

NTT INDYCAR SERIES

News Conference

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Alexander Rossi

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: Obviously now joined by the driver of the No. 7 Arrow McLaren Chevrolet, Alexander Rossi. Thanks for coming by, first of all. Felix talked a lot about energy going into this season, a lot of good stuff happening with Arrow McLaren right now. Do you feel that, too?

ALEXANDER ROSSI: Yeah, 100%. I think it's been very cool to kind of watch them evolve and expand over the past couple of months. Obviously I don't have a benchmark of what they were before, but certainly the commitment to kind of performance and results goes without saying. It's apparent throughout every level of the organization.

I'm very excited to get on track and stop talking about it and just get to work and start driving.

THE MODERATOR: Still using name tags?

ALEXANDER ROSSI: Yes. But I think honestly, everyone is. I think there were like close to 40 hires over the organization the past couple months. It's been kind of a good time to come in because everyone is finding a new role and position and kind of learning who's who, finding everyone's strengths and weaknesses.

THE MODERATOR: We'll start with questions.

Q. Alex, does this have all the ingredients to be a really big breakout year for you?

ALEXANDER ROSSI: I hope so. I mean, it's a fantastic organization whose results speak for themselves. I think what they've done the past couple of years is very impressive. They're a great organization with great partners and great people. Getting to work now with GM and Chevy has been pretty cool as well, to see what they're doing, how they're helping push the program forward.

Like I said, it's been a lot of conversations and things in theory. We don't really know anything until we get on track. But from where we sit right now, we're very excited

about what's to come.

Q. What is it like working with Gavin Brown? You both have Formula 1 backgrounds. Do you speak a little bit more the same language?

ALEXANDER ROSSI: I think Gavin is a fantastic leader, but also his background is really in everything, whether it's engineering or systems engineering or aerodynamics, now kind of in an all-encompassing role that has that technical director standpoint but team manager and team principal standpoint.

His door is always open. He's a very involved kind of person from every aspect of the whole organization. I think that's been really cool to see and to work with him on. He's someone who understands the ins-and-outs of the sport from top to bottom. I think his big thing is maximizing people, their strengths, what they can bring to the table. If you can do that every single day, every single position, you're going to set yourself up in a good position.

Q. Fro said he was pleasantly surprised to meet you because he thought you have this bad-boy reputation. He said you've been a good fit; Pato was the crazy guy, Fro in the middle, you're a F1 guy. What is it like now being teammates with Felix and Pato?

ALEXANDER ROSSI: Again, we haven't really done anything yet other than some meetings and some team activities together.

I have a lot of respect for what they've done in INDYCAR and also their prior careers. I think that we all bring something a little bit different to the table, which I think is really unique in terms of not only personalities but driving styles and experience levels.

I think we have the ingredients to really be able to develop the team and continue to push the team forward to even a better level than what they've shown in the past.

It's been a really positive experience. Really I have nothing at all negative to say and can't actually wait to get to work, get on track and start working together.

Q. You mentioned McLaren adding 40 people or

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something recently. Is that a testament to McLaren that they're able to add that much quality?

ALEXANDER ROSSI: I still think it was very difficult. Every day you're still trying to fill little roles here and there.

But yes, ultimately I think the brand is synonymous with a lot of things, and performance is one. Like I said, in terms of Gavin's leadership style, maximizing people and encouraging people to bring ideas to the table, kind of have that diversity that exists and is so often overlooked in motorsports sometimes, to have opinions come from all different aspects of the team. I think that really encourages people to come.

I think Zak also kind of leads the charge in that. It's pretty amazing to me with how easy he is how involved he is with every aspect of the INDYCAR organization, the F1 organization, but like his sports car program, I don't know how he's in so many places at once seemingly.

He makes an effort to kind of keep everyone up to date from top to bottom as to where things are, what the current objectives are and what's future looks like.

I think Gavin kind of feeds off that and has a similar style as well.

Q. On Thermal, what have you heard about why INDYCAR made this move, and what do you think you, the team, the series can learn from testing at a track where you're not going to race?

ALEXANDER ROSSI: It's always a difficult situation in January, February, in the United States to find a track that's climately appropriate. I don't even know if that's a phrase. Has the appropriate climate to be at.

But I think on top of that, not only do we have a beautiful place to come with seemingly good weather, but you're introducing INDYCAR to obviously a demographic that has an interest in racing, with some decent capital behind them. They may not know of INDYCAR. They may have known of INDYCAR but never seen it in person.

What we're doing is we're able to bring and showcase what we believe is the best series in the world in front of people who are passionate about motorsports, participate in motorsports themselves, and maybe haven't seen it before.

Q. How big of a book did you get from Mr. Hampson for the test? How much time have you had to spend with him, and what's that been like?

ALEXANDER ROSSI: Yeah, I mean, I've known Craig

since 2016. He was at Andretti when I was there. I got to work with him a little bit. We've always been friendly in the paddock. Working with Craig, kind of continue that relationship, obviously develop it to be actually working together on the same car and same program.

I have a huge amount of respect for what Craig has accomplished in his career. I think he's a brilliant engineer and just a great guy. Again, we haven't done anything other than a couple sim days. But his track record speaks for itself. Regardless of anything, I'm excited to be able to get the chance to work with him.

Q. Do you have a better sense over these last couple months of why this team has become so successful consistently so quickly, maybe a better sense now having been with the team versus competing against them?

ALEXANDER ROSSI: I think there's just a very clear path in terms of what they're trying to accomplish, whether that's on a weekly, daily time frame, monthly time frame, right?

