

NTT INDYCAR SERIES

News Conference

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Alexander Rossi

Taylor Kiel

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: Welcome, everybody. We are joined today by Taylor Kiel, president of Arrow McLaren SP, and Alexander Rossi, driver for Andretti Autosport.

Yesterday Arrow McLaren SP announced that Alexander Rossi will be joining the team next year in 2023 and beyond as part of a multi-year deal. We wanted to provide some availability to ask any questions you may have.

We'll start with Alex. Why did you want to join Arrow McLaren SP?

ALEXANDER ROSSI: First of all, thanks for having me. This is a cool moment.

I think it's been very obvious what Zak and Taylor have done over the last couple of years. Arrow McLaren SP's competitive. The overall performance of the team has exponentially increased every event we go to. That was a pretty easy decision for me to see them as a championship contender. Going forward into the future, I think it's only going to get better.

Q. Taylor, what attracted the team to a driver like Alex?

TAYLOR KIEL: Alex has a fantastic résumé, a good fit for our organization. In the short amount of time I've known him, he's certainly going to elevate what we're doing as a great teammate, a great driver for our team.

It's really a no-brainer for us. We're trying to elevate on track, off track, bring in the best talent that we can.

THE MODERATOR: We'll open it up to questions.

Q. Alex, how excited are you to start this new chapter in your career?

ALEXANDER ROSSI: Very excited. I've drove for Andretti for quite some time. There's been a lot of success that

we've had there. I'm forever appreciative to Michael and Bryan Herta for the opportunity back in 2016.

Life ebbs and flows. I think it was time for a change. Looking forward to getting started. There's a lot left to do in the 2022 season. That's the main focus right now.

Come the end of September, 2023 will be a very exciting time for me.

Q. Taylor, how exciting is it for you to have Alex?

TAYLOR KIEL: Very excited. It's been a goal of ours to expand to three entries. Bringing Alex onboard automatically makes that a contender.

The goal for us is certainly not to detract from the other two. Bringing Alex in, the team we're going to build around him, is very exciting for me. It gives us three great opportunities every week. We're confident that Alex will help push our program forward with the experience and knowledge he has.

It ticks all the boxes in my opinion.

Q. Alex, after all the years you've driven a Honda, how interesting and intrigued are you to see what Chevy has to offer?

ALEXANDER ROSSI: It's no secret, the performance that Chevrolet has had at the start of this season. Obviously Arrow McLaren SP's performance in the 500 with the results they got showed it's a very, very competitive battle between Honda and Chevrolet, as it has been since I joined the series in 2016.

Again, very, very grateful to Honda and the opportunities they've provided to me. I've won a lot of races in a lot of categories with them outside of INDYCAR as well. That relationship has been phenomenal.

On the Chevrolet side of things, I worked very closely with them quite some time when I was at Andretti. There's some built-in trust, knowledge in the relationship there. It will be a great thing to switch manufacturers, have that kind of communication lines open, right?



Q. Having Pato as a teammate, he is young, aggressive. You're still young and aggressive. To put the two of you together, how exciting an opportunity is that?

ALEXANDER ROSSI: I think it's fantastic. Obviously Pato is one of the guys that's come on the scene in the past couple of years, someone that's properly a championship contender, someone you have to beat every weekend.

From day one we're going to push each other really hard. Naturally that's just going to elevate the team to have that kind of dynamic.

He's someone that I've gotten to know a little bit over the past couple of years. We've had some jokes together. I don't really know him that well. I look forward to getting to know him and obviously everyone at the team.

Yes, I think there's going to be a competitive drive inside the organization.

Q. Alex, you were convinced in 2019 that staying with Andretti was ultimately the right move for you. Can you reflect on the last three years there? What do you feel like I wouldn't say went wrong but didn't play out the way you hoped they would?

ALEXANDER ROSSI: If I had the answer to that, we'd probably all be in a different position right now. I don't know that there's ever an easy solution to something like that.

Obviously in 2019 we were coming off a very successful 2018, beginning of 2019. That was the team I'd driven for, that's where my relationships were. At the time that was an easy decision.

Ultimately I don't think this has met anyone's expectations, myself, the team's, Honda's. I don't think it's necessarily a huge surprise for everyone.

