

# NTT INDYCAR SERIES

## News Conference

Saturday, July 15, 2023

**Christian Lundgaard**

**Scott McLaughlin**

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: Welcome to the NTT P1 award winner for tomorrow's Honda Indy Toronto for the second time this season. Pole position in the NTT INDYCAR SERIES. Christian Lundgaard driving the No. 45 Vivid Clear RX Honda for Rahal Letterman Lanigan Racing.

That was one of the crazier qualifying sessions we've had probably in your career in the NTT INDYCAR SERIES. You survived and advance. Congratulations. Tell us about Firestone Fast Six. How crazy that was?

CHRISTIAN LUNDGAARD: Thank you. I think when I woke up this morning, I was just hoping we were going to make improvements from yesterday, from 17th yesterday. To end the day like this I didn't quite expect, but RLL has just been smashing it, quite honestly.

I know the past few race weekends we've been moving forward, and we've been making progress on the shoulder as well from my test at Iowa.

Let's just see what the rest of the season brings. It starts well now, so we'll keep moving.

THE MODERATOR: Good news is we're only halfway through the season, so anything can happen in the second half of 2023. Questions?

**Q. Do you think from what you learned in practice you would have been in the fight for pole today without the wet, or is it totally clear to you that either way would that have been possible?**

CHRISTIAN LUNDGAARD: I think we were having a conversation about it just before going out. I don't think anyone really knew if it was going to rain or not because it said it was going to rain for P2 as well.

At least I thought we were going to be around the edge of getting into the Fast Six, but I think our strategy throughout the whole of qualifying actually we just nailed it.

The Hy-Vee Vivid Car team made it happen today. I don't think I did. I think they did.

**Q. I know you spoke after the session there about having believed you're good in the wet, and you have been in the past. You have had some strong wet races. I think I remember one in 2020 and '22.**

CHRISTIAN LUNDGAARD: Thank you.

**Q. Where do you think your ability in the wet comes from? Is it a driving thing? Is it an ability to read the conditions? Is it a combination of all of those things?**

CHRISTIAN LUNDGAARD: When we grew up in mini-karts, in Denmark we don't have wet tires, and as we all know, we develop our skills when we are in a very young age.

I was driving around on the slicks in the wet, and I've just always been fast in the wets. Especially in go-karts. Yeah, I guess it comes from there.

**Q. As a knock-on to Jack's question, how much was it instinct and how much was conscious driving that lap? It looked you were close to opposite lock at one point?**

CHRISTIAN LUNDGAARD: Yeah, I think when we were there in Q2, I knew I was basically 11th, and I don't really think that we were going to have any more.

Then we put the second set of wets on, and we did that one lap, and we made it through. My race engineer in the middle of Fast Six, we did that one lap on the wets. He told me everybody has already pitted for slicks.

So we came in, and we had actually agreed to do the used set of greens, but we ended up going to the new, which I think was the right decision.

**Q. Just a little bit more on the driving in the wet. How much of that is an interpretation? Because you've lost all your references at that moment, how difficult is that to make the adjustment?**

**ASAP** sports . . . when all is said, we're done.®

CHRISTIAN LUNDGAARD: You're tiptoeing around. You're just trying to find grip, and obviously here it's high risk-high reward. But my previous lap before that when I was told this is your last lap, I was already finding grip.

Basically the only thing I did was just go more from the wet kind of line into the dry line, and there was just grip there.

I think we all knew how wet turn eight was. There was a big puddle there. When I came down there on that last lap, I was just praying, praying, not to brake too late.

**Q. My question for you is, do you think you will be able to have the same pace for tomorrow, or will that be dependent on weather and other factors?**

CHRISTIAN LUNDGAARD: I hope so. I do think we will be fast tomorrow. I just don't think we'll be the fastest car. I don't think we've shown that pace throughout the weekend.

I hope the improvements that we did make from practice 2 into qualifying and the changes that we made will pay off tomorrow.

**Q. Do you think anything can happen?**

CHRISTIAN LUNDGAARD: Anything can happen here, sure.

**Q. Just based on your experience of the series, how important is the car setup here in INDYCAR because I know sometimes it's almost all the driver in the wet in some series. Sometimes it's a lot to do with the quality of the car setup per team. I just wondered what you think compared to other series you have raced in what that's like?**

CHRISTIAN LUNDGAARD: When I came to INDYCAR, I was told that the Rahal car was very understeering in the wet, and it certainly is. My first ever time I drove this car in the wet was at the GP last year, and I think we finished 9th in the race.

