

NTT INDYCAR SERIES

News Conference

Wednesday, August 31, 2022

Christian Lundgaard

David Malukas

Linus Lundqvist

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: Welcome, everyone. This weekend the penultimate round of the 2022 INDYCAR SERIES championship. Both series head to Portland International Raceway for the Grand Prix of Portland. We have a group of INDYCAR's next generation today.

One leads the Rookie of the Year standings with six top 10s and a second on the IMS road course this summer, great to have Christian Lundgaard.

Meanwhile the other driver, just 11 points behind in the Rookie of the Year battle, third closest rookie battle in the last 10 years, coming off an incredibly impressive second-place finish, it's David Malukas.

Our third guest is competing in the NTT INDYCAR SERIES next season. Got a shot at clinching the Indy Lights Presented by Cooper Tires championship this Sunday. He's up by 108 points or more, we welcome in Linus Lundqvist.

To all three, thanks for doing this today. Should be a lot of fun.

Let's start with Christian. Two races remain, coming off the test at Laguna Seca Monday. How do you feel heading into the final two races?

CHRISTIAN LUNDGAARD: Yeah, looking at the test at Laguna, I wasn't as comfortable as Graham. We never really seemed to have the pace that we wanted to have. Looking at the whole season, I think we've been more comfortable on street circuits and road courses that we have on ovals for different reasons. We didn't have a very good race in St. Louis. Again, Graham seemed to have the pace. The car seemed to be quite edgy there.

We need to make the most of it. David is on our tail. We got the last the last two races and have to score the

maximum points we can. I'm sure we will have a good end to the season.

THE MODERATOR: David, pretty clear your genuine excitement about a podium at World Wide Technology Raceway afterwards. How much momentum has that given yourself and the team as you head to the final two?

DAVID MALUKAS: I feel like ever since the month of May came around, I feel like that's when we kind of flipped a switch, starting getting a lot better with the car, strategy, the racing, continued to go forward.

After getting podium, having a really good race there and at Gateway, I think it's only helped it that much more.

We also had a really good test at Laguna on Monday. I don't know. I feel like this West Coast swing might be good for us. It's been so tight. The field is just so strong. It's like we're going to still have to be at 110% if we want to get anything done.

THE MODERATOR: I have a picture I'm going to try to share.

CHRISTIAN LUNDGAARD: I know what this is (smiling).

DAVID MALUKAS: I have a feeling.

THE MODERATOR: Does this look familiar?

DAVID MALUKAS: The guy in the middle is pretty good looking.

CHRISTIAN LUNDGAARD: It's Portugal.

THE MODERATOR: How did that weekend go? What's the story behind this? Obviously you have a friendship that has lasted. Tell me the year.

CHRISTIAN LUNDGAARD: 2016.

DAVID MALUKAS: 2016.

CHRISTIAN LUNDGAARD: Actually, as you can see, me and Rasmus Lindh were in the same team. What was the team called?



DAVID MALUKAS: Yeah, we kind of had like a BN Racing deal. We were stationed inside the Ricardo tent.

CHRISTIAN LUNDGAARD: I can't remember how this weekend went.

DAVID MALUKAS: I can't really remember much. I just, yeah, remember we had a good time. That was it. We were good buds back in the day.

There's another picture somewhere of him throwing me in the air.

CHRISTIAN LUNDGAARD: That was the last race of the European championship. I remember that.

THE MODERATOR: Good you have these memories that go back many years. Would you call it a friendship?

CHRISTIAN LUNDGAARD: I wouldn't say we've become enemies, for sure.

DAVID MALUKAS: Yeah. Let's just say, like, when I heard that Christian Lundgaard was going into the INDYCAR SERIES, I was like god dammit, that's going to be really tough (laughter).

CHRISTIAN LUNDGAARD: I know your mom is a big fan. You said that to me earlier this season. I remember you told me your mom was a big fan of me, she was following all the European races.

DAVID MALUKAS: Yeah, she follows all the stuff. She's a big Newgarden fan. I don't know if you'll be able to beat that (smiling).

THE MODERATOR: Linus, congratulations on a very dominant Indy Lights season. Five wins, eight podiums, six poles. You took over the points lead at Barber and never looked back. What will it take to wrap up the championship on Sunday?

