

NTT INDYCAR SERIES

News Conference

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Benjamin Peterson

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: Continuing on here, joining us, the driver of the No. 55 AJ Foyt Enterprises machine Chevrolet, Benjamin Peterson. Looking ahead to rookie campaign, obviously, and hopping in the car Thursday and Friday at the Thermal Club. How excited are you to get in the car and see what you can do?

BENJAMIN PETERSON: I'm just so excited, even just being here today, driving here. This is how desperate we've been to get on track, just driving to content day felt like kind of getting ready to go on track, but we're just here talking with people, so it was a glimpse of hope to be on track.

But luckily we're on track already this week at a new track that I think everyone is very excited to be at.

Q. I don't know if you would call it an overhaul, but some changes at AJ Foyt Racing from last year. How are things coming together for you guys?

BENJAMIN PETERSON: It's been very exciting times at AJ Foyt Racing, new people, new organization, new structure, new methods. People are so hungry right now to be there and to improve. I think it's been a lot of time, but before my time there, of people wanting it but not necessarily knowing how to get there. But now there is a very good path with as a team how we can accomplish things that we have as goals.

People are staying extra during the weekends to practice pit stops when they don't have to be. People don't have to be there to help them are showing up to help with that, and it's just really special to be a part of.

Q. You got to spend most of last year with AJ Foyt Racing, in a lot of ways shadowing the team. How valuable was that for you?

BENJAMIN PETERSON: So valuable. I felt like last year I was a part of the team, a driver, the only thing, but the only thing I wasn't doing was driving the car. Every team meeting I was part of. You know, being on the timing

stand, seeing strategy come into play, it was a really big help, and kind of made me feel like I got a season's worth of experience without driving the car.

And the only difference is now I'm driving the car. Strategy meetings, everything like that will feel very similar, and I am very grateful to the team for letting me be a part of that last year, and can't wait to do it now for real and as an official driver for them and working together.

Q. You were kind of a fly on the wall last year for Foyt, and you mentioned that this team has made a lot of changes this off-season. Can you take us into what you've seen over the last 12 months?

BENJAMIN PETERSON: Absolutely. When I talked about the restructure of the team, new people, some of those key players is the additions of Michael Cannon, who was at Ganassi here for the last three years with Dixon, who is now our lead technical director and oversees many different areas.

Craig Brooks as a new person, as well, who helps run the team as a manager position.

New mechanics.

Same engineers that have been involved with the program to keep building what they have started; new parts on the car that will help hopefully with dampers, et cetera.

So yeah, a lot of new things and a lot of hard work, but as soon as we go live at Thermal here in a couple days, it's going to be a lot of hard work, and I can't wait to work hard with the team.

Q. You've got a somewhat veteran teammate in Santino Ferrucci. He's been around. How much can you learn from him?

BENJAMIN PETERSON: He's been awesome. I haven't had too many interactions with him. The first one this year was at the Foyt Christmas party actually. We were sitting down having dinner together, and the amount of info that he shared with me that I would not expect him or any teammate to share with me once you get to INDYCAR, it was pretty eye-opening, and I take my hat off to him for



that.

Everything from little advice or tips for how he has his cockpit set up and different tracks, what he prioritizes. I was very impressed with what he shared. I can't wait to work with him as a teammate to help make this team better.

Q. Does AJ get wild at the Christmas party?

BENJAMIN PETERSON: I was at the Christmas party at the shop here in Indianapolis, not the Texas one, so unfortunately I didn't see AJ. But maybe next year.

Q. Does Larry get crazy at the Christmas party?

BENJAMIN PETERSON: No. Everyone is having a good time, but everyone is well-behaved.

Q. You had 10 podiums, five of those runner-ups before you had that win at Portland last year. How much did you feel like you needed that win in Indy Next before feeling confident in taking this step up?

BENJAMIN PETERSON: Yeah, I felt very confident making the step up, even if we got that win or not. Like I said, we had a lot of podiums. I feel very good, very confident, that everyone that's around me I feel like is the key people, and I feel really fortunate to have these people around me that are still around me.

Yeah, the win was very special in Portland at what felt like a home event growing up in Seattle, but obviously would I have taken more wins? Absolutely. But I think a lot of podiums is very important, as well.

Q. Is there any particular track or area of INDYCAR that you're particularly looking forward to this season?

BENJAMIN PETERSON: Absolutely. In terms of tracks coming back to, very excited for Barber, one of my favorite tracks. Honestly, every track on the calendar in terms of tracks that I've been at, there's not any track that I don't enjoy.

I very much look forward to the new tracks such as Indy 500, Texas, Toronto, Long Beach. Yeah, very excited to explore these new places.

Q. With your background in British Formula 3 before you came over to Indy Lights and then the performances that you put in the ovals in Indy Lights with the podiums and whatnot, are you equally excited for the ovals in the INDYCAR Series, and do you expect any growing pains with the differences in

machinery versus Indy Lights?

BENJAMIN PETERSON: Yeah, I personally am a huge fan of the ovals. We've had a lot of success in Indy Next the past couple years on the ovals that we've done. It was not like I had a lot of experience on ovals before then, but obviously we hit the ground running pretty good as soon as I was introduced to it.

Can't wait to go to two superspeedways this year. I haven't gone over 180, 185 in a race car, so now we'll be doing close to 240. But yeah, very excited.

Q. Just a quick question about the Global Racing Group that you've been racing with in the last few years. Does that still exist now that you've reached INDYCAR, or is that something now that you've reached your target that is something that has been shelved?

BENJAMIN PETERSON: Yeah, Global Racing Group obviously a team that I raced with in a lot of my junior formula, more so in F4 and F3 here in the States. It then became more of a brand for performance engineering in my efforts in two years of Indy Next, and now it's more of a brand.

But obviously the heart and soul of every effort here is AJ Foyt Racing.

Q. What have you been doing to prepare for INDYCAR versus Indy Next?

BENJAMIN PETERSON: Good question. And good to hear from you. I saw you not too long ago. But preparations have been -- I personally spent a lot of time on the simulator that I have at my house, so I've been doing a lot of sim racing, long races to get used to that.

I've been go-karting. Been basically taking advantage of any track time that I can get. But really the last time since being in a proper race car was Laguna last year, and honestly since my INDYCAR test, it's been seven months since my first INDYCAR test. Look forward to getting back in real life and pushing like crazy.

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

BENJAMIN PETERSON: I think the big goal is just let's get going, get comfortable in the car, get used to a brand new track, and then my first goal is always to push myself as hard as I can and then work with people around me to improve myself.

And then secondly, or equally as important, how can we



improve the car, and if we have a car that's capable of being Top 5, then that's what I expect, and if it's a car that we're struggling to be in the top 15, then anything over that I think is good.

Whatever is realistic is what my goals are, and we'll always push for a little more.

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