

NTT INDYCAR SERIES

News Conference

Friday, June 3, 2022

Kyle Kirkwood

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: Good afternoon, everyone. Thanks for joining us. We are joined by our fastest driver in practice, Kyle Kirkwood, driver of the No. 14 Rocket A.J. Foyt Racing Chevy.

Kyle, I know you're busy because you're doing IMSA this weekend, too.

KYLE KIRKWOOD: Actually got qualifying coming up here shortly.

THE MODERATOR: Tell us how the car feels.

KYLE KIRKWOOD: So far so good. We knew we were going to be solid here based on performances from last year. Quite happy with the way that ended up. Granted we did do it on two sets of tires. Wish I could say we did it on one.

The car felt good the entire session. We were tuning it in. Right there at the end felt like there was still a lot left in it. So quite happy with that outcome.

THE MODERATOR: We'll take questions.

Q. How quickly do you feel the transition from a sports car to an INDYCAR?

KYLE KIRKWOOD: It's very quick. Now if I was doing DPi and trying to go to an INDYCAR, I think that would be a lot harder based on they're both high-downforce cars, high-grip.

The fact I'm going from a GT car that has traction control, ABS, super heavy, it's doing 14 seconds a lap slower, it feels like I'm driving a road car out there compared to the INDYCAR.

If anything, it's beneficial just to get track time. Obviously learned the track a little bit quicker. Everyone has been here for the most part. But at least for this year I got a lot more laps than the rest of the guys to start off the session.

Q. How do you feel going back and forth? Do the lower temps help with the double duty? Last year it was really hot here.

KYLE KIRKWOOD: That's true. The GT car is so easy to drive that I don't think it takes anything away. Power steering, ABS, all that stuff. We got a helmet blower, cool suit. It's icy cold in that Lexus car. It's not hindering my performance whatsoever.

I think the fact that last year the guys ran two races in one weekend was a lot worse than me doing a 40-minute GTD race then racing the next day in INDYCAR.

Q. Big week for you. Announced you were going to drive with Andretti Autosport next season. How much does getting something to validate your time here with A.J. Foyt really boost the team and yourself for the rest of 2022?

KYLE KIRKWOOD: For me it's really just not a focal point at all. To me it hasn't changed anything. It's been, yeah, some time now that we've actually did it.

For me it's been the same thing. It's the same goal always. We've got 11 races left. Right now we're doing solid. Obviously the focus is still with A.J. Foyt Racing and the Rocket Chevrolet because all I want to do is win for the team because they worked really hard for it.

Q. How far away do you believe you are being in the position where you can win for that team?

KYLE KIRKWOOD: It feels like it right now. I mean, after that practice session, usually a lot of it is how you roll off the trailer, as many of us know, especially street courses. As the track evolves you want to make sure you have a good car art away.

Right now it's looking pretty sharp as long as we can continue (indiscernible).

Q. How physical is Belle Isle?

KYLE KIRKWOOD: It is very, very bumpy. The kickback is quite, quite harsh. That's the physical part about it, is trying to resist the kickback and bumps you get with all the



corners. It's not easy. It's one of the harder tracks we go to this year.

It was tough out there just now because we're seeing the actual pace of the track quite quick, at least in the first practice session. Obviously it's just going to get quicker, which equals a heavier steering wheel and even more kickback. We might have to do something to aid me in that potentially.

Q. What are your thoughts about going to downtown next year? Will that change anything, the physicality of it?

KYLE KIRKWOOD: I have no idea. I couldn't tell you. I've seen like a brief layout of the track which I don't know if it was official or not. Depends what the surface is like, what the characteristics are like.

I can tell you one thing, there's a handful of high-speed, high-commitment corners that are very bumpy that can catch you out. You're always very tense through most of the corners.

Q. How beneficial is today's result going into the weekend and Road America next week?

KYLE KIRKWOOD: I don't know if it does anything for Road America. For me, I've always just focused on one weekend at a time. I can't be like, This weekend went well, so the next weekend is going to go definitely well. I think that's not the right mindset. I think you have to be focused on what's going on at the present time.

It does help with this weekend, as I said previously. A lot of street courses, any track we go to with limited track time, you have to roll off good. We clearly rolled off pretty good. That's enough for us right now. It's solid.

THE MODERATOR: Thanks, Kyle.

KYLE KIRKWOOD: Thank you, guys.

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