrated a little bit more rather than the hot tea we have inside the car (smiling).

Q. Do you have any idea what happened on Felix's crash?

PATO O'WARD: Yeah, he popped off the brake. I mean, if you see the replays, you hear it out, the engine just goes flat out. I know him. I'm pretty sure that wasn't him doing that with his own throttle.

Man, I feel for him. It sucks. If you think about it, I mean, if it could have been in like a turn seven, turn three, that's ugly. I really hope they find what caused it because that can be really bad. It was really ugly.

I'm really happy he's okay. We're like brothers. I was definitely asking for updates.

Q. When that happens did you start to have any concern that maybe something happens to your car?

PATO O'WARD: No. You have to block that out. We're in a business where you just, I mean, see accidents and accidents will happen, they can happen to you at any time. You just hope that they don't. But if they do, you just try and do everything possible to recover.

These INDYCARs are very safe. The monocoque was intact. The front end of the car was destroyed, but it's a survivor cell. They're meant to withstand hits of 230 plus miles an hour. This situation more now is more of the G that your body, like, compresses through when the car just launches up.

But, yeah, I mean, I think the cars are really, really safe.

Q. You talked about your thoughts on restarting the Formula 1 race. Do you think today was okay?

PATO O'WARD: I understand they want to end on green. I bet you if I was Will, I'd be telling you no. I feel for him, man. The guy, I'm pretty sure he was the one leading. I think he would have walked away with it if it didn't go red. It really sucks.

Yeah, I mean, I wasn't the one winning the race or anything, so I don't really care if it was one or the other. For me it was good because I got a couple more

(indiscernible).

THE MODERATOR: We've been joined by our second-place finisher, Rinus VeeKay, driver of the No. 21 SONAX Chevrolet for Ed Carpenter Racing. This is Rinus' second podium finish in seven starts.

Tell us about your day.

RINUS VEEKAY: It was very nice day. Pretty crazy race. I think we made a good call on the strategy. I always trust the team with that. Yeah, best Chevy. Two Chevys on the podium. Very happy with that. I think engines are flying. Yeah, everything felt great. The team gave me the material to win.

Yeah, made some pretty cool moves to secure second place. Also got a bit lucky with Will. Of course, I prefer to pass him just on track instead of with him being unlucky.

Anyway, P2, very happy with it. Yeah, it was just a crazy, crazy Detroit race. Definitely a really good start for the first race.

THE MODERATOR: You and Pato had a good battle at the end. We heard his side of it. How about you?

PATO O'WARD: I didn't think we had a battle. We did? I was waiting for him to make a mistake, but he didn't make one. I was just chilling.

RINUS VEEKAY: In one part from turn seven till turn 11, you cannot really make a pass.

PATO O'WARD: I do remember now (smiling).

RINUS VEEKAY: I pushed my tires quite hard at the beginning of my stint. At the end for the restart my tires were a little cooked. Yeah, I knew Pato was going to be fast. He's always aggressive. But so am I. That was good.

Yeah, I made a good move on Takuma, which I was pretty happy about. That felt pretty good. Pato came with me. Yeah, I just had quite a lot of 'push to pass'. Luckily I could get a little bit of a gap in the last lap.

From turn seven to turn 11, kind of took it a little bit easy. Didn't want to tap a wall or break anything. I knew he wasn't going to be able to pass me there. Still it got pretty close.

No, I think it's quite a cool podium, quite a young one, too.

THE MODERATOR: This is also our seventh different

winner in seven races.

PATO O'WARD: Crazy, yeah.

THE MODERATOR: We'll continue with questions.

Q. Trying to figure out the points, but once again it's scrambled. I'm sure you guys have moved up since Alex didn't have the greatest race in the world.

PATO O'WARD: I might be like within five points, I think. I thought I got 35. How far was I back? Palou gets some for 15th.

I should be in the fight. It was a good points day for me.

Q. Both you and Rinus probably gained a lot today. Talk about how it seems like this points race is going to be a dogfight.

PATO O'WARD: Everyone keeps asking me, Would you risk it? I mean, obviously it's not like it's one race, double points. There's two races in two days. You need to maximize those two races. You're better off having two top fives rather than a win and a DNF.

THE MODERATOR: You got 37 points for the day, and you have 248 currently.

