

NTT INDYCAR SERIES

News Conference

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Alex Palou

Marcus Armstrong

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: Joined by Alex Palou, Marcus Armstrong.

I'm sure both you guys are champing at the bit to get going back in a car on Thursday.

ALEX PALOU: Yeah, yeah, I am. It's great to be back here, see new guys' faces and get ready to start the season.

THE MODERATOR: Did you see our faces or their faces?

ALEX PALOU: Yeah, of course, your faces (smiling). Too long.

Q. You're looking forward to our questions?

ALEX PALOU: Of course.

THE MODERATOR: Marcus, don't worry, this is going to be fine.

MARCUS ARMSTRONG: I'm looking forward to this one (laughter).

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

Q. Alex, you've got everything sorted out now, you know what you're going to do. You're going to split your time. How does that work on the INDYCAR side? Do you anticipate the relationship is going to be fine and strong, you get all your access, or is it going to get weirder as the season goes on, then you're headed out?

ALEX PALOU: It's been good since everything was set week after Laguna. The relationship has been back to 100% like it was before from both sides.

Yeah, I had full access since then. Been at the workshop many, many times before I left for Europe for Christmas,

once we've been back to prepare all the pre-season and stuff.

Yeah, I don't expect anything.

Then in regards to sharing time between both parties, we set it in the way that will be focused on INDYCAR during the INDYCAR season, then once it's done and once we try and get to 100%, then I'll be focused on the other side.

Q. You can't do Formula 1 until INDYCAR is over?

ALEX PALOU: Yeah, as long as there's no conflict... But there's a lot of conflicts. But if there's no conflict, but there's only three days in between races; it's better to focus on INDYCAR.

As long as it doesn't take crazy commitments to fly and stuff, yeah, we will be focused on the INDYCAR side.

Q. Marcus, you haven't had a lot of time, but which of your teammates do you like best? I'm just kidding. How are you settling in and enjoying it so far?

MARCUS ARMSTRONG: It's been amazing. The team has been so welcoming since I arrived last December. I mean, yeah, extremely welcoming. Everyone has been giving me more information than I could have ever imagined really. So open with everything and how they approach things.

I've been genuinely impressed by the organization, just the strategic point of view that Chip Ganassi Racing has. It's really quite remarkable. I can understand why they've had so much success.

Q. Marcus, you're spending your first year running the road and street courses. While you were trying to figure out what 2023 was going to look like for you, was there a potential for you to run the full season or always the plan to run road and street and bump up next year?

MARCUS ARMSTRONG: As a racing driver, I'd love to be doing everything. It's not the first time that a rookie has started off just doing road and street course races.



Like you said, it's certainly my target in the future to be doing the full season. But at the moment I'm fairly happy with how it's panned out. It's sort of the perfect way to introduce myself into this championship and work my way to a full campaign.

Q. We've seen a lot of drivers follow this path, Formula 2 to INDYCAR. How much communication did you have with Callum Ilott and Christian Lundgaard?

MARCUS ARMSTRONG: Everybody seems to say the same thing. They love it. Christian was very vocal about it actually when he first did his race. We hadn't finished our F2 season when he did his first race in 2021, I think it was. He was raving about it, wouldn't stop talking about it. He was a really good advocate for the championship.

Callum and I don't really speak about racing. To be fair, he loves it as well. He's enjoying the competition side, and I can see why. Results orientated, performance orientated. Sometimes those lines are blurred overseas. I can understand why they like it.

Q. Do you come to INDYCAR feeling like you've had to put dreams of running in Formula 1 off to the side, or does any of that still exist?

MARCUS ARMSTRONG: To be fair, I'm a New Zealander. I don't know if you know this, but Scott Dixon has been pretty successful here the past couple of decades (smiling).

Q. He's okay.

ALEX PALOU: Kind of (smiling).

MARCUS ARMSTRONG: I've been watching him on TV since I was a kid, so... Literally a kid.

It's cool because INDYCAR is massive where I'm from because of him, I think. I've always been so attracted to this championship. Of course, I spent my entire life chasing F1. You can never say 'never.' If I'm honest with you, I'm happy where I am now. It's a dream come true.

Q. Alex, looking at 2022, obviously it was awkward, difficult for you and the team at times. Did the way you handled it, the team handled it, the fact you never really completely collapsed, did all of that contribute to having things come back together for 2023? Did it teach you anything about yourself, how you handled it?

ALEX PALOU: Yeah, it was a tough year. Could have been a lot worse, for sure, than what we had, but also

could have been a little bit better if we didn't have anything around in our minds. It's a part of racing.

Yeah, I don't know if that made everything come together better or not. In fact, it was after Laguna but before Laguna and during Laguna, it was like everything coming together.

Yeah, I don't know. I'm just happy that now we know that even with things in our minds, we were able to be successful. Hopefully we can be back to 2021 things during this season.

I think we have a great team. We have now Marcus and we have also Takuma that's going to help us at the ovals. Hopefully we can be a little bit stronger as a group than we were last year.

Q. Were you always confident you could get through it? Being mentally tough, how important to your success is your ability to block everything out and compartmentalize?

ALEX PALOU: Yeah, obviously there's always some moments where you're like, Oh, no, my God, this is not going the direction I wanted.

But there was things that were out of my control obviously. Some things that I could control, as well. But at the end of the day I had all the information from my side, from other sides. I knew that everything could be settled, and it did. So, yeah, I'm just happy it did.

Q. Are you good at that? Do you take that as a challenge?

ALEX PALOU: Well, I mean, I didn't have another option, so... Either you're good or not, that's what you have to do.

Q. Marcus, you said this series has been appealing to you following Dixon. What can be your realistic goals here as a rookie? Do you feel like you can come in and win a race?

MARCUS ARMSTRONG: I think fundamentally I need to get on it straightaway. I have all the information in the world really. Obviously he's won a championship. Scott has won more than a couple. Marcus won the Indy 500. It's a very accomplished group. I have all the information to learn from, which is really cool.

I just need to hit the ground running, do well immediately. That's my target, and yeah, to maximize myself from the beginning. Obviously I understand how competitive this championship is, and I need to learn a new car with limited

test days. But that's part of the challenge.

Like I said before, the organization and the strategic view that Ganassi has, I think it's going to help me for that. Yeah, I hope that we can hit the ground running, then see what we can do afterwards.

Q. Marcus, you've got all this great talent with your teammates, also in the engineering room. How fortunate do you feel you've got this wealth of information available to you?

MARCUS ARMSTRONG: Oh, it's awesome. It's funny when I talk to people around the factory, they talk about when they arrived at Chip Ganassi Racing. I was like, I wasn't born yet, but cool (smiling). A lot of people have been there forever, so... So much experience, so much knowledge, which is exciting.

I'm a fan of the sport as well as a driver, so I like to learn everyone's stories. Also my teammates, haven't really spent much time with them, but just understand where they came from, how they sort of grew as drivers. It's really interesting to me.

The engineers, as well. They all have a lot of history. Certainly my engineer has been there, done that. I draw inspiration from that.

Q. Marcus, both Callum and Christian spoke last year about the fairly easy transition from F2 to INDYCAR. With both being Dallara cars, both cars having no power steering, how has the transition been for you so far?

MARCUS ARMSTRONG: I mean, in F2 we don't have power steering. I know that INDYCAR is notoriously physically demanding, which again is part of the challenge and cool. Certainly cool to watch on TV when you're wrestling with the car like it's an alligator.

It something I'm used to. If I'm honest, actually the only time I've ever driven a car with power steering is when I did an F1 test, a couple of one-off days in a GT car. I'm well-accustomed to not having power steering.

Q. Marcus, I'm not quite sure how much time you've spent in the United States. What has been the biggest culture shock for you?

MARCUS ARMSTRONG: That's a good question.

To answer it seriously, I think that everyone is very open. It seems like racing is a lifestyle as opposed to a job. That was sort of my first impression, which is a real positive

thing. There's no such thing as work hours. If you need to stay in the office till ten, you stay in the office till ten, and no one is going to ask questions. That's really quite unique.

Again, it's something that excites me because everyone is as committed as I am, I feel.

To answer unseriously, I think it's funny that no one understands my accent when I'm walking around Indianapolis. People speak to me like I'm French or something, speak to me in pidgin English (laughter). That's been an interesting experience.

Q. I assume you are going to at least attend the Indy 500. What are you looking forward to about that day?

MARCUS ARMSTRONG: Everyone raves about that race. I haven't stopped hearing about how fantastic the whole experience is. I mean, I'll be fortunate enough just to look at it from a wide perspective, look at how everyone approaches the race.

I can probably even learn a few things for the rest of the season and my own campaign just by how everyone approaches it. I'll have a lot of time to chat with people, understand what it's all about. It will be awesome.

THE MODERATOR: Thanks for coming by. Appreciate it Alex and Marcus.

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