

# NTT INDYCAR SERIES

## News Conference

Monday, January 17, 2022

### Marcus Ericsson

#### Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: Marcus Ericsson has joined us. May just be my observation but I see you walk in here knowing how well you performed last season through the top five a lot, finished top six, two wins, you look and feel like an INDYCAR driver these days. Do you feel pretty confident in this sport now?

MARCUS ERICSSON: Yeah, I do. I think I've had some steady progress in my three years in the series. Last year was definitely kind of a breakthrough for me getting that first win out of the way, having a super strong season, a consistent season with a lot of top 10s, actually running in the top five for most of it there in the second half. Lost Colton in the last race. But still it was a very strong year.

It's been a good off-season. We've been analyzing it, trying to understand how to improve and be even stronger for this season. I'm really liking where we are at the moment going into this new season.

THE MODERATOR: When we got to Nashville, you'd already had a race win, then of course you had the early race situation where your car got vertical. I thought the last half of the race when you and Colton were dueling, just a terrific drive. After your years of not being able to be in a position to win races, that's what racing should feel like?

MARCUS ERICSSON: Yeah, that was one of the reasons I came to America in the first place, was to compete for wins and podiums again. In Formula 1 it depends a lot what team you're in. For five years I was not in a position to be able to do that.

It's been fun since coming here to know that you have that ability or that chance, let's say. Of course, to get that first win in Detroit was very special. I think like you talk about that Nashville performance, the second half of that race, defending from Colton, all the restarts and everything, was definitely one of my best performances of my career.

Yeah, it was a lot of good memories from last year that I bring with me.

THE MODERATOR: To put three cars in the top six in the standings, you have to think this season could be a repeat of that?

MARCUS ERICSSON: I think so, yeah. We have a very strong team. We work so well together. I think that's one of the sort of reasons why we are so strong, is that we have all of us drivers in the team, me Scott and Alex, but also Jimmie and T.K. We are really working well together. We're different characters, different personalities, but we all work really hard together and want to succeed as a team. I think that's been getting the best out of each other last year. It was a big reason why we were so strong.

THE MODERATOR: Questions, please.

**Q. Both of your wins have come on street courses now. Are you thinking maybe you can become a street course specialist or are you looking to be more all around?**

MARCUS ERICSSON: I don't know. I've always liked street courses. I had the lap record in Macau for almost 10 years I think from F3 there. I've always gone well on street courses. So, yeah, maybe wasn't a surprise for me that I won my first race on a street course.

Still most of my life I've been driving on road courses for the most part of it. I do think that's maybe a bit more natural for me. But I like it here in America on the street courses, the sort of challenge they present, bumpy, difficult to drive. That sort of challenge with very little room for errors is something that I like in racing. That's one of the reasons why I like to drive on street courses.

**Q. I think you ended with 12 top 10s throughout the year. Is that something you're looking to continue, or are you looking to take a few more chances?**

MARCUS ERICSSON: I think the consistency is a key in INDYCAR. That was the reason why I was running for a championship there deep into the season last year. I aim to continue that. Instead of a lot of seventh or eighth finishes, trying to change that to top fives. That's how we're going to be able to challenge really for the championship.



Keep that consistency, but try and, yeah, improve top 10s to top fives.

**Q. You're obviously heading off to Daytona next. What is it about endurance racing that's interesting to you? Do you have any bucket list races that you would like to do?**

MARCUS ERICSSON: Yeah, I'm real excited to go to Daytona. It's been sort of on my list to try and get to do that race, yeah, since I came here two years ago to America.

It's obviously a very prestigious race to be part of. But I think also it's a perfect way to sort of get the year started, especially these days with very limited testing. It's a great way to sort of get up to speed with the driving before the INDYCAR season. It's a win-win for me.

Of course, going there with Chip Ganassi Racing, with a great lineup, it's going to be really a big opportunity for me. I'm really excited to take that new challenge. I've never done any endurance racing before. It's definitely going to be a lot to learn for me. I'm really looking forward to it.

**Q. Any other endurance races you'd want to do down the line?**

MARCUS ERICSSON: I mean, of course Le Mans is something you want to do as a racing driver. That's definitely on my list as well in the future.

**Q. You talked about both the steps you took last year and the steps you want to take this year being alongside Alex Palou in his big rise last year. Is there any one or two lessons that you took from being around him in the year he won his championship that you feel like you might be able to apply to your push here in 2022?**

MARCUS ERICSSON: I think the key, Alex did a very strong year, didn't do hardly any mistakes. That's one of the things. I think also what Alex did really well was that he qualified very high up the field most of the races. That have shown again and again that you usually stay out of a lot of trouble if you qualify a bit higher.

I felt like I improved that quite a bit last year compared to my first two seasons in INDYCAR. That helped me finish higher up in the races. The area for me is to try to qualify a bit higher up. I think that was why Alex put himself in a good position to score points every time on race day.

Qualify a bit higher up and limit the mistakes, I think that's the key.

**Q. Your improvement in qualifying last year was noted. After you got finished with the season, looked back, was it taking a little bit more risks, more setup driven, anything consistently you could point to that led to the improvement?**

MARCUS ERICSSON: I think one thing was the understanding of the tires, to get more out of the alternate tire. I think I sort of unlocked some keys there to do that on a regular basis. In combination with my race engineer, Brad Goldberg, helping me to set up the car more the way I need to have the car set up to get the most out of my driving style.

We've been working together for two years. He really knows what I need from a race car to go fast. He's been giving me that a lot of the times last year. Now over the off-season we've been digging into the details even more than last year trying to learn from it, aim to sort of have that ability to get the car where I want it for as many races as possible obviously.

I think that relationship, engineer and driver, it's so important in INDYCAR. I'm lucky to have such a good race engineer in Brad that really works hard to give me the car I need.