We saw it here again. I had that one lap on a new set of tires when no one else was there. So it is very tough, especially on a street circuit like this, but I also do just think that there's a lot in just confidence in the wet.

THE MODERATOR: Obviously also joined by Scott McLaughlin, driver No. 3, Gallagher Insurance Team Penske Chevrolet this weekend with another front row start. We talked a lot about tiptoeing around this racecourse when the conditions are like that. How difficult

was it for you, Scott?

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: Yeah, it was tough. I was sideways at one point on the side of the track, so you just have to really gather your thoughts, and you've got to just methodically sort of feel the track and the way that it dries off.

We've had a really fast car all weekend, so I knew if it dried off, it was going to be okay. But even in the wet conditions with what we got, it was really good.

So I would have loved to have seen if we didn't wait so long between Q1 and Q2 to have a crack at real wet, but yeah, really provided of everyone on the Gallagher Chevy.

The car was very good. Congrats to Christian. Great lap. I think we benefited a lot by being able to be the last couple to the finish line.

He still pumped us by four-tenths, and we have to figure that out and see how we go.

**Q. This question is for both of you. There's I think a 40% chance of rain tomorrow. What did you learn about this course and how it handles when it's wet?**

CHRISTIAN LUNDGAARD: It's slippery.

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: Yeah, it's just so tough. You go.

CHRISTIAN LUNDGAARD: Yeah, it's just tricky. I mean, you're just trying to find your way around. And in qualifying it's split groups, right, so you do have more visibility than you will in the race situation.

I mean, luckily, I'm out there in the front, so I won't have to deal with that at least in the beginning.

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: I'll probably pass you, but that's fine.

CHRISTIAN LUNDGAARD: We'll see. As long as it's only you.

I think it's just important, too, to keep the car off the wall really. It's so tough and super tricky. We see cars go off. I know that we are pushing to the absolute maximum today, but again, we're just trying to search for grip.

I'm sure we haven't explored all of it yet, but I do pray for it to stay dry just to -- it's more fun.

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: From my perspective it's probably one of the toughest street courses I've ever combatted in

the rain from a difference, yeah, from what I learned in Australia, but from the difference in bitumin and concrete and trying to stay off those. Then concrete dries quicker than the asphalt and trying to figure that out, and you have to do that in split seconds and trust that the car is going to start.

You go into turn three at 185 miles an hour, and you are like, okay, I am going to brake at the 300-foot mark and hopefully she sticks in the middle.

It's a tough confidence thing, but when you get it right, these are the most rewarding conditions in any motorsports. This is fun.

Like Christian said, though, I think if we get some dry tomorrow, that would be great and great for the fans. Fans got a little nice little, you know, moist fixture today, so now we're going to fire and get dry tomorrow and have a good time in the sun in Canada. Beautiful place.

**Q. As a follow-up to you, Scott, there was some talk that you might be penalized. You weren't or at least it didn't affect where you sat, where you are going to be on the grid. Were you concerned about being penalized and how that might affect you?**

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: Yeah, I was on the red limiter there for about 15 minutes post-qualifying trying to figure out whether I'd got it done. I was hard on the chip, but we figured it out.

I understand the rules, but I certainly am glad that we can keep our P2 and press on because I think a lot of people went faster after that anyway. So it was really null and void at that point.

**Q. This one is obviously for Scott. Scott, if there was -- at the moment it looks like a 50% chance of it raining tomorrow. Are there certain parts of the track where potentially standing water because of it being a street course could become a problem?**

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: Not from what I've seen. I mean, I think there's some spots, but that's a street circuit thing.

No, from what I saw, it was tough, but it's a very pretty well-drained street circuit and was okay. You're not going to get it perfect everywhere, but I think we would be fine.

Like I said before, I wish we sort of went a bit faster between Q1 and Q2 to get a good idea. I think the guys that ran in group two in Q1 probably got the best sort of look at the track to see what it's like.

Certainly we'll be looking at my teammate Josef's data and footage tonight just to figure out a few things. Yeah, I think it's pretty good so far.

**Q. Then you mentioned before too, and it's one thing that I've been following, this mixture of the concrete and then the asphalt surfaces. There obviously is an issue itself just in the dry, but in the wet that makes it even harder to manage those two surfaces, doesn't it?**

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: Yeah, it is. Yeah, sometimes it's grippy. Sometimes it's not. Honestly there's different concrete surfaces out there, like there's a polished one and then a grippy one, a coarse one. You sort of have to spot them because you can see it with the sheen on the road.