LINUS LUNDQVIST: Yeah, we've had a great season. Obviously looking forward to the West Coast races now. Obviously we have a good margin. But we're still here to win a couple more races, what we enjoy doing. That's definitely the target. It seems to be the best way to try to win the championship as well, is to win races.

We'll see. Obviously you look a little bit at the points. Obviously you play it on the safe side. We'll see how it goes.

I think Portland was a strong track for us last year. David

got double pole, because I got double seconds unfortunately. We'll see what we can do this year.

THE MODERATOR: Questions, please.

Q. Christian, Rookie of the Year is something that is maybe not so much a thing in Europe, outside of America. Was that something that was a surprise to you, how many questions you get about this?

CHRISTIAN LUNDGAARD: I mean, sort of internally there's always a rookie championship no matter what series you're racing in. But, like you said, I don't think it's a big topic in Europe. For sure the team has pushed me further and further to understand how much it actually means.

But yeah, again, obviously coming into INDYCAR, I hoped to be in a better position at this point in the season than we are. You can only hope for the best. I think we've had our ups and downs, we've had good weekends, some worse ones.

You only get one shot at the rookie championship. You have to make the best of it. I think that's what's important about it, at this point now I know I'll be here next year. I mean, I know anyway I'm not going to get another shot at it, but I also know I need to learn as much as possible this year going into next year, but at the same time I want to end it on a high.

I mean, unfortunately David is pushing me extremely hard with his pace. I think it's going to be a tight battle at the end.

Q. David, would you say it was always a focus of yours from the start of the season? Is it similar to Rahal that Dale Coyne have been pushing you on to achieve that?

DAVID MALUKAS: Yeah, it's always been in the back of my head. It wasn't kind of my main goal. My main goal was to enjoy the INDYCAR experience and learn as much as possible. Dale was in my ear every day, We need this rookie, go and get it (smiling). He was pushing me and driving me forward.

Lundgaard definitely has been pushing us 100%, especially after the IMS performance. I was like, Man, how am I supposed to get a podium? That's going to be tough.

Part of the push in Gateway was having that in mind. Yeah, like I said, Dale is always in my ear that we really need it. A lot of pushing going on. In Gateway we succeeded under the pressure. Hopefully we can carry

that into the last two rounds.

Q. David and Christian, let's say you're both challenging for the win at either Portland or Laguna, and you have one of the four or five guys going for the championship, they decide to mix it up with you, what do you do?

CHRISTIAN LUNDGAARD: Keep fighting.

Q. Can you explain a little bit more about that?

CHRISTIAN LUNDGAARD: I mean, yes, they've got a championship, but so do we. I mean, I wouldn't say I would unnecessarily help anyone if it doesn't help my own case. If it's going to help me...

We are racing drivers, we want to win. If they're racing for a championship, I mean, anyone in the race is there to take points away from each other.

I mean, I wouldn't say I'd try to help anyone.

Q. David?

DAVID MALUKAS: Yeah, I mean, even though I know people are in the championship run, once you go on track, you're focused on your own deal unless there's some teammate stuff maybe going on.

It's always in the back of your head that you know everybody is in a championship fight. At Gateway, being in the front running going against Power and Newgarden, McLaughlin, you know they all have a chance at the championship, you make sure you have very committed passes. You don't want to make things go south for you and them.

I mean, if anything, if that's situation happens in the last two races, we're going to make sure to be careful and make committed moves. It's in both drivers' heads we're fighting for our own championships and everybody is going to take it safe.

Q. I'm not going to mention names, but one of the contenders gives you a really hard time, maybe there's some contact, do you look to avenge that contact? I'm specifically speaking about the contenders left. What do you do if they are the aggressors to you?

CHRISTIAN LUNDGAARD: I mean, I think personally, there are drivers on the grids that is harder than others to race against, for sure. But I think what I like about INDYCAR is that it's extremely tough and hard racing but very respectful.

I mean, me and Simon had a bit of wheel banging in Mid-Ohio, but there were no hard feelings. It's racing. It is what it is.

If someone punches me off the track, what better am I if I do the same to him? I want to race clean, help my own case, make sure I get the best result that we can. Obviously doesn't help if you're being pushed off the track.

I mean, I wouldn't say I'm looking for vengeance in any way. Yeah, I think that's it honestly.

Q. David?

DAVID MALUKAS: Yeah, no, personally I get all the revenge, get like a TV series about it, dramatize it a bit (laughter).

No, I mean, you don't want to have bad blood. If something happens on track, you don't want to have that in the back of your mind going into your next race or next session.

Yeah, I don't know, it's a tough situation to try to let go of something that you know that truly wasn't your fault, they messed you up, your race.

I always talk to the person after the fact, make sure we're on good terms before we go back on track, hear their side of the story, kind of connect.

If INDYCAR starts doing, like, shows, I can dramatize some stuff. Maybe me and Lundgaard can put fists up, do some rolling around. When the camera cuts, we'll shake hands, go have coffee (smiling).

THE MODERATOR: Linus, explain a little bit about the race team that you're with this year and how much they have done to put you in a great position to win a championship, what they brought to the table in the last couple years.

LINUS LUNDQVIST: Yeah, I mean, it goes for every driver. I mean, we get the luxury of being the front figure of everything. Obviously you have the whole team behind you. You wouldn't be able to even come to the race without them.

Obviously HMD the last two years I'd say have been one of the top teams together with Andretti. Obviously that was the goal from the end of last year to sort of come back and try to fight for the title. The target was to go with HMD because we thought that's where the potential was.

I think it's proven right so far at least. It's cool to see them expanding as well. It was a little bit of a question mark when David moved up to the INDYCAR, what's going to happen to the Lights car. They only expanded, added more engineers, put more effort in than last year.

It's cool to see them expanding both on the Lights side but also to INDYCAR with the partnership with Dale Coyne. It's a good energy with the team right now.

Q. David, you've been fighting against Linus in Indy Lights last year, also in the same team with him. Did this Indy Lights season work out with the way you expected it to be, with him completely dominating the competition?

DAVID MALUKAS: Yeah, he's being intimidated (laughter).

Yeah, going into it, I'm a little bit biased, but I definitely saw that all of HMD Motorsports to dominate. I'm not surprised that Linus took it and ran with it, kept running with it. An impressive season for him.

When he said he was going to be racing for us next year, I knew that, Okay, yeah, he's got a really good opportunity at it. He's done an amazing job to make sure it's clear-cut and center. He deserves to be in the Indy Lights championship and be in INDYCAR.

Q. Linus, in 2018 you spent a whole year in British F3 driving against Jamie Chadwick. Earlier today we reported she's going to test an Indy Lights car with Andretti. Do you think she would be a good fit? Can you reflect on the differences between those cars?

LINUS LUNDQVIST: Yeah, I was happy to see that she's doing a test. Obviously we kept in touch a little bit. She's been doing very well in the W series.

It will be interesting to see how she does over here. Like you said, I raced against her in 2018. She raced for the same team as I did in 2017, when she did F3 and I was in F4. I've seen her a little bit. Obviously that's some years ago.

I'm not the same driver as I was in 2018. I'm sure she's not. Excited to see what she can do and what she thinks of the Lights car. It is a big difference from the regional car to the Lights car.

In 2020 when I did the Formula Regional Americas, it was probably the biggest step of my career going into the Lights car just how the car drives, how you have to drive it to extract lap time.

Multiple times in pre-season, a couple of tests, in theory in my head I did close to the perfect lap, and I was 5/10ths or 6/10ths off David. Look at his onboard, it's oversteer, understeer, he deals with it. Mine was calm, hitting the apex. That's not how you extract lap time out of a Lights car.

It took a little bit of time to get used to, but super rewarding when you do it. It will be interesting to see how she can adapt to it.

Q. David, obviously you dominated in Portland last year. What do you think you can take from Indy Lights to the INDYCAR race in Portland?

DAVID MALUKAS: Yeah, we had a lot of success last year in Indy Lights. Completely different car, different team. It's all going to be very different with the setup.

I know I have the ability to go around Portland and do some quick times. All I know is, yeah, just turn one, yeah, the fingers crossed. If we make turn one, it's always going to be swell from there.

Q. Lean on Taku for a bit of information for that as well?

DAVID MALUKAS: With Taku's help, it's been more on ovals. Also at the Laguna test we were talking. I'm always trying to get as much information from him as possible.

I have a really good veteran teammate, I think probably one of the best for me, for my rookie season. I'm trying to get the most out of it. He definitely keeps some things to himself. I have to look at videos and data to try to find it.

Yeah, I definitely will ask him a lot of questions.

Q. Christian, what are your expectations going into Portland?

CHRISTIAN LUNDGAARD: Going into the last two races of the season, I don't think the sort of expectations have changed, I wouldn't say. We go into every event pretty much the same. We want to do the best we can and extract as much time as we can from the car.

We didn't test at Portland. I know (indiscernible) tested both tracks, which was actually pretty interesting to see. But I think our Sebring test earlier this season just before Toronto helped us more. We're on the right track. We just need to keep improving. I think we're in the right direction.

Having Graham and Jack here, I know Jack has been

successful here, I know he's been extremely fast, hasn't quite got the result that he deserved. I think as a team we're looking quite strong.

Graham looked at a pretty comfortable podium last year until some strategy that didn't work out. He's been there. I don't think we're going to be struggling. I think we're going to be in the better end of the field.

Q. Christian, this is a relatively new circuit to you. How much extra preparation have you put in?

CHRISTIAN LUNDGAARD: I think it's pretty much the same preparation as every track you go to. I mean, looking at Indy GP last year, the one race I did, I basically showed up on Friday and drove practice. That's pretty much it.

You try to look at certain issues to see if you can find some onboards, videos, do as much preparation as you can do. Speak to engineers, see what they have of experience at the track. Speak to my teammates, Jack and Graham.

Like I said before, they've both been quite successful here in terms of sheer pace. They haven't got the result that I think they deserve.

As a package, I think we will be there. For me, I enjoy coming to new tracks. I enjoy the challenge of going out there pretty much blind. We saw Nashville, I'd never been at Nashville, and we were real quick straightaway. The most I can hope for is that the car is in a decent window and we can fine tune it from there, be at the better end of the field.

LINUS LUNDQVIST: As long as we're ahead of David, we're fine (smiling).

Q. Can you tell us how many years you are contracted for?

CHRISTIAN LUNDGAARD: I can't tell you, but I'll be here for a bit (smiling).

Q. David, how much of a relief was it to get that first series podium?

DAVID MALUKAS: Yeah, no, it felt really good. It's just because we knew it was possible at that point for a couple of races until then. We knew if we put everything together, we can finally get it. We got very close in a few different circuits, things didn't really go our way. With the amount of races counting down... I also knew Gateway was going to be our best chance to do it. The Dale Coyne car on ovals is an absolute beast, quick.

We were going around Penskes on the outside at the end. It proved we had a really good car. I knew that was our best chance to finally get it. I feel like that's one of my goals completed for the end of this season.

Now it's just going to be, yeah, making sure I finish in front of Christian (smiling).

THE MODERATOR: Did you tape Bus Bros or is it going to happen?

DAVID MALUKAS: No, it's going to happen. They said it on Twitter. I was freaking out, accepted it. They haven't said anything since. I don't know if they're going to go into my motorhome and wake me up. I don't know how it works. We'll see.

THE MODERATOR: Be ready for anything is probably the best advice.

Q. We're going into the final two races of the season. As many as six or eight people going for a championship.

THE MODERATOR: Seven are mathematically alive.

Q. You have the season card and the rookie card. Given that, team dynamics, do you see the team helping your direct effort over the last two races given how they've treated you the whole beginning of the season?

CHRISTIAN LUNDGAARD: I mean, I think the team has treated me well. I mean, we got a podium at the GP, so it can't be that bad, for sure.

I mean, we've had our ups and downs. I think as a team we struggled in the beginning of the season. We weren't as strong as we were hoping to be. We bounced back.

I think, like David said earlier, kind of as May came, the month of May, after the 500 I think we sort of took a step forward, improved the second half of the season.

Obviously Gateway wasn't our best of weekends. But I think up until then we had a really good sort of streak going. We were moving in the right direction. Road America, Mid-Ohio, we were moving forward. We came to the GP and we were there. Even Iowa we had a pretty good weekend. Didn't qualify as well. Had an issue on the car the Sunday race, which was a bit unfortunate, didn't score any points.

The team has treated me well. They've given me the

opportunity, all the tools I need to sort myself out. As a team I think we'll all hope for the last two weekends to have as good a package as we've had at the later GPs.

Q. I guess what I'm asking, given the way they treat you on the track, do you expect to have softer elbows on the track being thrown at you in order to maybe aid you in the rookie championship?

CHRISTIAN LUNDGAARD: I don't think they're going to make it any harder on me than necessary, for sure. Obviously the easy answer is qualify ahead of them and just stay ahead of them. That's the easy solution.

No, I think Graham was extremely strong at the Laguna test on Monday. I need to find some time there. But overall I think both drivers have been helpful to me on and off track. I don't think there's been any scramble there. I know that me and Graham had contact earlier in the season. But no hard feelings. It happens. Obviously it's not preferred from the team's perspective. We moved on, we learned from it.

Q. David, how do you feel with Taku, his ability to throw elbows?

DAVID MALUKAS: Taku has been so much help to me this entire season. Going into these last two, nothing is really going to change. I'm trying to get as much information from him as possible.

Setup-wise our cars are actually quite similar so we can share each other's data and work off of each other.

On track, any time I go around him, he knows what he's doing. He's tough to get around, especially on the ovals. I was struggling in that move on Gateway. He really forced me to go wide in three and four. I was holding onto my breath.

It's all still friendly play. The only time we had a bit of a mishap was Texas. I was still doing rookie mistakes. Came out of the pits and stalled. That was the time he came in. I completely ruined his race. He didn't really like that.

We moved on from that. I was like, Just take your pit box away from me, it's all going to be okay. We have a really good friendship with each other. For my rookie season, having him as a teammate has probably been the best decision.

Q. Linus, I know it's kind of hard to look forward, what do you see going forward as it relates to INDYCAR, the challenges you see going forward?

LINUS LUNDQVIST: I mean, the big challenge right now is just getting a seat in INDYCAR, to be honest. There's not a lot of 'em out there. We'll see what we can do.

Obviously the target is to be with these guys next year full-time. Hopefully we can make that happen. We'll see. I know that the best thing I can do for myself is to continue to try to do well and wrap up a couple more wins at the end of the season and we'll see what happens.

Q. Have there been a couple of overtures coming your way?

LINUS LUNDQVIST: Yeah, I mean, I've had talks with literally every team on the grid since May I think. But obviously it's so competitive out there, just to get a seat opening. We're doing my best. We're doing our best to put myself in one of the big cars.

THE MODERATOR: Linus, a strategy question for you. How much of the team, you, will be thinking about points, making sure you get what you need to clinch at Portland, or do you race your own race and whatever happens...

LINUS LUNDQVIST: This is usually the case where I go for a win and the team says, Don't worry, you're fine. Big picture, look at the points.

But, I mean, the best and the safest way is qualify up front and try to run away with it. That's going to be the plan. Score the most points, it's the safest way of doing it.

DAVID MALUKAS: I'd say take it easy this race, you're still in the points running, then you get it on the final race, you get everybody. It's much cooler. Not as cool if you already get it and go to the final race (smiling).

LINUS LUNDQVIST: So now you know, if Portland doesn't go well, race one at Laguna doesn't go well, now you know why (laughter).

Q. It's your first year for both in INDYCAR. You have some races to improve. In what aspects do you think you have improved more and in what aspects do you think you have to improve in the last two races?

CHRISTIAN LUNDGAARD: I'd sort of say me and David are in this battle now. I'd say he has the advantage having been to most of the tracks, done ovals before in junior categories. For me to come out here and just drive around in the big car straightaway, for me, I wouldn't say I struggled mentally, but it's obviously a tough task to come in and be expected to perform.

I think there's been a few events this year where I've told my strategists to give me more information because we can be 6/10ths off the pace compared to my teammates. I don't know where the pace is.

These things we've kind of learned as a team, moved in that direction of helping me as much as possible early in the weekend. The pace has been there. Obviously we didn't need it in Nashville, which was nice. Seemed to be able to sort that out.

For the last two races of the season, now I have a test at Laguna under my belt, I've never been to Portland. Now sitting here hearing that David has had a successful couple of races around here, for me, I need to be on the top of my game going into this weekend, be sure that together with the team we have the best package.

I think for me the ovals are still where we need to improve. Personally I think I'm quite comfortable with street circuits and road courses. I've done that pretty much the whole of my car career. Ovals is still different.

I think this is what has been tough this season. You only got one shot at it, at the rookie championship. You need to perform at your best and limit retirements. I think we've got the most out of it, but I'm sure there's a lot to learn. I think the whole winter we'll look into things to improve.

Q. And David, in what aspects do you think you have to improve more during the season? In what aspects do you think you can improve during the last two races?

DAVID MALUKAS: I mean, the whole improvement has been with I'd say race strategy and pit stops. That's kind of been the whole season. I feel like that's the same goal going into these last two races.

All that stuff is new to me. Although I've come through the feeder series, you don't do pit stops, strategies, fuel saving, tire saving. You don't really do much of that. All of that was very new to me. At the beginning of the season I was definitely very lost with all of it.

I've managed to learn how to figure out how to do all these things, just following veterans like Power. He passed me on track. Man, I got passed again. Wait, this is actually really good. I can follow Power's line, where he does these fuel saving.

From these moments I've managed to learn, learn how I can use all the tools I have from me, the team, Honda, how I can use those to help me as a driver.

Q. Linus this is your second year in Indy Lights. In terms of your performances and your training style, what impact has this had?

LINUS LUNDQVIST: Yeah, a second year always helps because you kind of hit the ground running when the season starts again instead of starting from scratch.

But honestly, looking back at last year, I'm actually pretty proud of the season that we had. We were fast and good enough to challenge for the title, I don't know, with three races to go until we had the tire blowout at Gateway.

This year everything that we did last year we just did a little bit better. It was more natural to me, the driving style of the Lights car, how the team operates, the people within the team.

I'd just say that we turned everything up a notch. I'm working with the same people, engineers, mechanics. We knew each other very well. We knew our strengths and weaknesses. We kind of just worked on that, yeah, became a better package all the way around.

Q. Christian, how was your impression of Laguna?

CHRISTIAN LUNDGAARD: I think pretty much both drivers here can agree with me that the track itself is amazing. I think the elevation the track has is awesome. It's a tough track to master, I would say. I think even though every corner looks simple, it's tough. I think that's what kind of caught me off guard. Pretty much everyone at the test at least went off a couple times. I think I was one of the drivers that went off the most.

We were just trying to find the limits, all these kind of things that we want to do. I think the track itself is cool. I was a bit surprised how low grip the track actually is. I feel there is a very small margin for error in terms of I'd say grip. I'd say the car feels like it has a lot of lateral grip. When you go a half percent further, it just gives up. For me, that was tough to sort of master and understand earlier in the day.

I feel like that put me on sort of the back foot early in the day. I think all of us would have liked to have run earlier in the day. We were a little tire limited, all of us.

It was a good day. I think we learnt a lot. I learned a lot. Now I feel more comfortable coming into the race for sure. Full focus on Portland now.

Q. David, same question?

DAVID MALUKAS: I mean, I love Laguna. To me it reminds me a lot of go-karting, a slow and rhythmic track.

If you make a small mistake in turn three, I feel like the rest of the lap you're going to try to be catch up for it, make more mistakes, all around lose that lap.

It's a very tough track. Like I said, it's all about rhythm, knowing where that limit is, trying so hard. The limit is such a fine line of going overboard or being under. You have to stay within that line.

It's a tough track, as Christian says. In qualifying it's going to be interesting because you're obviously going to try to find the most amount of time you can. One little mistake, that's it. Also the way with alternate timelines, people setting it up. You have less laps, because setting it up you gain that much more time. It's a tough track, but a lot of fun, one of my favorites on the schedule.

Q. Linus, you have two races there. How do you like closing out your season there twice?

LINUS LUNDQVIST: I say I'll enjoy closing out at Laguna more than last year as we did at Mid-Ohio. Nothing against Mid-Ohio, but I just think Laguna is a better venue.

Excited. Laguna was a little bit of a tricky one for us last year. We finished on the podium in both races, but we were playing catch-up to Andretti. We'll see if we can change that around. Hopefully we can have a good run at Portland and go to Laguna with a little bit less pressure, just enjoy it.

THE MODERATOR: The great story about these three is they're success stories up and down. Thank you.

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