There's a very black-and-white set of objectives and a reason behind those objectives in terms of the development of the car, the development of people, the transition of people, helping someone in an area where they've previously struggled or whatever, right? I just think there's a lot of very detail-oriented people that are kind of in a management role of the team, in a senior role of the team I should say.

With that comes a lot of structure down the pipeline that you're able to very clearly see a path of progress as you go into the season.

Q. How different this transition to a new race team, how different personally and maybe even professionally does this feel compared to when you were coming into INDYCAR for the first time in 2016 with Andretti?

ALEXANDER ROSSI: I don't think it's as extreme as that, right? I know the series and I know kind of everything that goes into American open-wheel racing versus the European open-wheel racing, which is really the biggest transition.

Certainly it's the largest kind of team switch. I've obviously driven for different teams in the past in Europe, in sports cars, whatever, but never really in my full-time job, if you will. I've driven for the same organization for a very long time and have a lot of respect and fabulous memories with those people.



So, yeah, it has been a big kind of shift, trying to compare and contrast areas that I can bring kind of recommendations and experience to maybe help fill the gaps that exist at Arrow McLaren.

Again, all of this is in theory, right? I don't really know anything. We'll have a much better idea and plan going into St. Pete, obviously coming out of St. Pete, with a pretty big gap before Texas.

Q. Does this team working off track feel drastically different after seven years at Andretti?

ALEXANDER ROSSI: I don't think 'drastically different' is fair. I think it's different. I think what's very cool about Arrow McLaren is we do have the resources of the McLaren F1 team. They very much are being integrated in a lot of respects. It's not two separate entities. McLaren Racing, if you will, is one organization that has its people and resources and intellect in kind of everything.

It's been pretty cool to see how that can be an advantage to us in terms of people, resources, simulations, software, kind of everything. We've been able to kind of rely on that and use that as a tool that maybe other teams certainly don't have.

Q. Recently there's been an ice hockey rink that's opened here in the desert. If there can be that, do you think we could see INDYCAR out here on a more permanent basis?

ALEXANDER ROSSI: That's up to people. Like, that's up to people coming. That's really the driving force for all races that we have. The races that we currently have on the calendar are very well-supported and well-attended, and we're very fortunate to have such a diverse schedule.

Obviously we would all love to expand it. We would all love to come to another track, another demographic in terms of location. But that relies on people coming out to the track.

We'd love it. We'd welcome it. Hopefully in the future we can add this place to the calendar.

Q. I know testing is limited, and you're with a new team. Have you been in the car at all? Have you had a chance to drive the Chevy engine, make some adjustments in how you drive?

ALEXANDER ROSSI: Nope (smiling). Very soon, though. It's coming up.

Q. Looking back on your time at Andretti, you were

the team leader there for a few seasons. Now I think that shifts to Colton. How do you think he'll do as the team leader over there?

ALEXANDER ROSSI: Great. Colton, he's excellent in really everything he does other than dressing (smiling). He's going to do just fine. He's one of my closest friends in life actually. I look forward to competing against him on track. It will be weird to kind of race him certainly a little differently than I have the past couple of years.

Yeah, I mean, at this point he's pretty experienced, and obviously his performance and capabilities speak for themselves. I think he'll be just fine.

Q. Any familiar faces that have joined your team that came over with you?

ALEXANDER ROSSI: Brian Barnhart. He's really it. Obviously I had one year of working with him last year, and it was pretty much perfect from every standpoint and metric that I could judge him on.

It was very cool for me to be able to get to work with him coming over to a new organization, but also an amazing opportunity for him. He's been in so many roles throughout the paddock and has had varied levels of success in really everything he's done. For him to get kind of a senior role at one of the best teams on the grid is just a testament to the work and effort that he's put in, and also the capabilities that he has, not only from an on-track timing stand standpoint but also back at the shop, kind of a leader-of-men standpoint.

Q. You get to work with Tony Kanaan at Indy this year, but next year Kyle Larson is going to join the team. That was pretty big news. What did you think of that?

ALEXANDER ROSSI: Yeah, I mean, getting to work with Tony will be awesome. Him and I have kind of got off to a weird start, but we've actually kind of become pals because we've realized we're more similar than different in a lot of respects (smiling).

So that's going to be awesome. Can't wait to do that this year.

Then Kyle, it's just a hell of a story, man. It's really, really cool to be able to be witness, part of someone doing the double. That's such an amazing thing for any racing driver, to have the opportunity to do that. Obviously I think he's one of the elite racing drivers on the planet.

He's going to come in and have his own kind of opinion and experience to bring to the table. I think both years



we've got a lot of really exciting things to look forward to in terms of our four-car lineup for the 500.

Q. You mentioned it's hard to have expectations when you haven't been in the car yet. Do you look at any outside inspiration?

ALEXANDER ROSSI: Fortunately or unfortunately, I don't know. I never won a championship with Andretti (smiling).

I think we're just going into it with the expectation of having a really good organization and awesome teammates around all three of us really.

I think the goal is to perform to our level and to execute what we know we're capable of each weekend, and hopefully that means we can have three cars fighting for the championship come September in Laguna.

Q. What are some of the challenges of going from one team to another?

ALEXANDER ROSSI: Honestly, the biggest one is people, just learning who does what and what everyone's kind of roles are, experience levels, who you need to go to for help on whatever issue you may have. I think that's the biggest thing.

Obviously, it's going to be a different car, right? They're going to have their own approach, methodology and way of doing things. Also switching manufacturers, that's also big. Not only was I with Andretti for so long, I also was with Honda for that whole time. It's going to be a transition from that standpoint, but nothing we can't overcome as a group.

THE MODERATOR: Thanks to Alexander Rossi. Have a great Content Day day here in Palm Springs.

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