That being said, I think there have been scenarios that have been outside of our control. But that's motorsports, life, just the way things go sometimes.

Again, like I said, very grateful for the opportunities that I was given. Very grateful for the partnerships and relationships that I've developed with AutoNation and Honda, NAPA. I'm still going to be close with those people, those decision makers. We'll be friends I think. I've become friends with those guys. None of that's going to change. We're just going to be looking to beat their ass in '23.

Q. When you are moving to a team that hasn't won a championship or a 500 yet, those things are very important to you, what makes you feel like the pairing of you with Taylor, with Zak, with Chevy will help you to get a different result than the last couple years?

ALEXANDER ROSSI: I think when you look, Taylor and Zak got control and got to have the direction of the team not too long ago. What they've accomplished in a short period of time speaks for itself. The result they had last year, a huge amount of respect for Pato obviously, but he's still new to the championship, relatively young. The results he had was phenomenal.

I think the inherent performance is there, it exists. I think if you look at what the team did at Indy this year, they were the second strongest team. I think what Ganassi was able to do was phenomenal. We've all touched on that. I think Arrow McLaren SP was certainly the next best shot.

Yeah, I think this is a team that is going to be a championship challenger. They already were last year. They will be this year. I certainly think it will be the case going forward.

Q. Would you classify this parting of ways between you and Andretti as a mutual decision or was it essentially up to you?

ALEXANDER ROSSI: So, yeah, I mean, this decision was made for me kind of last summer. It was clear that I was going to look at different options and explore what was out there.

I've driven for Andretti Autosport for a long time. Sometimes you need to change things, whether that's on a personal side, a professional side or the both combined. I think it was time for a change.

Like I said, there were a lot of things that we accomplished that were very special, that I'll have memories of forever. They essentially gave me a base and established me in INDYCAR to have a future in the NTT INDYCAR SERIES. I owe a lot to the organization.

Ultimately for me it was time to do something different. I don't think there's a better pairing out there for who I am as a person and a competitor than Arrow McLaren SP.

Q. Taylor, is there a car number yet for Alex?

TAYLOR KIEL: I don't think so. I think we're evaluating all the options. We got three cars, three numbers. We need to see where the pieces fit into that, we'll go from there.

Haven't really thought about that at the moment.

Q. You got asked last week was the 7 car still in evaluation.

TAYLOR KIEL: Felix is doing what he needs to do. Us as a team, we're doing what we need to do. Again, there's been no secret that that team has taken a little bit of time to gel, no doubt. We're seeing fantastic pace, good races. The Indy 500 was fantastic on a lot of fronts.

We're taking it day by day for sure.

Q. Andretti said that AutoNation is staying with Kirkwood. NAPA, does that go with you?

ALEXANDER ROSSI: No, those sponsors have always been (indiscernible) sponsors.

Q. Taylor, Alex is on a long drought. What makes you think he can turn it back on with you guys?

TAYLOR KIEL: Yeah, I don't particularly consider the last two years being indicative of what Alex can bring to the table from a performance point of view. He's always had the pace. One thing or another has cost him results.

I'm not close enough to understand that. What I do see is he's a determined, very focused driver that's had a lot of results.

I don't believe that you can just wake up one day and magically lose all your talent. I feel very strongly about the fact that if we give Alex all the tools to succeed that he will.

Q. Alex, you said you knew you wanted to look around last summer at other teams. In January you named four teams that you said these are probably the only four places I'd go to. About when did you know you were going to make a move?

ALEXANDER ROSSI: Again, like last summer was when personally that decision was probably made. But then there's a lot of other things that had to happen. Yes, I can want a horse, but that doesn't mean I'm going to get one. I had to from a personal standpoint look at what options were available, what was actually out there, right?

I think this all started very, very early. We're talking about '21 when we're discussing a thing for 2023. I think this is a record for an announcement in a lot of respects.

Yeah, I would say around the January time is when it started to become clear what the options were actually going to be. From there it was just about from an

organizational standpoint figuring out how all those pieces could fall together.

I got to tip my hat to Zak and Taylor, the whole McLaren organization, for making it a pretty seamless process.

Q. How is your confidence? When you go through a long streak like this, a guy can get rattled. You had a great Indy 500. Wondering how you're feeling?

