

NTT INDYCAR SERIES

News Conference

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Romain Grosjean

Marcus Ericsson

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: Good afternoon. Thank you for joining us.

Joining us now, finishing third, his ninth career podium, second here of 2023, obviously the points leader as well, Marcus Ericsson. Finishing second, Romain Grosjean, fifth career podium, fourth runner-up finish, second straight here at Long Beach.

Romain, we'll begin with you. Tell us about your afternoon. A big day for Andretti Autosport as well.

ROMAIN GROSJEAN: First thing we've got to say is congratulations to the whole team, first, second, fourth. It's been awesome, a good weekend. Kyle has done an amazing job in qualifying and again in the race. I mean, he didn't make any mistake in front of me. Couldn't use any of that.

We had a great strategy, did a very good job. Had a very fast car. Because the way the race turn up, I have to save a lot of fuel on the last stint. I had 188 second of push to pass left, but I was not allowed to use it. For once I saved too much, I guess.

THE MODERATOR: How frustrating was that?

ROMAIN GROSJEAN: It sucks. I just wanted to push the button and I wasn't allowed to.

Yeah, it was tough. Then Marcus was driving fast at the end of the race. I think, yeah, we did a tremendous job. Honda did amazing, as well. One, two, three, four, five. We have to note that. Bits and piece, we're getting there.

I would lie if I said I wouldn't have loved to be on the top step of the podium today, and I thought I had a chance. Just the way the race turned out, the fuel situation was, it wasn't possible.

As a team, I think it's very good where we are. The team

has been working super hard through the winter to improve our pit stops. I believe in Texas I had the fastest pit stop of everyone. Here again we had fast pit stop.

We knew that in lap and out lap were going to be critical. I was hoping that I was going to be the one going a lap longer than everyone else, but it was Kyle at the end. It's normal, he was the leader. We had to cover Josef Newgarden. We did that well.

Yeah, as I said, the fuel situation was not easy to manage through the end of the race. Created a lot of issues with brakes getting too cool, tires losing temperature. We had good cars and managed to get 1-2.

THE MODERATOR: Marcus Ericsson, the points leader. You come out of here with a lot of momentum heading into Barber.

MARCUS ERICSSON: Yeah, I think it was a great weekend for us. We had tying best qualifying results for me. I think we had a really good race going today.

The only sort of issue we had in the race was that restart when Pato decided to dive down there and try to take out a lot of cars. Got caught out in that. Had to almost stop the car. I think I lost five or six positions there. From there on, it was tough.

We had the pace in the car to fight for the win today. So it was a good recovery to come back and still finish on the podium. I think the pace on the last stint was amazing. Really, really happy.

Like Romain said, we had Honda one through five yesterday in qualifying, Honda one through five in the Long Beach Grand Prix. Well done to them.

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

Q. Marcus, you're leading the points again. How much confidence does that give you going into Indianapolis again?

MARCUS ERICSSON: It gives a lot of confidence. I think we've been really strong. Last year already, we were



fighting for the championship and leading the championship for a long time. Was disappointed to miss out on that. But used that as motivation this winter to work hard on myself and my team. I think we've come out even stronger this year.

Winning in St. Pete showed that. We had a good weekend on a bad weekend in Texas, quite a good result. Here again this weekend, we had tremendous speed. We're definitely in the fight. Leading the championship feels good, but it's a long way to go. We need to keep focused and keep working hard.

But, yeah, I'm really happy with the start of the year obviously.

Q. Romain, what goes through your mind when you finish second at this race two years in a row?

ROMAIN GROSJEAN: It's better than finishing third two years in a row, I guess (laughter).

You know what? I did not even want to try to go for the win today. It would have been taking too much risk. Kyle drove a brilliant weekend. He had the best strategy out there, but he was on pole.

He was fast. He didn't make any mistake. He drove well. He deserved the race.

For me, it was more like after the two first races, Marcus mentioned he won St. Pete, kind of was mine, but it's okay, I give it to you. You got it anyway (smiling).

I think we're strong everywhere. Today the race car wasn't the best ever. I think we're going to learn a few things and move forward. Generally we have a very fast car. Two weeks ago in Texas Motor Speedway, also showed I could do ovals.

