

NTT INDYCAR SERIES

News Conference

Thursday, September 2, 2021

Ricardo Juncos

Brad Hollinger

Callum Ilott

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: Good afternoon, everyone. Obviously it is a big, big month for Juncos Hollinger Racing, a new look team about to make its return to the NTT INDYCAR SERIES. Ricardo Juncos joins us, one of the long-time supporters Road to Indy, who first took a team to the NTT INDYCAR SERIES back in 2017.

It was announced a month ago that Brad Hollinger would join the team as a partner forming this new look, Juncos Hollinger Race team. Brad joins us from Philadelphia. Of course, just announced yesterday and in the middle of his first test at the NTT INDYCAR SERIES, Callum Ilott joins us, 22-year-old taking a break from his duties as a Formula 1 Ferrari test driver and taking a run at next week's Grand Prix of Portland.

Thank you to all three this afternoon.

Let's begin with Ricardo. How exciting is it to return to INDYCAR and do it with Brad, to get things going with Callum today?

RICARDO JUNCOS: It is amazing. I mean, we were pushing for this, everybody knows what we did in 2019. We never stopped looking for this opportunity, to be honest. Everybody knows how difficult was 2020 for the whole planet, right?

We take a break, and now we are back. I'm very, very happy to the whole situation, of course. It's a dream come true now, came in a totally different way than we did before. Very happy to have Brad Hollinger now with me working together. We share the same philosophy, the same passion for the sport. We have good ideas, very, very similar.

This is exciting. Having Callum Ilott, top, top driver today, what is we can ask for? Testing here at IMS, perfect weather as well, I'm very happy.

THE MODERATOR: Brad, announced a month ago that you were joining Ricardo. Certainly you're no stranger to racing with your ties to the Williams F1 team. Why is this team the perfect fit for you?

BRAD HOLLINGER: Well, I've always followed open-wheel racing, whether it was Formula 1 or Indy racing, and have wanted to get involved in some way after departing the Formula 1 world.

I was looking for a team that I thought I would, one, blend in with from a philosophic perspective, in addition to being value added beyond just monetary.

Ricardo and I met, we just really hit it off from a philosophic and cultural perspective. I think I very much liked the way that his shop operated, from a corporate structure perspective thought I could be helpful in that regard as well.

It just seemed to be the perfect fit. Rather than participating with a larger team that has the resources they need, this is an area where I felt I could be value added financially as well as corporately.

It just worked out really well. Ricardo is a great guy. I did the background checking, of course. His reputation is I think really pretty much unparalleled. It was just a great fit.

THE MODERATOR: Callum, welcome to you as well. How exciting is this opportunity for you? Really how did it come about?

CALLUM ILOTT: Firstly, thank you for having me. Thank you to Ricardo and Brad for the opportunity.

I mean, first time in Indianapolis, it's an amazing place I have to say. We don't have anything like this in Europe. It's quite special to be here, quite special to drive the car obviously this morning, out for some laps.

Going back almost three weeks, one month ago, yeah, a very, very interesting text from my manager saying there was a potential opportunity to do some races in INDYCAR this year, from Ricardo. Very quickly the next day I was on a Zoom call. The opportunity was going from there.

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Honestly INDYCAR has been on my radar since the end of last year. A good option. You can see a lot of drivers are heading towards it. It made sense for me, especially at the end of this year to get an opportunity to do this. I mean, it's very special.

Again, thank you to Ricardo. I can tell he's a very, very motivated person. I can understand why Brad has full trust on him because he does make a job very motivated. I think we could have some very good results coming up.

THE MODERATOR: Callum, I'm sure you and the Formula 1 paddock, you can't help but notice guys like Romain Grosjean came over, found some success, Marcus Ericsson, Rossi, Magnusson earlier this year, the list goes on and on and on. How much did all of that have an influence perhaps on your decision to pick up a ride for next weekend?

CALLUM ILOTT: Look, the first time I properly started to pay attention to INDYCAR is when Alonso came over for the first Indy 500. That's when the attention started to come to it. I had Felix Rosenqvist, a mate of mine, come over as well.

