

NTT INDYCAR SERIES

News Conference

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Marcus Ericsson

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: We've been joined by the third-place finisher in today's race, Marcus Ericsson, driver of the No. 8 Huski Chocolate Chip Ganassi Racing Honda.

Marcus, talk a little bit about the run today.

MARCUS ERICSSON: It was a great day for us in the No. 8 Huski Chocolate Honda. We started a bit further back than we would have liked. I didn't really have a great run yesterday in qualifying. Had some work to do.

But I did a really good start, some good restarts, then my guys did really good strategy. My car was pretty difficult to drive in the beginning of the race, but we adjusted throughout the race to get it better. That was pretty helping me.

Huge team effort today, get all the way from 14th up to the podium, yeah, a very good day. I'm very happy with that.

THE MODERATOR: All the work that was done yesterday to run in the high line, how effective was that today?

MARCUS ERICSSON: I don't know if it was that or the extra downforce, whatever. The track was so much more raceable today compared to a year ago. It was really fun out there because you could actually overtake people, go side by side through 1-2, even 3-4 sometimes. It was really raceable out there. It was really fun to race today. We had the last two years where it's been difficult to overtake.

That was a huge improvement. I hope also it was more fun to watch as well.

THE MODERATOR: Final stint, how much of it was fuel saving and trying to run all out to chase down the Penske guys?

MARCUS ERICSSON: We were a bit limited on we were struggling more on tires. That was the limitation for us during the run. I was attacking Josef harder towards the beginning of the stint. Towards the end struggling with tire

wear, so I had to settle for third.

THE MODERATOR: Questions, please.

Q. When did you get so good at ovals?

MARCUS ERICSSON: I don't know. But it's been something, to be honest, ever since I came to INDYCAR, I've enjoyed ovals. There's been a lot to learn coming from European racing, no oval experience. It's been a quite steep learning curve.

I felt pretty comfortable on them, but I haven't really got any results on them until today. That was one of the big areas that we focused on in the off-season this year, to really analyze, for me to look at lots of data, onboarders, trying to understand oval racing better so I could get some more results on the ovals.

If you look at the championship last year on road and street, I think I was second or third in that championship, but on ovals 12th or 13th. An area we've been focusing on this season. To get to the first oval of the year, get my first podium on the oval, I think shows all that work that I and my engineer and the rest of the 8 car group, Dario, all the work we put in is paying off.

Q. You were third, your teammates were five, six, seven, something like that. Did you collectively have a plan? Have you improved as an organization? Did you work with Jimmie at all or did he even need it?

MARCUS ERICSSON: Jimmie was a great asset for us this weekend with all his experience on ovals. You could definitely feel already from lap one this is more like his home, driving on the ovals. Even though the cars are very different than what he's used to, he's been helping a lot this weekend for all of us, I think.

Like I said, to have four cars in the top eight, I think that's super impressive team effort. It bodes well for the rest of the year to have that many strong cars and drivers on the ovals. That's going to help us especially for the 500 coming up.

Q. You said you hope it was a better race to watch. It was a much better race to watch. Was it a better race



to drive, more fun out there?

MARCUS ERICSSON: 100%. Ovals, it's a lot of fun to race, a lot of tactical and all that. Sometimes when we go racing, it's very hard to overtake on the ovals, then it gets very static racing, you get frustrated because you cannot really make moves.

That was not the case today. I think whatever INDYCAR has done, they've done a great job. We need to sort of understand what we did right this weekend to get the racing this much better because it was a lot more fun when you knew you could get around people, not easy, but you could get around people. That was making a huge difference for the enjoyment behind the wheel, I would say.

Q. Did you feel like this type of race was possible after practice yesterday? Will talked a little bit about the work they did in the midday session, high line, still didn't feel very confident. You saw a lot of passes, two-wide racing today.

MARCUS ERICSSON: Yeah, I think we need to understand if that extra practice that we did yesterday, if that was the reason why we could run two lanes today. We definitely need to do this if we come back here to Texas, which I hope, because, yeah, you could run two wide in 1-2, stay there two wide. That just makes the race so much better because you don't have to bail out in turn one when you don't pass or clear someone. It's definitely made a difference.

I think also the extra downforce helped there. Even if it is a bit more slick in the second line, extra downforce, hold your foot down, the car would stay. It was definitely a big, big improvement. Yeah, like I said, again, I think INDYCAR has done a great job there.

Q. Did you go into the race thinking that two-wide was going to be possible or something you had to watch and see?

MARCUS ERICSSON: My plan was to go the high line in turn one. I thought it was going to work for the start of the race, when it's a bit slower. I think I got around three or four cars there on lap one just going around them in turn one.

After that I was sort of settling in, not wanting to play too much with it. I saw some other people going up there, sort of holding it in the high line. I sort of was brave enough to try myself, as well. It worked. Then you get confidence. I did quite a few passes around there, the outside in 1-2.

Q. In St. Petersburg you said one of the biggest things

you needed to work on was ovals, that the difference between P10 and winning on an oval is quite big. How much of that gap do you think you've made up?

MARCUS ERICSSON: I think, yeah, like you said there, we as a group focused a lot on the ovals this off-season to improve because I feel like that was the biggest reason why I wasn't, like, really in the fight for the championship all the way last year. On the road and streets, I had enough points to take it down to the last race. Just lacking too much on the ovals.

It's been a big focus for us. We worked really hard. I worked really hard, studied I don't know how many onboard videos of Scott Dixon, Indy, trying to understand the racing on the ovals especially.

I think that's so much experience, being tactical, thinking ahead, being on top of your tools and all that. It's been something, like I said, I've been working a lot on. It's such a great feeling to see that work is paying off, we get this podium.

Also a bit like last year, when I got my first win, it was a big relief. You go on from there because you get a lot of confidence. I'm hoping and thinking it will be the same thing here: I get my first podium on an oval, build on that and go to Victory Lane next time.

Q. How much more do you feel you need to learn on an oval to be sitting in the center chair?

MARCUS ERICSSON: Getting closer. Last year Helio winning the 500, all these experienced guys, they are strong on the ovals. It's not by coincidence. I think experience is very important on the ovals.

This is my fourth year, I cannot blame inexperience too much any more. It's time to step it up and I think I've done that today.

Q. Your teammate who has a ton of oval experience here, but not in this car, how impressed were you by Jimmie's run today?

MARCUS ERICSSON: I didn't see him once today on track, but I saw him on the results list. It's super impressive. I think already from lap one yesterday, you could tell he was a lot more comfortable, this felt more at home for him compared to the road and street courses, even though he's improved a lot there, as well.

I think for us as a team, he's been a great asset with his experience. Even though an INDYCAR is very different to NASCAR, I think his oval experience is still paying off a lot.



I've been able to ask him questions this weekend to learn things from him.

It bodes really well to have all four Ganassi cars in the top eight. It just means coming the 500, we're going to be super strong and have so many cars to work with, sort of help each other. Also adding T.K., he's not too bad around that place either.

It's really good to see. I'm really happy for Jimmie as well. I know how much he's worked to get results in INDYCAR. He's had a big mountain to climb. To get this result today I think is huge for him. I'm super happy for him, as well.

Q. When he crossed the line, I think Eric came on the radio and said, Let's go win the Indy 500. Is that a possibility for Jimmie Johnson?

MARCUS ERICSSON: I'm going to make it hard for him because I'm planning to win it. But if I can't win it, I would be happy to see Jimmie win it. He's going to have the car. Chip Ganassi is one of the best in the sport. I think he always has experience. It will be an interesting month.

Q. You have had your own experiences with bad luck. Any words of support for Felix after yet another race where things didn't work out for him?

MARCUS ERICSSON: I mean, I have no idea where he even finished or if he finished. It's a bit hard. I was really happy for him yesterday. Obviously he's one of my best friends in racing, fellow Swede. I think to see him on pole was a great effort. Like I said, I have no idea what happened for him today.

THE MODERATOR: Mechanical. They had to retire the car.

MARCUS ERICSSON: Yeah, that's not fun.

Q. You spent a lot of time in the off-season talking about how you've improved each step of the way, every season you've been here. This makes you a legitimate championship contender. I think the answer is probably pretty obvious yes. How much do you start thinking strategy here to win a championship?

MARCUS ERICSSON: Very much so. I went into this season with the goal to win the championship. I was sixth last year. Running up front in the championship, winning races.

Started off this year, St. Petersburg, I think we should have been on the podium without the pit lane penalty that put me back from fourth to 25th. I think that shows how much

pace me and the car had there.

To come to Texas, superspeedway, finish on the podium, we're going to be contenders. We will be all year. I'm feel confident, ready to take that fight and get the championship.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you, Marcus.

MARCUS ERICSSON: Thank you.

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