ALEXANDER ROSSI: I don't care about the past honestly. The Indy 500 was okay, it wasn't great. We didn't win, so... I mean, ultimately that's what we showed for. That's what these guys get to the shop at 7 a.m. for, train for.

It was an acceptable result from where we started, but it didn't meet my expectations. Obviously the past two and a half years haven't met my expectations.

This weekend is a new opportunity. We're going to go try to do our best to win the race, see what the rest of the year brings.

Q. You're going to get a chance to work with Rob Wickens. Are you looking forward to that? What do you think he can do to help you?

ALEXANDER ROSSI: I've known Rob for 10 plus years. Everyone thinks we had a big rivalry in 2018. We didn't. He was obviously upset at me. I was not that bothered by it. I mean, we've been close friends for a very long time. We are to this day.

I think he's obviously an incredibly talented individual and a fantastic race car driver. The element that he brings to the team is very unique in the INDYCAR paddock. There's no team that has a championship-caliber driver that's kind of aiding the current drivers in terms of how they can improve on and off the track. I think that's a great resource to the team.

Q. Taylor, at one time you were going to run a third car in the second half of this season.

TAYLOR KIEL: Yeah, we've been working on that since the end of the year. It's going well. In this climate it's very difficult. But our team is doing a great job of identifying and recruiting and pursuing and doing the things we need to do to aggressively get some people in the door. That's all going well.

I would say that the plans to run a third car a few times towards the end of the year was more an opportunity to evaluate, should we need it. Obviously having Alex signed up eliminates the need for us to go to market and evaluate.

I particularly don't want to the distraction of that as we go into a championship run. That's the thought behind it.

Q. Taylor, do you have a shortlist of people you want to pair with Alex as far as engineer, race strategist? Is that still being evaluated?

TAYLOR KIEL: Still being evaluated for sure. The overwhelming concern for me is that we get the right people, the right fit for our organization, certainly somebody that meshes well with Alex, can just hit the ground running from day one. We're evaluating that. We're keeping our eyes wide open, understanding what's out there, who's available, who would be the ultimate fit for our organization.

No decisions yet, but got a few feelers.

Q. Do you have sponsorship lined up? Yet to be announced? Do you have an idea on who will be on his car?

TAYLOR KIEL: Nothing concrete at the moment. But what I can say is that our organization from a personal point of view is very strong. We've got a lot of momentum. Partners current and prospective love the idea of having Alex in the team. I've got no doubts that we'll be in a good place.

Q. Alex, at some point in time is there an opportunity or do you still want to do F1?

ALEXANDER ROSSI: I have a lot to accomplish here. At one point I might ask Zak for a half day just to show the kids what's up (laughter).

No, I have so much to accomplish in this championship and a lot of goals here. My time in Europe was fantastic and it made me who I am today. But ultimately my focus and attention is 100% on this championship in this series and to win races for Arrow McLaren SP.

Q. Taylor, we've seen in history, in the Indy 500, the multiple-car teams, more than two. How early had you identified, how critical is it these days to be a more than two car team?

TAYLOR KIEL: I think it's critical so long as you do it in the right way, you don't dilute the other entries, right? The process for us is, yeah, we were ambitious and wanted to grow, no doubt, but we wanted to do it in the right way. This opportunity gives us that shot.

I'm very, very convinced that the more arrows you have in the quiver, the better you'll be at Indy. Gives you more

data, gives you more opportunities for the race obviously.

You can't just continue throwing entries on the board just to win the 500. I don't think that's how it works. For us, so long as we're doing it in the right way, the more the merrier.

Q. You also announced a new facility you're building in Indiana. (Indiscernible) additive?

TAYLOR KIEL: 'Additive' I think is a great word. This facility for us is a lot of things. I think it's a catalyst for future success, it's a catalyst for our people to come to a facility that they're proud of. It's new, cutting edge, class leading.

It gives us room to grow, get our elbows out. For those of you that have been to our facility, it's tight. It's not ideal. But it serves us well and we've done a great job there.

This new shop is a lot of things for us. I think it ultimately signifies our intent and our investment and our series focus on producing at a high level in INDYCAR racing. That's the focus for us. The building will give us just another tool to make sure that we're capitalizing on all of our resources.