Recently obviously Romain was a very strong candidate to come over, a good example. For me recently Christian was a big motivation to just say, C'mon, let's go do it, why not? He's a good mate of mine from the F2 paddock.

He did a mega job and I hopefully want to continue that.

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

Q. Callum, what was it like driving the car today? In terms of your F1 experience, was there anything you could take away from that going into today, obviously going into next week for Portland?

CALLUM ILOTT: For sure. I mean, in terms of a car, it feels in a certain way the style is definitely closer to what I felt in the F2. The F1, yeah, it's an incredible car, but this on its own, with these Firestone tires, you can really push it, really slide on it, which is something I haven't really had in Europe. I did enjoy that on the first couple laps being able to go a bit sideways and enjoy it.

On the other side, I think the F1 stuff, obviously I've been in a test and development role, a reserve role as well, a lot of my focus has been on development. Hopefully I can shift everyone in a good direction and get the car into a very good window.

Q. In terms of the aeroscreen, how have you found

that?

CALLUM ILOTT: No problems. I mean, the first run I had to get a bit used to on the sides because it becomes a little bit distorted when it starts to curve. Honestly, it's not a problem. After one run, you're used to it. You just have to adapt a little bit.

Q. Ricardo, obviously you're going in this time round with a partnership with Brad. How beneficial is that to you as a team owner going in with someone who has motorsport knowledge?

RICARDO JUNCOS: I think for me is very good. I'm looking to learn from Brad actually. When you see someone that was Williams F1 team, so is very good to have someone like him with me.

For me obviously change a little bit because this is the first time I will have a partner. But I'm totally fine. I think, like I said, he said the same thing, we share the same kind of view, philosophy.

So far it's been great, to be honest. The main difference is that the way we going to be participating now. Before we just didn't know, we find drivers, last-minute deal. Now we can totally project, we can be proactive. We know we going to race these three races, next year the full season. So is totally different way to approach it. Is way less stressful for me.

Doesn't mean it's not challenge, of course. Never mind to put a team really quickly for three races, has been difficult. But, no, look, I think I'm happy and I'm more relaxed now. Obviously in the last five years whatever we did here, there, '19 qualifying, was mega. We learned a lot, I learned a lot myself. I think we are approaching now with a totally different scale.

Q. In terms of doing the three races, how advantageous is that to you going into next season?

RICARDO JUNCOS: I think it's mega, as well. It's very important. We can do nothing at all this year, then a lot of questions going for next year, credibility for the sponsors. We are talking with many, many companies, a continuation of 2019 of what we did. We have to do these three races, have to put the team back together. We have to learn from the new aeroscreen as much as possible. We need to start activating for all the sponsors to be in the position we are today.

I think it's super important to participate this year in these three races. Then after that obviously we have much more time to put the proper thing together the way I want it for

'22.

Q. Brad, coming into INDYCAR, how exciting and special is it for you to be teaming up with Ricardo?

BRAD HOLLINGER: I think it's a huge opportunity. He obviously has had immense success in the Indy Lights series, the Road to Indy, which I thought was a huge plus. Doing some other exciting things with a couple universities in terms of technology, which excited me as well because that's obviously the wave of the future.

I think most importantly our philosophy of racing and passion is aligned. I've loved it ever since I was a child and still do. Do some amateur racing on my own, nowhere near to the level of these guys. But it's fun. Hopefully I bring that passion to the team as well.

From a financial perspective, Ricardo now having the financial support, it enables him to focus 100% on the technologic part, driver enhancement and driver capability as opposed to wondering where the next dollar is going to come from. It enables us to get started this year, get the team ready to go, then next year really hit it hard and be in a position I think to be very competitive. It's really exciting.

Q. Callum, what has motivated you to do this? Is it because you just love competition or because you're really looking towards INDYCAR in 2022?

CALLUM ILOTT: I can't say no to competition, for sure. The thing that motivated me obviously was looking at INDYCAR as a central option. Seeing Romain go over here, it's definitely a great opportunity, a great thing to do. For me, I've been recommended this series for a long time, because of my style, because of the way I approach things. It seems a lot of people think it's perfect for me. So I'm here to give it a go.

On the other side, look, I'm quite interested in Ricardo and the future that they have because of his ideas and the projects he can put together. He's very well-trusted. He has a great motivation, like I said, for the sport, what he's doing.

It's a great team to be with. I'm looking forward to kind of hopefully build on a future with them.

Q. Obviously there's a lot of restrictions in terms of testing in INDYCAR. Does that intimidate you at all if you were looking towards a 2022 season here?

CALLUM ILOTT: I can't imagine there's much more restrictions than the F2 stuff (smiling). I'm honestly thinking that it should be okay. Look, I'm throwing myself into this

race in Portland. Honestly this test day only came about recently. I signed up to do it almost without any testing. I'm not afraid to just jump in. You never know how it goes. Obviously the idea is to get Ricardo started and to see what we can do with the car. We're lucky to have this test day at a great track like this.

At the moment I'm happy with what I've got, even if it was one day, if it was 20, you've got to work with what you've got. We'll try our best and make sure we make it happen.

Q. If Juncos Hollinger offered you a ride for 2022, would you be happy to do ovals as well?

CALLUM ILOTT: Look, I'm definitely not against it. I have a lot to learn. For sure there's a lot of steps to go about, yeah, to make myself safe, to obviously do all of that. But they have a good track record on the ovals especially after '19. I think I'm in good hands with Ricardo to teach me and to get me ready basically if I have to do that.

Q. Ricardo, Brad, if you were to say how many candidates were on your list of potential drivers for 2022, are we in double figures? How do you decide which ones are the best candidates? Is it people with experience of all the tracks like through Road to Indy or is it European imports from F2, especially the ones with the kind of credentials that Mr. Iloft has?

RICARDO JUNCOS: That was actually surprise for me the amount of quantity of people that want to race with us and contact us. That was actually difficult to deal with.

Clearly we all know the drivers that are praising INDYCAR in the last two years, for example, are on the door, like Pigot, Chaves, all those guys. We know them, right? Actually some of them race for us.

We looking to see top young drivers like Callum. We also talking to many from Europe, as well. I think the list past 20 drivers, to be honest. That was actually good to see because that shows as well that the quantity of interest in INDYCAR in the last, I would say, year, two years.

This is good. That tell us we are in the right path. I think actually Roger Penske is doing a great job and everybody is expecting to keep growing. You can see that, you can feel it. Talking not just in drivers as well, by the way, engineers and mechanics in general from overseas as well. It give you confident that we are in the right path. Is very happy.

Q. Brad, are you basically giving Juncos free rein to pick whoever he thinks is the best?

BRAD HOLLINGER: That's certainly Ricardo's sweet spot more so than mine. I certainly will yield to him.

He's been very gracious in providing me the opportunity to provide input. He knows the drivers much better and the personalities that would fit best with the team.

I think also the ability to help calibrate the car from an engineering perspective is really important for us as a team just getting back into the Indy series. That's really vitally important as well.

It's a combination of having driver ability, commercial capability, and then technologic input that I think can really catapult us.

As you know, it's very difficult to find drivers that have that combination. Callum obviously has all of those components in spades. I think he's just a brilliant young driver. Ricardo I think was able to do something really special.

Q. Callum, do you follow INDYCAR back home in Europe?

CALLUM ILOTT: When I get time. The timing makes it quite difficult. For example, when I was racing in Le Mans, in between some of the stints I was able to put it on. I can't remember which race it was, either Nashville or the one after. I was watching Nashville. I watched Romain's race where he started here from pole earlier in the season.

I kept an eye on it. I'm not religious on it. There's not much I watch all the time. It's a really enjoyable race series. Good competition, lots of young guys against the older guys. It's special.

Q. Your schedule has been pretty packed this season, doing stuff with Ferrari road car division, Le Mans, also test driver for Ferrari, reserve in F1. How easy was it to get this deal done?

CALLUM ILOTT: Starting off at the beginning of the year, I didn't think my schedule was going to be that packed when I got told what I was doing. Then I saw five GT races. Okay, easy life this year.

No, so I live in the UK, but I have only spent three weeks the whole year in the UK, and that was at the beginning of the year. I've just been on the road non-stop, which is enjoyable, great. I can't say against that.

Yeah, I took my holiday in Sicily, within one day of being on holiday, I was on a Zoom call and started stressing out, had to sort myself out to come over here.

I have to say it was quite a stressful holiday. I tried to relax. At the end of the day it was an exciting opportunity that I can't say no to.

Look, I'm here now. I traveled out here Sunday afternoon from Spa. I got the seat fit done, testing today. I fly back tonight to Germany to race at Nurburgring in the GT. After that I come back for Portland. I'm a bit busy, on the edge, but we'll see.

Q. You mentioned you and Christian Lundgaard are good friends. Did you speak with him about INDYCAR after his drive? What was his feedback on not only the car but also the series?

CALLUM ILOTT: Yeah, I sent him a message saying, Well done. He didn't respond. I tried to get his phone number to give him a call, but I only got it recently.

I think before the race I'll give him a little heads up and ask what's going on, how it works over here. Sometimes he can give you wrong information, but we'll see (smiling).

He's a good mate, had a good run here. There's a lot of guys who have a lot of experience here, who I think will be happy to offer a helping hand if need be.

Q. Ricardo, obviously speaking with Callum here, his résumé is very vast, has a ton of experience. What made you confident enough to put a driver like Callum in your car before testing him?

RICARDO JUNCOS: I think is very young, super talented. All this Formula 1 testing and development he's doing is actually for us important. When we start racing INDYCAR was two years ago without the halo. Now for us is all clean. A driver with no preconcept from before, not even drive INDYCAR before, has a clean mind, super proper feedback, by doing the job he's doing in Formula 1, and the fact he's 22, very young, also has a bright future here as well.

I'd say was on the top of my list. I'm happy for both of us and his manager that make this happen. I trust him a lot. Like you said, his résumé is very impressive. He has a lot of experience. Actually when you interact with him, look like a 10-year driver, but he's only 22. Very mature as well. He's been fantastic so far.

THE MODERATOR: Callum, one thing you have to think about, there's a rolling start in INDYCAR. That's one of the things you can text Lundgaard about.

CALLUM ILOTT: I sent my teammates for the GT race,

sent a text earlier today. I said I'm starting the race -- because there's a rolling start in the GTs back in Europe -- I said, I'm starting the race this weekend because I need to get some experience for this. Go ahead, I want to do the start anyway.

Q. You were talking about the difficulty of the schedule. Is there any opportunity you'll be able to do the last two races or is this a one-time thing for this year?

CALLUM ILOTT: Look, at the moment it's one time. We're pushing for the last two races. Unfortunately I've got some things already organized for those weeks. Look, it's going to be last minute if I do commit to doing those. Ricardo has pushed me a lot to do it. We'll have to see. I don't think so, but never say never, so...

Q. On Christian, are you concerned that there's going to be too much expectation on you coming into this race because obviously Christian went into an established team, European style circuit, you're coming in with a new team, things are going to be different at somewhere like Portland?

CALLUM ILOTT: Look, at the end of the day the expectation is hopefully that we finish the race, get everything under control, and limit mistakes, problems. That's my expectation. That's what I'll be happy with. From my side, yeah, anything on top of that, points or whatever is a bonus.

We've got to work and have realistic goals. Obviously people can have expectations of me, but they know where I stand after last year with Christian and that and Formula 2. They know my speed.

At the end of the day we will work as we should. We've got to be, yeah, focused and get what we can. Portland is a small track, but it doesn't look easy. It's tough, very tight. I'm focused and I don't care what people's expectations of me are. People know how fast I can be. Once we get it right, whether it's in Portland or afterwards, we'll see.

Q. Ricardo, does the fact that Callum is the first driver in the car for you make him the kind of top of your shortlist for next season or is it just the way scheduling has worked that Callum is in the car?

RICARDO JUNCOS: No, I think he was clearly on the top of my list as well as other drivers, to be honest. He knows this. They couldn't commit to my original idea was to have three different drivers for the last three races. All three very, very top ones. The other schedule unfortunately didn't work out.

So now Callum is already set for Portland since the beginning. Of course, like he said, we're going to try to push a little bit so he can stay in the car, would be great. Because it's so important for the track learning going to next year, obviously that we talk about to keep building the team up.

It is what it is. I'm very happy to have him. But yes, clearly he was very on the top of my list, as well.

Q. How big has the aeroscreen been in terms of the impact on your setups? How confident are you in the engineering side going into Portland?

RICARDO JUNCOS: Yeah, no, I think it's good. We have just some issue, like I said in the beginning, with the steering wheel and fuel electronics. We did quite a lot of laps, 30, 40 laps so far. It's been great. It's all new for him. Everything we tell him once, he remembers, he does it without telling him. He didn't know some things on the steering wheel and stuff like that.

The idea was to make sure everything works in the morning. Now we have lunchtime. Then afternoon we maybe start pushing a little more, start working on the setup. We can learn a little bit together.

For me it's very important the relationship between engineer and him, on how they communicate, the way he's going to explain the feelings of the car, how they make the changes. All that is very important going to Portland. We're going to try to maximize that on the afternoon, then we see where that leaves us.

Q. Who are you working with in the engineering department?

RICARDO JUNCOS: The engineer is Matt Curry.

Q. You've talked about the drivers over the last few years that have influenced you to come over here. Over the last few days, have you leaned on any of those drivers, gotten any advice as to what to expect when you get into an INDYCAR?

CALLUM ILOTT: Honestly not yet. To be honest, I just wanted to experience it myself without any pre-advice because I knew once I had the test coming it would be a good experience to feel how it is.

The two things I got told was the steering is going to be heavy. That was from everyone who has done power steering. They need to build the muscle anyway. Yeah, the racing is hard and competitive. Two things I love. Why

not?

Q. Ricardo has talked a little bit about what is on the goal for this afternoon. For you as a driver, what is going through your mind this afternoon, what do you want to accomplish?

CALLUM ILOTT: Look, we had a few little issues this morning. Nothing that we can't solve. Got some laps in anyway. So that was good.

I think this afternoon I think it's about going through some standard tests, some standard things that we would go through on a race weekend, let me get my feeling for them, then they get my feedback, what we can do with this car. I know, for example, we did a practice, okay, this change, this change would be perfect for this. We can figure it out.

It's about me right now I'd say trying some stuff. Also I hope they will test some stuff in the background, get an idea of what we need, what can work best. At the moment the car is good. Once we sorted out the little electronic issues, it was mega. I can't complain on that side.

Yeah, we can always fine-tune it. Got to get myself comfortable and we'll see how it goes.

Q. You raced around some incredible tracks around the world. What was it like to come to the Indianapolis Motor Speedway?

CALLUM ILOTT: Look, I mean, yeah, it's massive. Massive, it's impressive. Obviously the road course itself, it's a good track, lots of combined corners, consecutive ones, that makes it quite difficult to get right. It's a challenging circuit. Maybe it's not the longest in the world that I've done. It's one of the most impressive. The history of motorsport in this I would say town, city, is incredible. It's really nice to experience.

Q. Callum, except Christian, did you talk to any European drivers about INDYCAR? Which drivers? What were their recommendations? Juncos is the team that took Fernando Alonso out to the Indy 500 two years ago. Did you try to get some information for him about the team?

CALLUM ILOTT: No one else. I mean, Romain I had a little bit of a quick conversation with on Twitter. Other than that, only Christian. Like I said, I just wanted to come here and experience it and try it.

On the other side with the history of Juncos and the 29 team, Indy 500 race, I've heard that a few times here since being here. Obviously it's a big standout point for Ricardo,

coming back with the white car, no branding, getting that on the grid.

I know the history. Hopefully we can see in Portland what we can do and add a bit more to that history.

Q. What is your expectations for next year? Is Formula 1 still an option for you?

CALLUM ILOTT: Look, anything's an option at this point. I'm here in INDYCAR to experience it. Hopefully I'll have a great time and it will attract me more to do it.

Formula 1, look, I've been in the testing-reserve role for a while now. Yes, of course there is a potential opportunity, but it's not up to me. It's not my decision. This is my decision to be here and to give this a go, but there is still potential in the F1 side as much as there is potential here.

I'm enjoying it a lot here. It's attracting me more and more to do this in the future.

Q. Mr. Hollinger, what is the thing that got your attention to INDYCAR? Do you still have some link with Williams that helped Ricardo to open the view on racing?

BRAD HOLLINGER: Well, my interest in INDYCAR dates back to when I was a child in the '60s, watched the Indy 500 on Wide World of Sports. I followed open-wheel racing ever since, both Indy and Formula 1.

I just loved open-wheel racing. After departing F1, I really wanted to stay involved in open-wheel racing, really sought out an opportunity in the INDYCAR SERIES. I was introduced to Ricardo through a mutual friend, and we just really hit it off from a philosophical perspective.

The best partnerships are made when each brings something to the table. Obviously Ricardo has a tremendous passion for the sport, as I do. I'm more on the commercial and business side of things, and Ricardo certainly is an extraordinarily talented individual in bringing drivers up to their best capability as well as on the technical side with developing a car and setting it up.

I thought this could be a perfect marriage, and it turns out that it has been the case. I think we're really set up to do some exciting things in the next couple years.

I'm committed to the long-term. I think we just grow from here. So the last three races of this season are just a segue into a full race schedule next year. But it's very exciting.

In terms of the question about Formula 1, no, I really haven't accessed the Formula 1 guys so much in terms of input regarding Ricardo and/or drivers. I certainly have a strong relationship with Toto Wolff and some of the other players. I think over time that will prove to be helpful, as well.

So far we have not really accessed many people in the F1 series.

Q. Callum, you mentioned all the drivers coming from F1 or F2 to INDYCAR. What is it about INDYCAR that attracts you to it?

CALLUM ILOTT: Look, you Americans with your sports, number one, I have to say is very impressive, always a great spectacle. Number one, any sport in the U.S. is always good to watch.

Secondly, these cars are great fun to drive. Well, yeah, a lot of guys love driving it. In the first morning I've driven it, it's great fun to drive, fun to slide around. If you have such a competitive race series as you guys do, it's just great racing and great fun. That's what, for example, Romain missed in the last couple years. For him, it's great, as I can imagine.

I'm looking forward to experience that in Portland. When you put good cars, good fans and good people together, you get a good series.

Q. Ricardo, what did you see in Callum that made you want to try out for your team? Also, has Kyle Kaiser expressed any interest in INDYCAR or is he on your list of drivers to try and get?

RICARDO JUNCOS: That's a good question.

Obviously I'm following all these drivers from the beginning, right? I understand what they do through the steps and the careers in the last probably five years back. I always try to search for them, what they doing. We don't know each other, right? I know exactly what they do, the team they're racing with, against who, what series. When the opportunity coming, maybe you know who you dealing with.

Clearly for me was no question about the talent and what Callum can bring to the table. He's very young, but has a lot of experience. Like he express as well, all the testing in Formula 1, all the development that he's doing, is very important. I think it's a piece that we need going forward.

Then as far as Kyle Kaiser, yes, we shake down the car three weeks ago in Sebring and Kyle was the driver that

shake down the car. We obviously have a great relationship. He expressed a desire to be back in INDYCAR, but has been without driving for three years.

Like I said before, I know Kyle Kaiser, I know many of the drivers here, so I want to give a chance to someone that we don't know that can bring some (indiscernible) and take the time for our decision going forward.

Q. Was there an Juncos INDYCAR five years back?

RICARDO JUNCOS: Say again.

Q. Was there even a Juncos INDYCAR five years back?

RICARDO JUNCOS: Yeah.

Q. Was it Kyle or a different driver?

RICARDO JUNCOS: 2019 was the first time with Spencer Pigot and Sebastien Saavedra. We entered two cars in the Indy 500. You should know that (laughter).

THE MODERATOR: In all fairness, Asher was three when that happened.

CALLUM ILOTT: Being a bit harsh with him (smiling).

RICARDO JUNCOS: The mother is supposed to give all the information. I got to talk with her later.

THE MODERATOR: Thanks so much for you guys taking a quick break. Congratulations to all three and thanks for joining us this afternoon.

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