**Q. How do you see the team towards the new season? Do you believe you will have a real opportunity for fighting for the championship this year?**

MARCUS ERICSSON: Yeah, I think finishing sixth last year, it's natural for me to aim for the championship this year. I had three seasons with good, steady improvement. Yeah, the next step for me is to really challenge for that championship. That's the goal. Especially being in a team like Chip Ganassi Racing, you're going to have the tools to do that. That's definitely the goal for me. I'm working really hard to be on that level from the get-go in St. Pete.

**Q. You are at a great team, was a championship contender last year. (Indiscernible) points to progress and achieve the championship?**

MARCUS ERICSSON: The points progress?

**Q. Yes.**

MARCUS ERICSSON: I think, again, the consistency is the key seriously. In the car, to not crash out of the races or finish in the back of the field. You need to always be within the top 10 or even top five on a regular basis.

It's hard. The field these days in INDYCAR, it's just



incredible depth. It's very easy to be P20 in this field. I think that's the hard part, to always be up front.

Also we go to so many different types of tracks. Yeah, it's a tough championship for sure. I think I couldn't be within a better team to do it. I'm very thankful for that. Hope that we can deliver on all types of tracks.

**Q. What do you think your countryman Linus Lundqvist?**

MARCUS ERICSSON: Sorry, again?

**Q. What do you think about your countryman Lundqvist in Indy Lights?**

MARCUS ERICSSON: Yeah, no, I was following him closely last year. I think he did a very good season, winning races and running up front.

Yeah, I'm not sure if he's confirmed, his plans for this year. I'm hoping he's staying here in America, hopefully in Indy Lights, trying to win that championship. I think he should have a good chance of doing that in a second year. He's a big talent.

It's good to see him and Rasmus Lindh, another young Swede, here in America racing, that we have not only me and Felix in INDYCAR, but also younger drivers in the junior categories here in the States.

**Q. Last year there was a lot of rumors regarding buyout by Andretti Autosport, Colton Herta would go to F1. What piece of advice would you give to him?**

MARCUS ERICSSON: Yeah, I saw the rumors. I think Colton is very talented, a good driver. It's difficult for me to say advice that way.

I think he's happier in INDYCAR. He's going to be a big threat for the championship this year I'm sure. Let's see. But of course I understand if he's also looking at Formula 1 if he gets the opportunity there. It's difficult for me to say from the outside.

**Q. You mentioned having a strong back end to the 2021 season, finishing sixth, the goal being a championship contender. Are you the type of driver who likes to fly under the radar when it comes to being a championship contender or do you want the fans and competitors to know you're a contender?**

MARCUS ERICSSON: I don't know. Like since I came here to INDYCAR, I seem to be flying under the radar for quite a bit. Even last year winning some races, it felt like I

was maybe flying a bit under the radar, which is fine by me. I don't mind that. It's okay.

I don't mind the other way around either, to be honest. Yeah, I just try and focus on my stuff. I know I have the ability. I know I have the people around me that I need to succeed. I try and focus on that. If people notice it or not, I don't really care. In the end of the day it's the results that counts. That's what I'm focusing on.

**Q. The calendar was released recently, especially the broadcast times, brought back a bit. Beneficial for European viewers. Is that something that you and some of the other European drivers have been talking to INDYCAR about, try to think of those considerations?**

MARCUS ERICSSON: We've been talking about it. Yeah, I was pleasantly surprised when I saw the calendar and the start times. Like you said, it's really good for the European audiences. Most of the races are starting in a good time slot, almost primetime in Europe on Sunday nights. It's really good.

I know in Sweden me and Felix have a big following, a lot of people watching our races. I know in other European countries as well with more and more European drivers.

I think it's great for the series because there is a big interest in motorsports in Europe. Everyone that I know that have started to watch INDYCAR the last couple years have loved it because the way the racing is, how entertaining it is.

I think it's clever by the series to put it more easy for people in Europe to watch because it's just going to help the series grow, and that's going to help over time.

**Q. Obviously with Jimmie Johnson going full-time with you this season, what do you think he'll bring to the team in terms of his oval experience? Do you think he'll bring anything extra to the team?**

MARCUS ERICSSON: Yeah, I think so. He was a great asset to the team already last year. He had a very steep learning curve to go through. I think all of us was very impressed with his progress throughout the year, the way he was sort of competing towards the end of it.

I know already from his test in Texas that he was straight up to speed straightaway. Definitely his experience from ovals in NASCAR is something that's going to translate well to the ovals in INDYCAR, I'm 100% sure about that.

He's going to be a great asset for us to have in the team on



the full season. I'm going to try and sort of pick his brain as much as possible when it comes to the ovals because I'm sure he has some tricks that he can teach out that's going to help all of us.

I feel great. We have such a strong lineup again this year in Chip Ganassi Racing. I'm very, very happy and proud to be part of that.

THE MODERATOR: To give a sense for the Swedish fan base, would the fan base appreciate an INDYCAR championship or an Indy 500 win more? Not your perspective, their perspective.

MARCUS ERICSSON: No, I think in Sweden still and Europe, people don't understand how big the 500 is. I think probably the championship is a bigger thing over in Europe and Sweden. It was the same before I came here to America. I didn't really understand how big the 500 is.

I would say the championship probably for the people back home. But the more me and Felix talk about the 500 and how special it is, I think people understand more and more.

I say it to everyone, that you need to experience it yourself. You need to come to a 500 to really understand it. That's the cool thing. I've seen a lot of Swedes coming over, unfortunately not the last two years, but in '19 there were a lot of Swedes there. I'm sure if borders are open this year, there's going to be a lot of Swedish fans coming to the 500 this year.

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