

NTT INDYCAR SERIES

News Conference

Friday, June 30, 2023

Christian Lundgaard

Alexander Rossi

Kyle Kirkwood

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: Currently joined by a guy that led throughout a good part of today's practice, ended up fourth quick, Christian Lundgaard.

Tell us about your practice session. Happy with it, Christian?

CHRISTIAN LUNDGAARD: Yeah, I think coming into here we expected obviously to be fast, considering our road course performance the entire year.

But leaving Road America, a track that has just been resurfaced, with a track that hasn't been resurfaced lately, we also knew it would be a different sort of balance in the car, tougher to drive.

It certainly was something to handle out there. It's quick. So that's the positives, I guess. We covered a lot of things in the practice session in terms of items we wanted to try. I think we're pretty satisfied at this point.

THE MODERATOR: Questions, please.

Q. Christian, Graham said all three of you guys were going to go out and explore different areas. Did you feel there was pretty good cooperation? Is this team making progress?

CHRISTIAN LUNDGAARD: I mean, looking we were fourth, I would say so.

But, no, obviously we got to do that in the race. That's when it counts. Our plan was to cover as many things as we could. That's the reason why we run three cars in the team.

I mean, at least on the 45 car we covered as much as we actually wanted to do, some other things as well. It was a good session.

THE MODERATOR: Joined also by Alexander Rossi.

Alex, describe your day. Happy with it so far? Good start to the weekend or no?

ALEXANDER ROSSI: It was okay. It's always fun coming back here. It's an awesome track to drive on. Yeah, a little bit further off than we wanted for the first session.

The good thing about having a teammate this quick is you got the good stuff to look at.

THE MODERATOR: Questions.

Q. Christian, this track always has been considered the home of the Rahals. As a Rahal driver, do you understand the importance of Rahal doing well at Mid-Ohio?

CHRISTIAN LUNDGAARD: We want to do well everywhere, for sure. You want to deliver a good result here for Bobby and the rest of the team.

But, I mean, for me every race is a race that I want to win.

Q. Alex, you talked about having a fast teammate out there in Pato. Is it surprising to see? Is that about the speed you thought we might be seeing?

ALEXANDER ROSSI: I don't know that I actually knew what we predicted. I think it was certainly surprising how quick, like, Josef went. Usually this track takes a while to evolve and come in. It's kind of very rubber and temperature sensitive. With no Firestone rubber, hot day, he was the first car out, like to do a 7.3, we were like that's pretty quick.

I don't think turn one is that much faster. Obviously they repaved turn one. It's certainly a chunk quicker. I don't know that I know. It was a surprise, for sure.

Q. Last race at Road America was not what you were wanting. When you had the strong practices that started off that weekend, a couple weeks to digest that, do you feel like you continued to make some progress,

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trying to figure out a way to piece a whole weekend together?

ALEXANDER ROSSI: Yeah, I think so. We had some issues in the race that we were kind of able to identify. Yeah, for the most part I think the big priority prior to Road America was really qualifying and figuring that out.

I think we certainly unlocked a little bit in the test and the subsequent race weekend we had there. It's tough. Like just because you were good last weekend doesn't mean you're going to be good this weekend.

The car started off in a good enough spot that we don't feel like we're playing catch-up. We feel we can continually stay on top of the track as the weekend progresses and it should be okay.

Q. The repaving of turn one wasn't too different for both of y'all? How was it?

CHRISTIAN LUNDGAARD: I didn't even know they repaved it, so I guess not.

ALEXANDER ROSSI: You didn't do the track walk?

CHRISTIAN LUNDGAARD: I (indiscernible) around, so I did.

THE MODERATOR: Kyle Kirkwood, fifth quick in the practice session. Your thoughts on your practice session today?

KYLE KIRKWOOD: Yeah, it was decent. I'm not sure where I can find a half second to these guys.

ALEXANDER ROSSI: Not me.

KYLE KIRKWOOD: Well, your team. Your team. I'm sure you'll find it, too, so...

Yeah, I guess we're going to dig into it because a half second is quite a lot around this place. But P5 is okay. We're okay with that.

Q. Christian, with the recent shuffle at Rahal Letterman, how have you gotten acclimated with the changes to your car? Has much changed to your car?

CHRISTIAN LUNDGAARD: I wouldn't say much has changed on my car at least. I think it's more across the engineering group and the team in general.

To be honest, I focus on my stuff with Ben, my engineer. We kind of get on with our stuff.

Q. Kyle, when you popped out of the elevator, you said, Is this the media center? You have to have been here before.

KYLE KIRKWOOD: Yeah, but I was told it was on the third floor. There's no three on it. I think Michele was messing with me (smiling).

Q. You've won here before.

KYLE KIRKWOOD: Yeah, in the Road to Indy, obviously.

ALEXANDER ROSSI: He's won on every track in America (smiling).

KYLE KIRKWOOD: Yes (laughter).

Q. Alex, you got T.K. around now as a special adviser. You got to work with him at Indy. What is it like having him in the role that he has on the team?

ALEXANDER ROSSI: He was really with us from St. Pete. It was Indy we obviously shared the track with him.

But, no, he's a huge asset for the organization. Just being someone who obviously has recent experience in the car. It's not really that. It's just him as a team leader and someone who really understands how to make relationships and differing dynamics within motorsports work together. He's pretty much an expert at that.

To have him in the position that he's in, to have him around at the racetrack for the foreseeable future is a great thing for us as drivers. We all get along really well with him and enjoy the time with him. I think it will only help us in terms of our performance on and off the track.

Q. Kyle, with all of the laps you've run here in all different categories, how much does that help you in the INDYCAR?

KYLE KIRKWOOD: Massively. I probably have twice the amount of time around this place than I do anywhere else. So, I mean, that's huge, right? Just confidence level when you go out for the first couple laps, you're not uncomfortable by any sense. That's the main thing. That just makes the weekend go smoother. When you're not on the back foot in the first session, everything can go smooth, you start nailing what you need right away instead of sorting out the driving portion and then figuring out what you need to do.

Q. Kyle, what's the preparation difference like this year compared to last year with Foyt?



KYLE KIRKWOOD: In what sense?

Q. How different is the preparation?

KYLE KIRKWOOD: For myself, it's no different. I mean, I do the same thing. I prepare by looking at video and data, whatever the team sends you pre-event-wise. Preparation is the same. Now I've got a lot more data from recent years, given that Colton and Alex and Romain have been there and have been really quick, especially around a lot of these circuits. That makes it a little bit easier on me.

But for the most part it's no different.

Q. Alex, tomorrow there's a chance of rain. Can you explain to people that don't understand when you put all these laps in, all of a sudden it's raining, you put on rain tires, but do you throw a lot of downforce on the car? Explain what you do.

ALEXANDER ROSSI: It really depends on, like, team philosophy. You'll have teams that never change a car from wet to dry. They'll kind of adjust brake balance, aero balance, that's really it. You have other teams that kind of make mechanical adjustments.

It also depends on is it going to be wet for the entire day or just start wet and go dry. There's a lot of variables in it.

Ultimately the rain is an equalizer. It's more the driver that can make the difference versus the car performance, right? We don't get a lot of wet races in INDYCAR, wet sessions in general. I think it would be a cool wild card to throw into the season this year. Yeah, maybe Alex Palou isn't good in the wet. I'm sure he is, but maybe not (smiling). It could help the rest of us.

Q. Alex, who is the best rain driver you've ever seen?

ALEXANDER ROSSI: I don't know if I could answer that. I don't know.

Can you answer that?

KYLE KIRKWOOD: Ayrton Senna. Seen it with my own eyes.

THE MODERATOR: Old soul.

Thanks for coming up. Appreciate it.

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