

NTT INDYCAR SERIES

News Conference

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Romain Grosjean

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: We are joined by the new man in the yellow suit. Good to see you in that. Romain Grosjean, you look very good in the DHL colors. Have you ever worn a bright yellow suit?

ROMAIN GROSJEAN: Not that bright, but I like it.

Q. I see on social media, have you been up here most of the week or at least last week getting further indoctrinated with the Andretti team?

ROMAIN GROSJEAN: Yeah, we came last year at Andretti, most of the drivers, everyone that could travel. So we were just missing a few of the guys, but it was nice, we had INDYCAR lights, the LMP 3, INDYCAR, drivers in the team, and we just had some fun. Also the guys from México. It was just a great day, having fun, doing some content, and then meeting the boys, as well.

All the crews are now formed, so obviously I know my engineer, but I could also meet the other engineer. I don't remember exactly -- it's different from Formula 1. The performance engineer would be named in F1, and then my mechanics, and then just being in the factory with the boys was good.

I'm actually going back Wednesday afternoon, sitting in a cockpit and making sure everything fits nicely before we go to Sebring.

Q. For as long as you've been in motorsports, does joining a new team give you a new sense of energy and a new kind of excitement?

ROMAIN GROSJEAN: Yes, of course. It's always great. I think last year joining INDYCAR, discovering the U.S. has been incredible. It was definitely a season I'll remember for a long time. And then getting the chance to drive for Andretti just adds to the fun, I would say. Incredible opportunity.

Yes, last year I came in INDYCAR not knowing if I was going to like the championship, if I was going to like the

car, the tracks, the American life, and this year it's a bit different because I come here, my whole family have moved -- we all moved to Florida. We're now settling in nicely in a new house. Everyone is happy. I come with one of the best team probably of the world, and on paper I've got all the ingredients that we need to be able to fight at the front. So that's definitely something I'd like to do, winning races, going pole position and see at the end of the championship where we stand.

Q. Just wanted to follow up on how you and your family are adapting to life now over in the U.S.

ROMAIN GROSJEAN: Yeah, life is great. I mean, apart from all the administrative stuff that are not fun when you move to a new place, the rest has been pretty good. We picked up a really nice area that we're happy with. It was not easy to do that via WhatsApp or FaceTime, choosing a house, but we picked up well and did everything we have to do, and now the kids are happy. They go to school. Boys are playing baseball, not something you can do back in Europe, so they're loving it. My daughter goes dancing. Everyone is having fun and can enjoy the sun of Florida and get to the training routine that I like to have before the season.

Q. What is one aspect of let's say the 2021 season you can't wait to do over again here in 2022?

ROMAIN GROSJEAN: Oh, just fighting at the front, fighting for pole position, fighting for podiums, fighting for wins. That's all that really matters to me. I think I'm in a time of my career where I do it for myself and for myself what I want to do is win races. That's what I like doing, and that's definitely what I'm going to try to do.

Q. It's your second season here and you're with Andretti Autosport. Do you feel any extra pressure to deliver solid results, or do you feel more confident having their support as you head into the new season?

ROMAIN GROSJEAN: Well, you know, I think pressure is just part of what we do, so I've been dealing with that for the last 20 years, I guess. It's just part of what we do.

I think, as I say, the relationship with the Andretti team has been really good. I've just felt really welcome in the family.



That's a word Michael uses very often, and it means quite a lot to me. I was also lucky to have my race engineer from last year that moved over, so that makes the transition quite smooth.

You know, obviously I know what I was capable of doing last year, but this year it's a new car, different team, so I just have to adapt, do the best I can there.

We'll know quite soon how we are doing. St. Pete is only a month and a half away, so it's just going to come quick.

Q. In the first year you achieved three podiums in this category. What will be your objective for this year?

ROMAIN GROSJEAN: I'm laughing because it's a question my oldest kid asked me this week. I want big. I want seven podiums. I hope I'm not going to disappoint him.

Q. This is your first time in your career that you will compete in the 500 miles in Indianapolis. What are your expectations?

ROMAIN GROSJEAN: I mean, big. It's a big event. Everyone talks about it a lot. I'm excited as everyone is to be in May, but I'm as well super excited to get competing in all the races. I believe the Indy 500 as long as you haven't discovered it you don't really know what it is, so it's hard to be excited for something that you don't know. But also I know what everyone tells me about it.