Q. Taylor, you had been continuing to maybe struggle to get consistent results on the second car. Was there any trepidation about adding a third when you're still trying to get the second car -- was there ever any worry or thought to getting the second solid before you went forward?

TAYLOR KIEL: Not particularly. It was certainly a conversation. I think in that conversation and the subsequent evaluation process that we went through to understand what were the principal concerns on that entry was they're all very small things, right? There's no foundational issues with it. The people are good. The driver's good. The cars are good. It's just one thing or another.

I think it's no different than Alex's last couple years, right? The pace is there, the speed is there. It can be any number of things, right?

It's nothing that concerns me as we scale up. So we made the decision to do so. I think ultimately what that will allow us is more opportunities to solve problems quicker rather than looking at it as a dilution of what we've got.

Q. You said that Felix is maybe still in line for that seat to return. What does he need to do?

TAYLOR KIEL: I think Felix is a fantastic driver and he's a great fit for our team. Felix just needs to continue doing

what he's doing, right? We're evaluating how to make our team better all the time. Felix is a part of that right now.

As long as he's doing what he needs to do, and he knows what that is, he'll be driving for us. There's no secret about that.

I'm proud of Felix. I think he does a great job. I'm expecting him to have a great weekend this weekend. He was very quick here last year.

I'm just excited for Felix because I feel like he's in that group now, our team is in that group. He had a fantastic Indy 500. We'll see how the rest of the season goes.

Q. Taylor, different topic. It's been five days so maybe your feelings or opinions have changed. Pato in that moment, great points day, but doesn't get you that Indy 500 win. What did you think of the last lap?

TAYLOR KIEL: Well, it was definitely exciting. I was on my toes, no doubt.

Yeah, you look at that race in retrospect, everybody in the paddock understands you win there or you don't. It's very much like the Super Bowl: there's only one team that leaves there happy.

I've certainly been able to take a step back and understand it was a fantastic points day for us. It was a great couple of weeks in a lot of respects for us. I think it was good to see both of our cars running 1-2 in the final stages of the race. That's something, frankly we haven't been able to do in the history of our program.

We've certainly put in the work and seen the results of that. That's what excites me, it's that incremental growth, that incremental performance gain. It's validating in a lot of ways that we're doing the right things on and off track.

Yes, it stings, it sucks that we didn't win. At the same time there's certainly a lot to be proud of top to bottom.

Q. Would you have been okay if he wrecked it?

TAYLOR KIEL: Look, I think that would have been a tough pill to swallow, right? I think we've seen that a lot of times in that race.

What I'm proud of is Pato's maturity to understand us as an organization, we value the 500, and it's hard to do that because both require so much time, effort and resource. I think in the position that he was in, he made a move that was wise beyond his years with the bigger picture in mind. That's what I think about. That's what makes me proud, is

that he's a young kid on the scene that's very aggressive.

I know in his heart he wanted to keep it flat, see what happened. But something in the back of his mind said, Let's focus on the championship. That to me is a huge thing.

Q. Alex, do you feel a tremendous sense of relief?

ALEXANDER ROSSI: Yes and no. I think it's nice to not have to talk to people about it any more, you all know. At the same time, like, this sport, you're only as good as your last race. It's all irrelevant. You have to go out there every practice, every qualifying, every race you have to execute, you have to prove why you should be here. That part of things doesn't change in my mind.

But, yes, it's nice to not have to have the round of questions about this.

Q. You mentioned you started looking around or having conversations last summer. Have you felt like there's any reason behind getting up to speed quickly? Alex, were you the catalyst behind that? Do you feel this has been a unique several months in terms of driver movement?

TAYLOR KIEL: I'd say there's certainly a lot of conversation about it. For us, we've been laser focused on this third car. I read a lot, right? So I see it. I don't particularly focus on it. For me, it's a lot of noise until it's been proven to be.

I don't try to distract myself with a lot of stuff. I've been busy trying to make this race team continue to take steps forward, making sure we get Alex in the fold. That's my perspective.

ALEXANDER ROSSI: Yeah, I think it surprised everyone honestly how quickly it all took off. I don't know what the rhyme or reason for it was, per se.

But, yes, it was early. From that standpoint, it takes a lot of coordination between all parties involved.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you, everybody.

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