

NTT INDYCAR SERIES

News Conference

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David Malukas

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: David Malukas, rookie with Dale Coyne Racing, has joined. First time I've had the opportunity to converse with you. Welcome.

DAVID MALUKAS: Well, hello. Thanks for having me.

THE MODERATOR: How has your day been so far? Any pranking going on by the veterans?

DAVID MALUKAS: No. Everybody has been really busy just going from room to room really. No, I've been having a blast trying to make the most fun out of it as I can.

THE MODERATOR: Any silly questions from our fellow media?

DAVID MALUKAS: Nope, because I already forgot (laughter).

THE MODERATOR: Talk about the optimism of this organization. It's a team that as we kindly say punches above its weight, has a great history of success. Dale Coyne is a great strategist, has great leadership. Talk about your optimism.

DAVID MALUKAS: Yeah, no, the opportunity that we have here is incredible really. I remember being a little kid actually, looking at the TV and seeing Scott Dixon, all of them drive. Now I'm going to be having the opportunity to go and compete side by side with them.

To be with Dale Coyne Racing, as soon as I went in for my test at Barber, everyone is so friendly, like I've known them for years. We've had great connection. Since then we've just been looking forward for the season to start.

THE MODERATOR: You've been described as fast, fast and fast.

DAVID MALUKAS: Really?

THE MODERATOR: You get pretty high marks for that. What expectations do you have for your season?

DAVID MALUKAS: Expectations are I personally will be focusing on the rookie season and also just learning as much as possible.

I think going against these veterans, it's an opportunity for me to learn as much as I can from them. As I said, I'm only 20 years old. They have quite a few years on me of maturity and driving. I'm going to try to absorb as much as I can from it and see where we're at by the end of the season.

THE MODERATOR: Tony Kanaan's 24th INDYCAR season.

DAVID MALUKAS: And I'm 20 years old (laughter).

THE MODERATOR: Your teammate pointed out you're more than half his age.

DAVID MALUKAS: Yes. I hope to absorb all that wisdom within the season.

THE MODERATOR: Questions, please.

Q. Have you set defined expectations outside of the Rookie of the Year? X number of podiums, top 10s?

DAVID MALUKAS: I would like that, yes. For expectations for myself, I try not to set these really, really extremely high expectations. If I don't hit them, it will mentally scar me. Even if I say it won't, I think it will. I just want to make sure that my mental state is always at 100% because I think that is the most important.

Q. You spent three or four years in the Road to Indy. Do you think it's done a good job preparing you for this step?

DAVID MALUKAS: Oh, 100%. The Road to Indy series is just incredible. Going from USF2000 to Indy Pro 2000, they kind of all go up from the steps to each other.

I think the Indy Lights car does such a good job to prepare you. It's a tough car to drive, actually tougher than INDYCAR. When I did the test at Barber, yes, a lot of things were new, yes it was hard, yes it was incredible. At



the same time I felt like I was ready for it.

Q. How much time have you gotten to spend with Takuma and what specifically do you think you can learn from him?

DAVID MALUKAS: Takuma, man, he's so just happy all the time. He's such a good man. When I talk to him, I just feel like the world could be ending and I'll be having sushi with him in Japan, it's no problem. He's so awesome.

I think the best thing I'll learn from him is probably any oval strategies. He's very talented. I already spoke with him about it. Yeah, I think mainly on ovals.

I mean, there's definitely different car characteristics that we were talking about. We only had one kind of meal together. I'm going to have to still go more into depth about that.

Q. What is your favorite track on the INDYCAR schedule? Is there a place you wished INDYCAR would race at?

DAVID MALUKAS: My favorite track is Road America. However, a track that I would want INDYCAR to go to? I mean, within the States, there's nothing that really rings a bell. Maybe in Canada. Montreal would be cool. Within the States, yeah, nothing I can really think of on the top of my head.

Q. What are your expectations from this year in your season of rookie? Why Road America is the track favorite for you?

DAVID MALUKAS: You're going to have to say that again.

Q. Why Road America is your track favorite in the 2022 season calendar?

DAVID MALUKAS: My favorite track? Why is Road America...

Road America is like a home track of mine. I'm from Chicago. I actually used to go to Road America when my dad was racing. He did some Corvette 2005 stuff. He always went to Road America. I remember watching him as a kid.

Now that I go there myself and race on that track, it's just so high speed. The thing is INDYCAR is going to make it even better. That's probably going to be one of the very few tracks we're going to be hitting the limiter in INDYCAR. I'm very excited.

Q. One of the things I was speaking to Dale about you, a slight worry, was your build. I was wondering how well you have beefed up, growing your neck muscles and stuff like that.

DAVID MALUKAS: You have to judge from here. That's the one thing, as soon as he saw me after Barber, he's like, That was pretty good, but man, you're weak.

You look at Newgarden, the man is ripped.

No, I mean, since that Barber test I've been trying every single day, three times a day, as hard as I can to just be at the gym. I've been trying to find different ways to motivate me, finding some new music taste that's helped me along the way.

I'm trying my best. I can look in the mirror. I have a little movement on the triceps and looks a little bit better now.

Q. Obviously it's a particularly tough time to be a rookie with so little testing. Are you expecting to be able to extract the most out of whatever the DCR team can offer you at St. Pete? Are you expecting to bang on the pace straightaway?

DAVID MALUKAS: Well, I'd say about 90% mainly because the extra 10% is I think going to be from how much time I've had off this off-season. I think it's still going to take a little bit of time for me to take the rust out. It is a long time.

I think we'll have one test day on February 14th. That's just not a lot. Then going straight into St. Pete which is a street course.

The team will give me everything I need, no doubt about it. The main thing for me is just chemistry between the team. At Barber, the one taste I've had of it, they've just been 10 out of 10. I felt like I was just at home.

From team side, yeah, I feel like I'll have everything I need. It's more if I can make sure after this huge break that I'm right back into it.

Q. What is the biggest takeaway from the INDYCAR test that you had?

DAVID MALUKAS: Biggest takeaway from the INDYCAR test? It is so incredibly fast, just so much grip through the corners. I mean, realistically I knew that Dale Coyne was calling me weak, that's what I got from the test. We did do like a hundred laps there, but that was the span of a whole day.

No, I mean, it's just incredible. There's so much speed. The one thing, the first lap I was just screaming the whole time because the car can just hold it. I couldn't hold myself and the car was perfectly fine flat out through all the corners. That's my biggest takeaway. Those tires can hold (smiling).

Q. What do you feel you need to work on as a driver to be even better?

DAVID MALUKAS: You'll have to stay it one more time.

Q. What do you feel you need to work on this upcoming INDYCAR season as a driver to be even stronger in your rookie campaign?

DAVID MALUKAS: I think it's going to be consistency. There's a lot of new factors going in from INDYCAR with the fuel saving, tire saving. That's all going to be brand-new, fresh and new to me. It's going to be interesting to see how quickly we can catch onto that, catch onto the strategies, have the consistency with it throughout the rest of the season.

Q. What are your thoughts about Callum and Christian when it comes to the rookie battle?

DAVID MALUKAS: Callum I've heard many stories about him. I've seen many things. He's a very professional, very good driver.

Christian Lundgaard I actually raced with him in go-karts in 2016 in Bahrain. We were with the Ricciardo car from F1. At the time he was better than me. We'll see how it is this time.

No, he's very good. Throughout those times within the team, he was kind of like the All-Star of the Ricciardo car at the time. He's a very good friend. I talked with him recently. Yeah, really good bloke.

Q. Did you set a target for yourself this season, certain position in the championship? Is it just learning and getting better every race?

DAVID MALUKAS: Mainly just learning, getting better every race. If I were to say a goal, it would be focusing on the rookie championship. You can ask me that again once the season starts. Maybe we'll see how things kerfuffle in there. You ask me that question again, I'll give you a more straightforward one.

Q. How did you find the aeroscreen in your first test? Something you don't really think about or was it kind of tricky?

DAVID MALUKAS: So hard to get inside that car. I mean, thankfully I had the seat fit beforehand so I was able to practice before I was in front of people on pit lane at the Barber test. I tripped and fell many times. In the end I figured it out. I had massive bruises under my arm trying to figure out different ways.

Once you're on the track, you can't see that aeroscreen. I honestly forgot it was there. It was actually quite nice, now I don't have to get the little covers for the visor anymore because now I have the whole windshield. You feel very safe.

One thing is if the air tube comes off or something it gets really hot in there.

Q. Do you think your performance in INDYCAR will attract attention and you will be recognized in Lithuania?

DAVID MALUKAS: Yeah, I don't know. I really hope so with this INDYCAR season, I hope we can perform well and bring some attention to myself.

Yeah, for Lithuania, I am really excited to kind of support them and get the fans in as well. I've never seen more supporting fans. They are a little bit crazy. I remember they actually came in the Indy Lights season at the IMS, at the road course. Yeah, the officials were kind of screaming at them to get away because they were jumping over fences and stuff. I'm really excited to show the Lithuanian group the INDYCAR season.

Q. I can tell you many fans from Poland support you.

DAVID MALUKAS: Thank you.

THE MODERATOR: With no further questions, we appreciate your time.

DAVID MALUKAS: Thank you.

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