I was lucky to get my rookie orientation program done in early October. That went well. I enjoyed the place. Last year in the bus, I've been living a lot of time at the Indianapolis Motor Speedway. I absolutely love the place. I've got a good record with it with two podiums. Hopefully that keeps going, and that will be great.

Q. Obviously Colton was performing on a really high level last season and I guess it's going to be kind of a big story this season, as well, how you kind of compare against him as a teammate. Do you see it as a positive that you're in the same car and you get to work with him and see his data, or is it a bit more of a negative because you're trying to beat him in the same car on the same team?

ROMAIN GROSJEAN: No, I see it as a positive. I think Colton is a great guy. He's done really well last year. He was very impressive on many places. I'm actually looking forward to discovering what he does and what I can learn from his driving style. I think he's been doing INDYCAR for a few years now, so he's got some good experience, so I'm definitely going to try to use some of that.

I believe he's also going to look at my data and try to see what experience I can bring the team. Actually I met Colton here at the media content day last year, and I asked him a question, and I said, why don't you weave on the safety car like you do everywhere else, and he was very honest in his answer. He said, we think that doesn't work, there's too much marbles on track; just use the brake and the throttle together to warm up the tires. First restart of the year I gained three positions, so I was like, thanks Colton, that worked.

I asked him, but I said, why do you tell me that. He said, just because we want the best one to win and we don't care about keeping secrets from each other. As I say, right now that's the positive attitude that I really like, and I'm going to be the same, and if he's faster than me, if he's better than me, absolutely awesome. If I'm better than him, great. Some days will be one way, some days will be the other way.

Q. You've got a big team with lots of other drivers. Have you managed to speak to them all and does it feel like a good atmosphere so far?

ROMAIN GROSJEAN: Yes, very good. I think there's also Alex Rossi who's been competing at the front in INDYCAR for a few years. He was not far from the title, so definitely Alex will be fast, as well. Really looking forward to working with them. Devlin, a rookie, so I think he's got three good teammates to learn as fast as he can.

We've got a good team. I think I'm excited that we get going. It almost feels like the winter break is too long and we forgot how to drive. Hopefully I did not.

Q. I'm curious what you thought of the end of the Formula 1 finale.

ROMAIN GROSJEAN: I loved it. It was exciting. My heart was pumping like hell, and I think having two cars fighting over one lap for the world championship was amazing.

I think the wrong conception is to think that the world championship went on one lap. It was 22 Grand Prixes, and if you look at the full season, you know Max had the puncture in Baku, Valtteri Bottas crashed into Verstappen in Hungary, there at the Silverstone race. I think at the end if we look at how many points were lost by Verstappen, not necessarily by his fault, he was the one that deserved more the championship.

On the Abu Dhabi race, Lewis deserved more the championship; he got unlucky over the last lap. But as a race fan, I loved that last lap, and it was super exciting to

watch.

Q. Were you surprised they decided it with that one-lap shootout and the safety car?

ROMAIN GROSJEAN: Well, there's a few ways of seeing it. It would have been very strange to not unlap those cars and have Lewis first and then Max four car behind over one lap for the world championship. On the other hand, it was from -- from Lewis it was definitely not a great call, but as a TV fan, as a spectator, as for the sport, I think Michael Masi make the right decision. I don't think the championship would have been nice to finish under the safety car. It would not have been nice to finish with the guys being separated on track being first and second separated by a few cars.

As I say, I was more Lewis side than Max, so I was kind of, oh, Lewis lost it over the last part of the season; Max did the same, made an incredible job. But I thought it was so cool to get those two guys going together.

Q. Just wanted to check and see how your hand was doing after that surgery this off-season.

ROMAIN GROSJEAN: Yeah, it's going good. It definitely made me life better. It was quite a big surgery. The first one was about four hours and the second one was an hour and a half. It was a little bit heavier than I thought it was going to be.

But definitely we made things much better and kind of live on a daily basis much more normally than I used to before.

Q. Curious to know your perspective, you've got obviously a really big global following both from Formula 1 and just some of what you were able to do in INDYCAR last year. As INDYCAR continues to try and grow its following in the United States and internationally, what do you feel like this series needs to do to capitalize and continue to build its fan base from your own perspective of having built such a strong fan base around the world?

ROMAIN GROSJEAN: Oh, wow, that's a tough question. You know, I don't have any magic tricks, so I don't have any magic answer. I can only tell you that I saw the starting time of the season this year, and I think for Europe they are in a much better place than they were last year. Having a race here around midday eastern time, even morning, makes it at least 5:00, 6:00 p.m. back in Europe, 7:00 p.m., so that's good. So that's definitely a good time for Europe to be watching, for South America, as well, so that's a step in the right direction.

Obviously I think for INDYCAR it's to keep pushing all the broadcasters outside of the U.S. to do a better job, just to communicate more, to push the program ahead and forward.

But definitely -- I know France last year did 100 percent on viewing, so they doubled what they were doing, so that's great. Still not Formula 1, but it's getting there.

You know, I think there's many other things that can be done, and the beauty with INDYCAR is it's open for everyone to come in. There's so much behind the scenes between the drivers living in the bus, the team being open. I think there's definitely room to make some cool content.

Q. How would INDYCAR benefit from something like "Drive to Survive"? We talk about how open and welcoming the series is, but we also don't maybe often get the behind-the-scenes perspective that "Drive to Survive" shows. I know maybe it's not accurate or it's exaggerated but how would INDYCAR benefit from something like that?

ROMAIN GROSJEAN: I would be very happy to see something similar be done in INDYCAR. I think there's still a perception that a little bit, what is INDYCAR. It's like the GT cars running on ovals. Oh, no, that's NASCAR. It's just not the same. For people that are not a hard-core fan, they still got a little bit wrong.

Yes, there's many platforms out there. Definitely Peacock broadcasting the 17 races live, it's going to be a good thing this year, as well as the TV channel.

Yes, if Amazon or Netflix or whoever wants to come and do a series behind the scenes, I'd be more than happy to get on board.

Q. Off the 2020 F1 season you were supposed to get a test session with Mercedes which didn't happen for whatever reason. Is that still in the works at any point?

ROMAIN GROSJEAN: Yes, I sent a message to Toto after Abu Dhabi. Well, I left a couple of weeks, a few weeks going by, and then I sent a message to Toto, and he did reply. He I started thank you, and then the last sentence was, we need to get you in that car this year.

Yes, it's still on the card. There were a few things last year that didn't make it easy.

This year I cannot go at the French Grand Prix because we're racing in Iowa the same weekend. But definitely Mercedes is keen to do it. I am keen to do it, even though

my neck will be dying because I've lost part of the muscle there. You can ask Pato what it was like.

But yes, I mean, we still want to do it, and if it happens, great, but it's just -- the main focus is now trying to win races with Andretti.

Q. You mentioned Sasha and Simon in baseball; do you have any baseball skills?

ROMAIN GROSJEAN: Absolutely none.

Q. How is your throwing of the ball, because we might have you throw out say a first pitch.

ROMAIN GROSJEAN: I mean, it's not -- I can practice with the boys, but for us it's quite cool. It's a very American sport that we don't have in Europe I don't think. I've never seen it. The boys enjoy it. I think it's just cool.

I'm probably going to try to hit some balls at one point. I actually went -- we went cage batting this summer, and I wanted to go full speed. It was a bad idea. I think the machine was wrongly set up. That was the problem. It wasn't me.

Q. They are seven and five?

ROMAIN GROSJEAN: Eight and six.

Q. You mentioned some things about your hand you can now do at home. What are a couple examples that it's now easier?

ROMAIN GROSJEAN: Just beforehand if I was doing some hope work or whatever, I would hit my hand, it would be really painful. Now it's much more normal. It's still healing and there's still the scar -- the inflammation is still here because it was early November, so that's only two months, but yes, now I can just put my shoe using my finger that I couldn't do before, things like that. It's better. I'm also a little bit less careful with the sun, using sun cream, and just when I'm in the water, it's just nicer. It is a good step in a good direction.

Q. Both those surgeries were in November or just the second?

ROMAIN GROSJEAN: Both.

Q. Four hours and one and a half the same week?

ROMAIN GROSJEAN: No, it was two weeks apart. The first one was to do the graft and remove the burning part, and the second one was to remove about 60 to 80 stitches

because I had 120, so we had to do them in a surgery. It was just a little bit too long.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you very much. Good luck to you.

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