Yeah, when we speak in Laguna Seca, I want to be with those guys fighting for the championship, and I think we get a chance to do that.

Q. Both of you spent a lot of time in Formula 1 in cars that didn't have a chance to compete at the front. How redeeming is it now to be here in solid equipment?

MARCUS ERICSSON: I love it. I think that was one of the biggest motivations for me coming over to INDYCAR, to get the chance to sort of show what I could do on top level racing.

The INDYCAR championship, the competitiveness of the championship, especially this year, is just incredible.

There's so many good drivers and cars out there. To know every weekend you can go out and compete and fight for a win, the kind of drive you get from that is something I missed very much in my five years in Formula 1.

Yeah, it's great to be in that position now. To be in a great team in Chip Ganassi Racing, yeah, be out there and fight for wins and podiums, it's a lot of fun.

ROMAIN GROSJEAN: Yeah, I think Marcus summarized it pretty well. You work as hard as the others, if not more sometimes, you still have the pre-season testing and you know you don't have the car to win the races. Yeah, it's tough. You start doubting yourself and so on.

You try to drive the car 120%, then you make a mistake, which is normal when you overdrive the car, you always try to overcompensate. It's very frustrating.

I have a lot of friends that are swimmers. They have to be in the pool at 6 in the morning. They swim for a very long time and they go back in the afternoon. That's very tough on them. We don't have that challenge, but when we don't have the car in Formula 1, there's nothing you can do. Kind of sucks.

Q. Romain, you're very relaxed. Are you feeling in a great place right now in the sport?

ROMAIN GROSJEAN: Who is relaxed (laughter)?

Yeah, even more if we start winning races. But, yeah, I think 2022 was definitely a very hard season. I couldn't get the car to do what I wanted it to do. I couldn't find the feel.

I've been racing for 25 years. I still doubt myself sometimes. I believe I'm one of the best in the world, but sometimes I still think do I still have it, do I still know how to drive.

That's why some people are so important for me. That's why Texas being in front was important. Like today, finishing second is important. I still know how to do it. I'll be 37 tomorrow. I wish I win for my birthday, but P2, I take it.

Q. Marcus, can you elaborate about the incident with Pato. Post race he made it sound like it was a racing incident. You describe it as something different. How do you generally describe that in light of the fact at such an elite level it's bound to happen, or is that not how you understand it?

MARCUS ERICSSON: I thought from my point of view it was a low-percentage move, early in the race, on a restart.

I think he was trying to overtake two or three cars in two corners. That move on Kyle, he could have taken out me and Kyle and Romain, all of us.

ROMAIN GROSJEAN: I kind of backed off. I saw it coming, backed off. This is not going to go well. I got proper position.

If Kyle would have had a bit of a wiggle, I could have passed by. But it didn't happen.

MARCUS ERICSSON: No, that was the only thing. Obviously I lost five or six spots on that. I had to clutch and go down to stall. I just lost a lot of positions. I hit my front wing, got some small damage on that.

It's not ideal, but that's racing sometimes. I'm not blaming him too bad on that. It was just a low-percentage move from my point of view.

But we still recovered and got back on the podium, so I'm happy with that.

Q. Romain, you said you weren't going to risk making a move for the lead. Do you think last year you would have tried to make the move for the win?

ROMAIN GROSJEAN: I tried a couple of times last year, but it just couldn't on Josef. I think you have to assess few things. If we had won St. Pete, finished on the podium in Texas, things would have been slightly different. But we did not. I think it's more important that we're first and second than just trying to fight for the win.

We're coming in Barber in two weeks. I'm not worried. I'm going to have a fast car and get a chance there. Could win Barber, could win Indy. At Indy 500, try to catch Ganassi. Did such a good job last year. We improving a lot, as well.

Yeah, it's a different situation. I think we're going to be strong everywhere. Wasn't for today but maybe for tomorrow.

Q. Marcus, had you not lost those five or six places, how would you assess your possibility of getting to the front?

MARCUS ERICSSON: I think we had a good chance at it. We were running second behind Kyle there. I think we had a bit more pace than him, especially at the end of the race.

It's always hard to overtake. Like Romain said, it's tough on a street course as well to overtake. Kyle did a great job, deserved the win today. But I think we definitely could have given him a run for it in the end there.

That's racing. Sometimes it happens. We had to bounce back. I was happy to be able to make some good overtakes on my way back to the podium. I'll take that. We're back in the championship lead.

Of course, could have, would have, should have. Maybe we could have challenged for it today but it wasn't our day, and we're happy with that.

Q. You said Thursday this last year has just been beyond belief, amazing. Now that you have a win and this placing, leading the points, how would you describe your level of elation?

MARCUS ERICSSON: Yeah, I think the 500 last year was the highlight of my career and my life really so far. Got to experience a lot of amazing things since then. It's given me a lot of confidence. I think I've shown that on track. Like I said, worked really hard this winter to be even better this year, to take the fight to try to win back to back on the 500, but also win the championship.

We've put in a lot of hard work and we're feeling strong, feeling good. But, yeah, it's a long season, so we need to keep doing what we're doing.

Q. Romain, how do you feel about finally being in the spotlight of this race? How do you feel getting number two here?

ROMAIN GROSJEAN: Yeah, I think it was important score some good points today and finish a race. We've got good confidence in the car. I've got a good car. Obviously St. Pete, yeah, should have been mine, but... Sometime it doesn't happen the way it should be. It's okay. We move on.

I think I learn a lot in Texas, as well, on ovals. I think the team has done such a good job from last year. Just not the same team any more. I'm so proud of them for having all of us drivers, but also everyone in the team kind of looked at themselves and say what can we do better, what can we improve. We've shown that this year.

It hasn't come out well until today. But today we were first, second, fourth on the final. That's pretty amazing for Andretti. I think the guys have got to count on us.

Q. Marcus, being referred to on the Hundred Days to Indy as the most consistent driver on the INDYCAR SERIES, how do you feel about that? Do you feel your consistency will prevail into Indy 500?

MARCUS ERICSSON: Probably the most consistent is

Scott Dixon because he's done that for 20 years. I get the privilege to work with him and learn from him as being his teammate. I try to do all the things that Scott does well. I think that's been good for me.

But, yeah, over the last couple of seasons, my consistency has been my key, to always be there. I think Texas last race was a good example of that. We had a bad day, but we still finished eighth. That is consistency.

Yeah, we need to keep doing that to win a championship. I think that's what Will did last year, he was so consistently up there. He only won one race, but he was always up there scoring big points.

In this series the way we get the points here, the way we win is consistency and being up there in the top eight, top five every time. It's how you win the championship.

Q. Do you feel Honda has an advantage when it comes to fuel mileage after the race today?

MARCUS ERICSSON: I think I need to watch back the race to know that and sort of analyze that a bit more.

All I know is that I think the fuel mileage we had was great. I could push really hard, still having to do a fuel number for sure, but still with that yellow that fell, the way we had to do the next two stints, I was really, really happy the fuel mileage we had gave us a chance to still push. Honda has done a great job there.

Q. Similar for you, Romain?

ROMAIN GROSJEAN: Yeah, I think Honda has done an amazing job. Same thing, they keep working every week, giving us a little bit more. I think Josef, I mean, you're talking Josef mainly, what really killed him is he pitted a lap before me and two laps before Kyle, three laps before Marcus, I think. It's mathematics.

I had to do a lot of fuel saving in my end. I think that extra lap would have been almost impossible on my end.

Q. Romain, do you feel today is so much more of a relief and for the team because of the adversity you faced has been out of your control, difficult for you to control?

ROMAIN GROSJEAN: No, I think the big relief is when I win a race. Hopefully that happens sooner than later.

Q. Marcus, Alexander Rossi told us that he wanted to see the Long Beach race maybe extended a little bit to have more strategy. I imagine you feel the same way.

MARCUS ERICSSON: What was the question? If I wanted to...

Q. Extend the race.

MARCUS ERICSSON: I mean, it was still a long race I think. But, yeah, when you're fast there, I guess you would want some more laps. But I think we knew the numbers we had to make.

Yeah, I think 85 laps, it's enough. I think it was good.

THE MODERATOR: Marcus and Romain, thank you.

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