But, yeah, it's a lot of fun. This track is wicked in the dry and even more fun now after driving in the rain.

**Q. Hey, Christian, obviously you guys have kind of had a very kind of quick turnaround this season in terms of your performances. You're saying you're probably not the quickest for the race tomorrow, but what would be a good result for you guys coming out of the race on Sunday?**

CHRISTIAN LUNDGAARD: I mean, I wouldn't be disappointed with a win. We do lead the field off, but it's tough.

I think the progression that we made just looking at Detroit, we were absolutely nowhere, and we come here, and we were on pole. It's two different street circuits, but they're very bumpy, and there's a lot of concrete patches here. There's a lot of concrete patches in Detroit as well.

It's certainly something that we need to figure out how to just understand that and have a better package. Clearly we were quick enough today, so the Honda Vivid Car will definitely try to win the race tomorrow, for sure.

**Q. I know you've been good in the wet in the past. I think 2019 at Bathurst you were strong in qualifying there in the wet. How difficult has the transition been to driving an open-wheel car in the wet? Obviously everything is new to you in an open-wheel car, but that transition racing in the wet, how has that been for you?**

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: It's surprisingly not that bad. A race car, whether it's a go-kart, whether it's an INDYCAR, or a Supercar, they all sort of have the same sort of tendencies in the rain.

So it's more actually just learning the tire and seeing how

much you can hurt it, especially when it dries out. This tire actually it just dies when it dries out. More than any other tire I've been on before.

Yeah, that's probably the biggest thing, learning the tire, and thankfully sort of jumped on it. But, yeah, I've always said I loved the rain. Being from New Zealand, it's just we grow up racing in the rain nine times out of ten.

**Q. You looked pretty angry when you got out of the car. Did you feel like the penalty was going to take things away?**

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: Yeah, they held me on the limiter. Yeah, I was -- you know, I knew that everyone went faster from that point, so I was like -- I get I should lose my time at that point, but I shouldn't lose my best time because everyone went faster, and I didn't hold anyone up. So, yeah, I've got to count to five sometimes (laughing).

**Q. Scott, semi-seriously, not totally, but two weeks ago a Kiwi got the run around in the rain, and he won the race. If it does rain tomorrow, should we expect you're going to win because now a certain portion of the racing world thinks that you guys are awesome at that and are ringers in that circumstance?**

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: Massive shout-out to Shane. That was an awesome drive and great for our sport Down Under.

I'm also going toe-to-toe with a Dane, and there's also plenty of good drivers. There's a Swede in the Fast Six and a Mexican. Everyone knows how to drive in the rain.

I feel like I'm very excited just to see how we go. Yeah, New Zealanders, like I said, we enjoy the rain.

Me and Shane, it's funny, in Supercars we used to always have awesome battles in the wet, and we would swap out the front with a few others. It was awesome to see him win.

Yeah, it's just nice to have some change. We are due for a wet race. I'm telling you. We haven't had a wet race in so long.

CHRISTIAN LUNDGAARD: How long was your conversation in mid-Ohio in terms of rain? We were, like, Oh, it's going to rain, it's going to rain. It never rained

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: I went to bed and thought 100% it was going to rain, and it didn't. So I was very surprised.

**Q. Slightly related to the other question, your social**

**media stream, what are the odds that SVG is inspired to drink beer and tweet about you racing tomorrow early in the morning?**

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: I don't think he'll -- yeah, he is pretty responsible. He won't drink in the morning, but -- well, who knows?

Yeah, it was a perfect storm for me. I came straight off a race, and I was home early. I stopped past my local shop and got a 12-pack of Coors, and I just sat there and just had a lot of fun. It was great.

By myself, too. My wife was away in New York. I just sat there and watched racing. I was a motosports fan. It was bad ass. It was awesome; it was awesome.

Yeah, you could see me getting more tipsy and more tipsy and more tipsy (laughing). All right.

THE MODERATOR: Congratulations, guys.

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: Can I say one thing? Nelly Furtado is back. I don't know if you know that. She's back. So, yeah, I'm just letting you know.

THE MODERATOR: With that, we look forward to tomorrow's race, Honda INDY Toronto. Front row for tomorrow's race. Next opportunity for the NTT INDYCAR SERIES comes up warm-up tomorrow morning at 10:15. Thanks, everyone.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports

