

NTT INDYCAR SERIES

News Conference

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Devlin DeFrancesco

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: Good afternoon, everyone. We'll kick things off with the No. 29 Andretti Steinbrenner Autosport Honda and Devlin DeFrancesco back after rookie season last year, so all this is now old hat for you. This is no big deal. Ready to go in season No. 2.

Looking forward to the start of the season and certainly getting back in the car on Thursday and Friday.

DEVLIN DEFRANCESCO: Very much so. I've anticipated coming here for quite a while now and have done my studying and reading. Looking forward to getting back to it after a long off-season. A lot of work has gone into everything across the board during this long off-season, and I think we're going to be quite strong this year.

Q. You blink and you look around, there's some new teammates on this team for the Andretti team for you guys. How is that working out so far?

DEVLIN DEFRANCESCO: Yeah, quite well. I've known Kyle for a very long time. We raced go-karts together in Indy Lights. I think he is going to be a good addition to Andretti. I think he's going to bring some knowledge from Foyt, and I think it's going to be an overall better year for all of us across the board.

Q. How are you feeling?

DEVLIN DEFRANCESCO: I'm good. I'm recharged. I finally got some sleep last night and I'm feeling good.

Q. How much does it help you having -- even though it was not the win like you had two years ago, but just to have the seat time after a long off-season.

DEVLIN DEFRANCESCO: I think it definitely gets the rust off and gets everything flowing. To be in a competitive environment fighting with some top-level guys definitely gets you ready for the season, and you won't be quite rusty, I think, when I get back.

It's a long off-season. The last time I was in an INDYCAR

was in Laguna the end of September. Just excited to be back and get going.

Q. He mentioned your teammates. In theory, Colton is now the veteran at Andretti. What kind of leader is he?

DEVLIN DEFRANCESCO: Very fast. Very, very fast last year, just looking at his data, some of the qualifying laps he was able to put in were very, very impressive, and definitely someone I've been able to lean on and learn from for sure in many different ways, and I'm looking forward to putting that to use this year and making a big step forward.

Q. With yourself and Kyle and Colton, it's kind of an INDYCAR youth movement. How much does that help to have all those three drivers, along with Romain, who's the elder statesman in some ways, how much does that help you band together, bond together and push each other?

DEVLIN DEFRANCESCO: Very much so. We all know each other quite well. We're all very familiar with each other. Romain included. We're there to do the best job we can for Andretti Autosport and to move ourselves up the grid, and I think we've all looked at things and analyzed things from the off-season, and I think we've found quite a few interesting things. I think we'll have a good team dynamic and look forward to moving up forward this year.

Q. With the depth of the engineering department there, that was always one of Andretti Autosport's great keys. How important is that, and do you see any changes coming from the engineering department?

DEVLIN DEFRANCESCO: Yes and no. For sure we looked at the events where we were strong and were not so strong and we've analyzed why, and I think we've all gotten on top of those. I think it's going to be a very good year for this team, and I can't wait to get going.

Q. You said you want to take a big step forward. What's that mean results-wise? Is there a goal in mind where you think you should be finishing?

DEVLIN DEFRANCESCO: You know, I want to be fighting at the front. I want to be fighting in the Fast 12 and Fast Sixes much more often. I transferred once last year and

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qualified in the top 12 twice. I want to make it a regular occurrence, and I think that's just going to make Sundays much, much easier.

When I look back at a lot of races last year there were a lot of what could have beens, and I very much intend on changing that to that's what we achieved.

Q. You're working with a new engineer, Ron. Are you looking forward to having a different person to bounce ideas off of and have you spent much time with him?

DEVLIN DEFRANCESCO: You know, Andy and I last year, we got on quite well. He's moved over to Lights. I've spent quite a lot of time with Ron and we've chatted a lot and bounced a lot of ideas off of each other. He seems like a very good guy. He's young.

He seems very hungry to do well. Anyone who's hungry to do well and for success with me, I'm all for it. He seems like a very good guy, and I'm looking forward to getting to work with him.

Q. Drivers always have their own preferences towards style and stuff. As it relates to the INDYCAR season, what tracks do you look forward to when you begin to look at a season like this?

DEVLIN DEFRANCESCO: Honestly, I look forward to all of them. In INDYCAR we're such a diverse series and race at so many different tracks. I enjoy the very different disciplines that we race at, from the ovals to the street course to the road courses. Toronto is one I'm looking forward to getting back to; Indy road course, was on for quite a strong result there, as well. And Gateway and obviously the speedway. Honestly, all of them. I'm looking forward to getting back on all of them.

Q. Given your past, have you been more successful at some than others?

DEVLIN DEFRANCESCO: There are events I look at for sure where I struggled more than others, but I think as a general consensus, sorting out my achilles heel in qualifying last year I think is just going to help across the board in general, and that's what the main objective has been for me during the off-season.

Q. You mentioned qualifying being an achilles heel. How do you go away and work on that in the off-season, considering you can't be in the INDYCAR and there's only so much simulation you can actually do?

DEVLIN DEFRANCESCO: So we would look at all the

events across the season, starting in St. Pete, ending with Laguna Seca, watch the qualifying on boards of my teammates, note down all the various differences, whether that was line, balance, et cetera, and just see which corners I struggled in and why, and look for patterns in the data over the lap to see what was different in the driving, as well, and just go through all the events.

I would do a lot of karting in the off-season, as well, going to Homestead and various different tracks with hard tires, soft tire, changing it up and working on delivering laps when I needed to, and as well, Daytona is a very good way to start the season to work on that kind of stuff.

Q. You had mentioned Toronto, having the bit of success that you did have there last season, what was it in particular about the Honda Indy Toronto that set itself apart from other races you competed in in 2022?

DEVLIN DEFRANCESCO: I think I gelled with the track fairly well, considering I've never been there. I don't think anyone else has really driven there for a while, so I think that made a bit more of an even playing field.

But I think in general for the course of this season, I think it's just going to be a vast improvement across the board.

Q. Devlin, how does it feel to no longer be a rookie?

DEVLIN DEFRANCESCO: It feels amazing to be back for year two. It's the first time I've ever done a championship for a second year in a row, so I very much look forward to putting everything I learned last year forward this year and into seeing what we can do.

Q. What are your goals for the test this week?

DEVLIN DEFRANCESCO: So we have some big ticket test items that we want to get through. A few things have changed from last year, and working on our slow speed performance, just generally braking in the slow speed and things like that to get on top of those.

Q. Have you seen the Detroit layout yet, and are you excited about it?

DEVLIN DEFRANCESCO: Yeah, I had a quick look at it. I haven't looked at it very much in detail yet, but I think it's going to be quite a cool race. The pit lane there looks quite different. I think that's going to spice things up a little bit.

Q. Just looking ahead to the fact that you've got a couple of days' test here at Thermal and there's pretty much still a month to St. Pete, what's the plan in that month period so any lessons learned at Thermal don't



get wasted by the time you get to St. Pete?

DEVLIN DEFRANCESCO: Definitely some simulator work back in Indy with my engineering team, as well. I think there's another test before then, so just looking forward to getting going tomorrow, and I think we're going to be ready to hit the ground running in St. Pete.

Q. Coming back to Andretti for the second year in a row and the infrastructure that's there and talks of a new workshop for the Andretti Autosport organization, that must make you feel very good being involved in a team of that sort of magnitude, as well.

DEVLIN DEFRANCESCO: Very much so. I'm very grateful to be a part of Andretti Autosport, to have the people around me that are pushing for me on my side of the garage. I've got great people around me. The COO, Rob Edwards, as my strategist, we've analyzed everything during the off-season on what to do better, and I think we're going to have a very good season.

Q. There's not as many, it would seem, testing sessions or practice sessions at some of these tracks that we go to. Do you think that would help your team's performance if INDYCAR gave you more time, or is it just a matter of trying to get the best setup immediately; you either have it right or you're going to be a little off?

DEVLIN DEFRANCESCO: For sure with the limited time, rolling off the truck good in a strong way definitely will help. Having to play catch-up when you're limited on time makes it tough. But that's all part of it, right? That's what makes -- that's what separates the best from not.

I look forward to this year. I think we will have it right in a lot, a lot of places, so I'm excited.

Q. One driver said that the tires were different, I think, at every race last season. Was that one of the areas where you struggled in the performance of the tires?

DEVLIN DEFRANCESCO: For sure in qualifying with the alternate tire, I think yes, nailing it on lap 1 or lap 2 was tricky. But I think that's one of the things I'm prepared for this year and I have experience at all the tracks now. It's something I look forward to putting to use when we get there.

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