PATO O'WARD: I'm where Palou was. I should be a few points back.

RINUS VEEKAY: I think title fight is pretty good on our side. But I just treat every race the same. Like last year I was 14th. Now I'm probably somewhere in the top five. But, yeah, the season is still like nine more races. We're not even halfway. So many can still happen. I just treat every race at a time and just, yeah, try to get the best possible result every race, see where I end up.

Q. You two are young. There's a quick turnaround. It's 6:00 here, you have to be out there qualifying at 9 a.m.

PATO O'WARD: What time is it now?

THE MODERATOR: 6.

PATO O'WARD: Dinner now at 6? That means I'm off the hook (laughter)?

Q. Quick turnaround, 9 qualifying, 12 race. How do you get as much rest as you can?

PATO O'WARD: I want to get in my ice bath. You have

one?

RINUS VEEKAY: I don't have one. I have a massage. I'm going to be massaged, a full spa treatment (laughter).

PATO O'WARD: Okay, I don't have my personal spa (smiling).

Q. Rinus, you were one of seven guys who never raced here before. How did you adapt to the track so quickly?

RINUS VEEKAY: Well, I think it's kind of a track that suits me. You got to be a little bit crazy. If you don't know the risks, you can't give it all.

I think for me, I like street courses. I think we also have a great car which helps me get up to speed. We also had a sim day last Wednesday on a sim.

PATO O'WARD: Those don't do anything to prepare you for Detroit. What are you talking about? Not a chance.

RINUS VEEKAY: No, I felt like it really happened. I did a pace lap with Conor.

Q. He taught you everything?

RINUS VEEKAY: Everything (smiling).

Q. Do you feel since your win you're driving a lot more confident? Or has that not changed, you're driving the same way?

RINUS VEEKAY: I actually forgot about my win. I just give it all. I enjoy. I think that's most important. I enjoy. I'm still pretty bouncy and happy in the team. Like all the spirits are very high, everyone is very motivated. I think that helps.

I think just the whole team, like everyone together, just has made a huge step compared to last year. We have a consistently good-performing car.

Q. Pato, I saw you throw your fist up in frustration at Sato maybe. Rinus, did you have an issue with Sato? Both had problems with the same guy today?

RINUS VEEKAY: I had no real problems. It was just racing hard. I was aware if he made a move and reaction, he would make a block. Yeah, just his mistake. No, Takuma, he's not an easy guy to race. No attack, no chance is his motto. He's a little crazy.

But, yeah, I finished in front of him. No attack, no chance



today, so it's been a good race.

PATO O'WARD: I finished in front of him, so I have no complaints (smiling).

Q. On the flipside, the guy who won today, he seems to be a driver that you don't ever hear anybody complain about the way he drives. How do you feel about seeing him crack into Victory Lane?

PATO O'WARD: I'm happy for him. He was telling me it's been 10 years since he won. Like for me it was three years and it felt like forever. I can't imagine 10 years. I'm really, really happy for him.

He's a great guy to race. He races you hard, but he's very clean. Yeah, good guy.

RINUS VEEKAY: Yeah, I'm also very happy for him. Of course, the first victory is always the most special. I think his first and only podium was here in 2019. Very good track for him. He's putting a lot of work in just like us. Definitely a great driver. Great that he gets his first win here. Pretty cool way to jump in the fountain and sit on the lion.

Q. You got your first wins this year. We saw another first-time winner. When was the last time we had four first-time winners in seven races? I don't think that's happened before.

PATO O'WARD: I got to say, I don't think the field has ever been this stacked in decades. Like I'm really proud to be part of it, proud to be one of the guys that's mixing it up in the front. I'm sure Rinus feels the same.

RINUS VEEKAY: I'm proud of it. We of course are the new generation coming up. It's pretty cool to battle it out. I think, yeah, it's just great how the young guys kind of take over. Really proud to be a part of it.

Q. Rinus, how was this place? You're one of seven drivers who came in this place for the very first time. What was it like?

RINUS VEEKAY: It's definitely crazy. Once you give it 99% one lap, you're a second off. You got to be on it every lap and push hard.

Yeah, you will touch the wall a few times in the race, which I did. No damage. Definitely very cool. It gives you a lot of adrenaline. Finishing on the podium here is really satisfying.

Q. Pato, back to talking about a championship. Were

there any moments today where you were thinking championship first? If so, what were those moments?

PATO O'WARD: Yes, many times. When Sato stuck it inside, when Rossi stuck it in the inside, when I was fighting I think it was McLaughlin. I ended up getting him, so that was good.

Yeah, I mean, there were multiple times in the race where I made the right call backing off. If I didn't, I'm pretty sure my race would have been ended before the first red flag.

Q. Is it full send tomorrow from the green flag or back to thinking championship?

PATO O'WARD: I need to qualify as high up as I can. We did a good job of that today. Tomorrow we try to do the same. Hopefully no yellows fall down to hose us.

Q. Rinus, your pass on Takuma on the last restart, how aggressive were you on that move?

RINUS VEEKAY: I was quite aggressive. I had a pretty good run from the restart. I knew they didn't sweep turn one. It was very marble-y off the line. I got a taste of what being off the line is like yesterday in practice. It's very slick.

I thought once I get my wing there, you know, I can stick it. He's not going to be able to follow me on the outside. I put my front wheels on his inside. Yeah, then I knew the move was done.

Very happy. Definitely paid off.

THE MODERATOR: We have been joined by our newest race winner here in the NTT INDYCAR SERIES, Marcus Ericsson, driver of the No. 8 Huski Chocolate Honda for Chip Ganassi Racing.

PATO O'WARD: Cold water? The pond?

MARCUS ERICSSON: Yes. Super relaxing, yeah.

THE MODERATOR: This is Marcus' first win. It's the fifth time in history that the sport has had seven different winners in seven different races. The last time was 2017. It's the 116th INDYCAR SERIES win for Chip Ganassi Racing. Fun fact, the last time the 8 car won was 1994 with Michael Andretti in Toronto.

Congratulations. Tell us about your day.

MARCUS ERICSSON: Thank you very much.



Yeah, I think we went into the race with quite high expectations. We were disappointed with qualifying. We thought we had a good car in practice yesterday. We didn't understand. We thought we were going to be a bit stronger in qualifying.

INDYCAR is tight. You just miss a little bit, and that was enough to bump us to the middle of the field. For the race, I think we obviously started on the sticker reds, tried to stretch that stint as long as possible, was able to do that in a good way without losing the tires.

The guys did good pit stops all day. Obviously the red flag came out, which was good for us, for our strategy it really helped. During the red flag I knew we were P2 on strategy behind Will. After the red flag, I felt stronger than Will, but he was driving very well and defending whenever I had runs on him. I was trying to be putting pressure on him and making him to do mistakes.

Felt like we had some more pace, but just couldn't find a way by. Then, yeah, the last red flag, first it was a bit frustrating, but then I thought that this is our opportunity to win this race. Really fired up to try to go for it, try to get by Will. I felt like we were a bit stronger in the beginning of stints. I thought we could have a chance to get by him on the restart towards the end there.

Unfortunately he had that problem, which I feel bad for him. He did a great job today. But we've had some bad luck these last couple years. I felt like it was about time we had some good luck, so I'll take it. Just had to finish it off with clean restart and clean laps. I think I did a really good restart, then just control it till the end.

It's an amazing feeling. It's been a long time coming. I've been working very hard for this. The team has been working very hard, believing in me. It just feels great.

Also Felix, I hear he's okay after that nasty crash. A good friend of mine. I'm glad to hear that and I hope that's still the case.

THE MODERATOR: He was laughing in the care center, so he's in good spirits nonetheless. We should get an update soon.

I'm going to let our second- and third-place finishers go since it's such a quick turnaround.

We'll continue with questions for our race winner Marcus Ericsson.

Q. What was going through your head when you saw the problems that Will Power was having right in front

of you?

MARCUS ERICSSON: Yeah, obviously you don't want to see someone have a problem like that, especially he was leading the race. I was really fired up to try and get to him on that last restart because I've been saying that this year I want that first INDYCAR win. That's highest on my list.

I was fired up when the red flag came out because I knew I would get a chance to try to get by him. Like I said, you never want to see anyone have a problem, but I'll take.

We've had some bad luck, I've had some bad luck the last couple years when we've been looking good. Today was our day, it was my day. That's racing sometimes. It's obviously bad for Will, but it was our luck. Just had to finish the job.

Q. You had been pretty close to him for a few laps, but couldn't mount a charge. Was the restart going to be the only chance you had?

MARCUS ERICSSON: Yeah, I thought I was following him well for a lot of the race. I put pressure on him a couple times throughout the race, was quite close to attack him down into seven a couple times. But he was defending well.

I saw after the first red flag that he was struggling a bit to get up to speed. I thought I had a pretty good chance there after the last red flag to try to attack him on that first lap because I felt like we were a bit better getting up to speed than him. I knew that was going to be my chance.

Obviously when he had his problem, it's just about trying to stay cool and just perfect the restart on the last couple laps.

Q. You're the only one up here at the moment, but at the start of the season none of the three of you had won a race, and now all three of you are race winners. Is this going to be a new podium sight?

MARCUS ERICSSON: Good for me (smiling).

I think INDYCAR, it's quite cool at the moment, which has quite a few of these older legends still racing, and they are very competitive, very good still, then the young kids are coming. I'm there someone in between, but quite new here in INDYCAR. It's really cool to see that mix I think of experience and different backgrounds.

This year has been tremendous. I think the field is so talented, so many good drivers. The fact that we've had seven different winners in seven races I think is an



incredible thing for the series. I was going to say let's hope it continues that way, but I don't want that now any more (laughter).

THE MODERATOR: From seven different countries, as well.

MARCUS ERICSSON: That's super cool.

Q. On the restart, it looked like you just nailed it. Would you call that one of the best restarts of your life?

MARCUS ERICSSON: Yeah, probably the best one I've done. I would say so because the pressure was on. I knew Taku was behind. Taku, he always goes for it. I knew if he would get half a chance to go for the win, he would send it up the inside of turn three. I knew on the restart I had to make it perfect or he would try to go for that gap.

I was really focused trying to plan it behind the safety car to see where I was going to go. Just managed to hit it perfect. And then when I saw my mirrors out of two, I knew I had done enough. I just had to try to control it for the last couple laps.

Q. When you're sitting there on pit lane, you see the 12 guys frantically trying to get the car restarted, when you realized you go onto the track, what immediately went through your mind?

MARCUS ERICSSON: The immediate thing is that, This is my day, this is my day. This is the day I've been working eight years.

Like I said, I had some bad luck the last couple years. The first red flag was good luck for me. The second red flag and what happened with Will, it was luck.

But also we performed. We were fast. We did everything right in the pits, the restarts. We made passes, overtook people. Yeah, we had some luck, but we also delivered. It was just one of those things.

Like I said, I feel bad for Will because he did a tremendous day. But today was our day.

Q. How much more new do you feel at home in INDYCAR now that you've had your first win? Do you feel quite comfortable as an INDYCAR driver?

MARCUS ERICSSON: Can you repeat that? Sorry, I didn't hear.

Q. How much more comfortable do you feel now as an INDYCAR driver now that you have your first win?

MARCUS ERICSSON: It's a huge relief. I came over here after five years of F1. One of the big goals coming over here was to win races again. Obviously in F1 I was in smaller teams where it was not any chance realistically to win a race. That was the big thing when I came over here, to have that opportunity again.

But obviously the first two years, I got to the podium in Detroit two years ago, but apart from that it's been good performances but not that first win. Going into this year I feel like I've really gotten used to the series, to the cars, to the tracks. I felt like one of the big things for me this year was to get that first win out of the way.

It means a lot. I think the confidence you get from it, it's going to help me a lot going forward in this championship. Yeah, it's a big thing. Also INDYCAR race winner, not many that can say that. I can say that now. That feels just amazing.

Q. With so much bad luck, did it feel like it was never going to happen?

MARCUS ERICSSON: No, because the thing is sooner or later the luck turns. Like I said, I don't want to blame bad luck. I think we haven't had much luck the last couple years.

But the thing this year that I felt from the whole 8 Huski Chocolate team is that we've been stronger everywhere, in the mix in the top 10, top eight, almost every track we've been to. We had some bad luck that sort of took away some results for us, but we've been there every single weekend.

If you continue to believe in what you're doing, continue to work hard, sooner or later your day is going to come. I did believe this year that we were going to get that first win. Obviously feels great to get it already now because it's quite a bit to go in the championship.

Q. How much confidence does this give you going into tomorrow's race, but also further into the season?

MARCUS ERICSSON: It gives a ton of confidence, I would say. As a driver, you always believe you can win, but to actually do it, it means a lot. I always believed I could do it, but it's been hard work here in INDYCAR. It's a very tough championship. Some of the best drivers in the world are here. To get that first win is a huge achievement I think.



It's going to help me a lot for tomorrow and going forward in this championship. It gives me a big boost of confidence, and the whole 8 car team a big boost of confidence. We're going to bring that in to tomorrow, try to get another one tomorrow, then have a strong season.

Q. In terms of the track in Detroit, what do you think it is that suits your driving style?

MARCUS ERICSSON: It's a good question. I don't know.

I just felt like the first time I came here in 2019, I really enjoyed the track. It has a lot of character. Bumpy and different surfaces that makes it pretty tricky to drive. But it's a big driver's track, I would say. All my life, Suzuka, Spa, Silverstone, where the driver can make a big difference, it's tracks that I've really enjoyed.

I feel like Detroit is also a track like that, where is really tough. You have to have a good car, but the last part is about the driver getting the most out of it, the last couple 10ths out of it in the driving.

I felt, like I said, from the get-go here in 2019 that I really enjoyed this track. I knew coming into this weekend we were going to be strong and have a good chance.

Q. You said on the NBC interview the last time you won you were just a kid. Do you appreciate wins a lot more? What is your appreciation for this win versus your GP2?

MARCUS ERICSSON: Yeah, I think I said 10 years ago, but it's not that long. It's eight years.

THE MODERATOR: I believe it was 2013.

MARCUS ERICSSON: Someone said 10. I was like, 10 years ago. Now I realize it's not 10, it's eight years. But it's still a very long time.

I think back then I was going through the junior categories, trying to get to F1. Then I was winning races pretty much every year, going up the ranks. It was something that you were sort of used to and targeting.

Then that's a tough thing with European racing, when you reach the top level like I did in 2014 to F1, I was in smaller teams that didn't have the resources to compete for wins. Then you as a driver, you sort of forget that feeling to fight and go for them wins.

It was not until I went to INDYCAR that I realized how much I missed that feeling to go into a weekend and have the mindset to try to win, try to beat everyone. That's

something I really, really enjoy here in INDYCAR. I've worked very, very hard. I think if you ask the team, I've been working very hard to try and learn as much as I can. I have great teammates to learn from. That's helped me a lot.

But still to be able to get everything together, to win in INDYCAR, I think it's one of the toughest things you can do. You don't only need to be fast in INDYCAR, you need to do all the things right, you need to have the team behind you, the pit stop strategy, setup. It's a tough series to win in.

It does mean a lot. I missed this feeling so much, it's crazy (smiling).

Q. Over the last eight years did you ever lose confidence or...

MARCUS ERICSSON: I think you definitely lose some confidence. That's the thing, you need to be mentally strong and believe in yourself, believe in your abilities. I've done that. I've been strong. I think that's one of my strengths, that I've been having good mental strength.

But for sure it's tough. I think it would be tough for anyone to go eight years without winning a race when that's what you do. My job is to win a race, and I haven't done it for eight years. Of course it's going to take a toll on you.

Today I think I showed that I can do it. It's going to help me a lot going forward.

Q. Your golf cart broke down. What happened there?

MARCUS ERICSSON: Yeah, I don't know. Must be the same starter like Will had unfortunately. I shouldn't make jokes. I feel bad for Will. He did a great job out there, yeah. That's how it goes.

Q. Did you get a replacement?

MARCUS ERICSSON: I had to call the team to pick me up. Maybe I used all my good luck for today up in the race. That's how it goes.

Q. You felt pressure in your other series coming up through the ranks. What is it like driving for Chip and alongside Scott Dixon? Do you feel the same kind of pressures?

MARCUS ERICSSON: Yeah, I do. I think Chip always says he likes winners. I came here haven't won a race in eight years. I think when he realized that, he was like, Oh, you haven't won in that long? We need to change that.

I think he's pretty happy that I won this race today. He wants drivers that can win. Today we had opportunities to do it, and I did. We as a team did it and delivered. I think that was a huge effort. I think us racing drivers, we always live with that pressure to try and win races and finish up front.

When you get opportunities like today, you need to take them. That's why I'm super happy I did that and not make any mistakes, really do a perfect job especially there in the end.

Q. The organization has three winners this season. How do you feel you stack up across the board?

MARCUS ERICSSON: I think we have a great team this year. We had Scott obviously, which is one of the best ever in INDYCAR. I think all of us other drivers can learn a lot and are learning a lot from Scott and just the way he drives, works, everything. Alex has come this year, been a great addition to the team. Obviously winning the first race out is super impressive. Since then he's been very, very strong.

Then Jimmie and Tony also have been very important for the team. With Jimmie's work ethic, his way of being who he is, with all the success he's had in his career, I think he's been a great addition to the team. T.K. as well, all his experience.

I think the sort of mix we have in Chip Ganassi Racing this year has definitely made us stronger. I think that shows with, like you said, three winners on the team. I think that's a pretty cool stat. It shows how good the organization is, how much work we've done in the off-season to make sure we have strong cars. Every weekend, everywhere we go, we are in the mix.

Q. This was a very weird day for sport in the Nordics, as you might have known. European football championship, scary incident with Christian Eriksen. Bad accident with Felix. Does it feel good that you can, as a Swede, end today on a high by winning your first race?

MARCUS ERICSSON: I heard about that incident in the Euros. I haven't heard more. We had the race. I hope he's okay. That was very scary when we had the news just before the race.

Then obviously Felix had a very nasty crash. From what I heard there as well he's okay. That's the main thing.

But of course, I hope and I think that I brought some joy to

at least Sweden with this win. I've had a great following ever since my years in F1. I have great support. I have people that really believes in me and supports me. I feel very happy for them, as well, and thankful.

Q. We've seen four first-time winners this season. Seven different winners overall. Is this the most deep the field has been in INDYCAR?

MARCUS ERICSSON: I believe so, yeah. I think the field now, just the depth of it, it's incredible. I think there is at least 18 drivers that can win a race this year, maybe even 20. I don't think there is another championship in the world that can say that.

I think the quality of this field, the depth of this field, is just amazing. I think it also shows that some people, they can win one day and be P22 the next day on pure pace because it's so tough and tight that if you don't get everything right, you can be in the back of the queue. I think that drives us to get the best out of ourselves and teams. I think that's really cool, I love that.

Us drivers, we're battling out there out on track, the way you have to deliver all the time, obviously improve, I think that's a very cool thing. I think INDYCAR is in such a strong position now. Ever since I came here, it's my third year, but every year it becomes more and more competitive and more and more good drivers.

Q. Was it harder dealing with the bumps or staying hydrated?

MARCUS ERICSSON: Probably a combination. The heat is definitely tough. But also today with such a long race with all the breaks, your mind is in race mode for so long, so many hours, you get pretty tired.

When you get dehydrated, sweating a lot, very hot, the bumps make it worst. Doesn't help being on a bumpy street course. Definitely hard work out there. That's all the hours in the off-season that I do, all the training you put down, it's for moments like this, when that pays off.

Q. Did you prove today that Huski Chocolate doesn't melt in the heat?

MARCUS ERICSSON: I think I did, yeah, exactly. The winner's drink, Huski Chocolate.

Q. What was the concentration level in the last several laps knowing what had happened to several other cars today?

MARCUS ERICSSON: When I saw Will having his



problem, I knew this is my day. I knew I was going to win it. It sounds confident like to say that. I knew obviously I had very strong cars behind me. I just knew it's all in my hands now, I just need to do my job perfect and I will win this race.

It was all about going into myself, focus, doing what I knew I had to do. I was really focusing on getting that perfect restart. When I did that restart, got it really perfect, it was all about trying to get the tires up to speed and just not doing any mistakes.

I was really feeling confidence within myself during that last restart. Obviously I knew Taku was behind. I knew if I mess it up, he's going to go for it. It was definitely pressure, but I felt sort of very calm and focused.

THE MODERATOR: Congratulations again, Marcus Ericsson. We'll end it there so he can recover and be competitive in tomorrow's event as well.

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