

NTT INDYCAR SERIES

News Conference

Monday, January 17, 2022

Felix Rosenqvist

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: Driver of the No. 7 Arrow McLaren Chevrolet. Felix, a new season. I know it was not the season you wanted last year, but the team has upgraded the engineering staff. It's a new year for you.

FELIX ROSENQVIST: It is. It's nice to have a clean start. Obviously learned a lot last year. It was a tough one to go through. I'm not going to lie about that. I think those seasons are what -- they make you stronger. When you're winning, things are easy, but I think those really define you, if that makes sense. Yeah, it's good to have a new start.

I think plenty of things have changed, but mainly everything is the same in the team. I mean, we're growing as a team. We have some new people on board on my car and in the team in general, but the foundation is the same, which I think is good, because I got to know everyone really well over the last year.

It's also good to keep doing what you're doing because I think end of the year we definitely picked up the pace, and not exactly where we wanted to be, but it's good to keep building on that where we ended last year.

THE MODERATOR: Talk about the optimism in the team.

FELIX ROSENQVIST: (Audio interruption.) There are going to be a lot of players in the mix in the front. So yeah, I'm excited to see what it's going to be when we hit Sebring.

Q. Now the team is more McLaren than it's ever been. Even though it's the same guys at the shop putting everything together, it's just kind of living up to the McLaren brand. How much do you feel that inside as a competitor?

FELIX ROSENQVIST: I think you definitely feel it, especially after the announcement was made last year that they're acquiring a bigger stake of the team. I think there's a change in how we think and how we operate, but I think the good thing, what they've done well, is to keep what we had before, as well. It's not like we're just a completely

new team. We kept our philosophies, which has worked. We're a very competitive team. We're a successful team.

I think McLaren has led us to just keep doing what we're doing with added support both on the engineering side or financial backing. I think in every area there's a lot of stones to be unturned during the off-season, and we're just trying to improve a little bit everywhere.

I think that's where INDYCAR is at this stage. You can't just find a massive gain anywhere. You have to keep working at the little details. I think that's what McLaren has allowed us to do.

Q. Because of what happened in Detroit, it really set you back to what you were hired at that team to do in the first place. How important is it for you to get off to a really fast start in 2022?

FELIX ROSENQVIST: It's for sure important to start the year not in the way that I did last year. I think it's also important to not try to overcomplicate and overachieve. I think we just need a solid start to the season to kind of get it going in a smooth way. That's the way you want to do it in INDYCAR. You don't want to risk it all in St. Pete and then have a lot of catch-up to do.

For sure we can't have a season like we had last year. I don't have to explain all the things that happened. I think Detroit was only a little part to be honest in everything that was going down.

We're excited and we have no reason to think that's going to happen again. As I say, if we can get off to a smooth start that's going to help a lot, as well.

Q. With your new engineer Craig Hampson, does it give you a bigger confidence level than you had before this?

FELIX ROSENQVIST: I've known Craig for quite some time now, and I think personally we get along. I think that's what makes me most excited to work with him.

He was on my radio already last year. He was calling my races for the last bit of the season.



But I like to talk with him about the car, and in general we spend quite a lot of time just discussing different things about setups and life in general, which I think is good. You kind of need that almost like father-and-son relationship with your engineer, and we spend a lot of time together. I feel like we really get along on a personal level, so I'm excited about that.

His record speaks for itself. He's been in this business for a long time, and INDYCAR is a category where you need that kind of hands-on experience. You can't just win by being let's say the most clever engineer. You have to kind of feel the sport and you know what's going on and see it with your own eyes. I think that's what Craig really has.

THE MODERATOR: To clarify, Craig was your strategist last year or he was just on the radio?

FELIX ROSENQVIST: Whatever you want to call it. He was in my ear. I don't know the official term for it. It's so different from what you see in Europe. In Europe you would say he was my engineer but here I guess you would say he was my strategist or calling the race.

Q. I wanted to know if you could explain in simple terms how different your car felt at the start of the year compared with how different it felt at the end of the year, and was it just a feel thing and a confidence building thing or was it simply actually making it faster?

FELIX ROSENQVIST: I think a bit of both. I think it was never an easy car to drive for me or Pato for that matter. It was definitely something to get used to in the beginning, and somewhere along -- we had a Portland test in the middle of the year and I think that's where I actually found -- we make some big grounds in the setup for my liking, and I think that gave me some confidence with the car, and it all kind of spiraled in the right direction, let's say.

As I said before, it's just details. It's not -- you'll never find something that is like, oh, now we're winning every race. It's always the small things.

But I think that's actually the time we found something that worked, and the results went a lot better from that point, so just that little added confidence just took me to another level really.

Those are the kind of things you want to find, and now we had an off-season to really look at things, and you sit back and go through all the data, go through all the races, and I've had some time to really work on myself and feel prepared in a different way compared to what it was at this time last year.

Q. Is it safe to say that your car is now set up so that you and Pato have diverged a lot more for 2022 in terms of car setups?

FELIX ROSENQVIST: I mean, that's a target at least, but with the amount of driving we get these days, nothing is for sure. I mean, we have one day of testing before we hit St. Pete, and there's a lot of expectation and a lot of things we're going to have to get done in that day at Sebring.

I'm not going to make any promises about what's been done or what's going to be done, but let's say we're pretty confident that we made some big grounds when it comes to drivability, which was the main issue for me last year.

Q. Just wanted to ask about Craig again. Wanted to ask how much of an initial impact you think he can have because obviously it's been a big topic of conversation about him joining you and I wonder if people can overestimate the impact on what you're going to be doing this year really.

FELIX ROSENQVIST: (Audio interruption.) Focus over the off-season. I'd say I have great hopes and expectations working with Craig, but I don't think -- that change alone is not going to change the world, but there's much more in the background going on let's say.

THE MODERATOR: What has been your off-season? Any big accomplishments or boxes checked or vacations taken?

FELIX ROSENQVIST: No vacations actually. There was quite a lot of time spent with family that I didn't really get to do last year, so that was nice. That felt needed after a tough year.

I've been spending quite a lot of time on the simulator doing some virtual championships over the winter, so that's been fun. It's not really for nothing more than fun really, but that's been eating up quite a lot of time.

Just kind of had some time to reflect on things and get some good old energy back into the system.

Q. Can you tell us something about Pato that people don't know.

FELIX ROSENQVIST: I think everyone knows everything about him because he's not really a closed person, is he.

Q. What is he like to have as a teammate?

FELIX ROSENQVIST: Great fun, man. I mean, you can

see I'm smiling right now just thinking about it. I think we have a perfect combo because both of us are pretty open with each other. We're not really hiding stuff. In general we have a good time. Like it makes the day go quicker when you have days like this or long days with filming or media or whatever. It just makes time pass quickly when you have fun with each other.

I guess that's more than you can expect sometimes in racing. You can't pick your teammates. Most of them are fast, but many of them are not maybe the guy you want to spend the day with.

No, it's good fun. We spend quite a lot of time outside of our professional hours, as well, and dinners and just hanging out. It's really good fun.

THE MODERATOR: Were you suggesting that today is a long day?

FELIX ROSENQVIST: Let's see. Let's see. It started early, that's for sure.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports