

NTT INDYCAR SERIES

News Conference

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Kyle Kirkwood

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: We welcome this year's champion, Kyle Kirkwood. Second win, a two-time winner in the NTT INDYCAR SERIES. Second podium of the season, as well. He gives Andretti Autosport their 72nd win in the NTT INDYCAR SERIES.

Congratulations. Tell us about the afternoon.

KYLE KIRKWOOD: Yeah, it was phenomenal afternoon. I mean, we absolutely nailed everything it felt like, to be honest. We had a great strategy. Car was extremely fast. Through the entire race, I feel like we were probably one of the fastest cars. I look back, I have no idea, but I assume we were.

Andretti Autosport, AutoNation Honda keep giving me a great car that's good on street courses. This should be more than two wins, to be honest, on street courses given the cars they've given me.

I'm thrilled with this one here today. This is kind of redemption from last year. A dumb incident. Redemption from Toronto. Redemption from Detroit.

Doesn't feel as good as the first one. The first one was absolutely amazing at Long Beach. Now this is a step in the right direction. This helps us in our championship, get us back in the top 10 range, I imagine. This was a phenomenal day for Andretti Autosport on the 27 car.

THE MODERATOR: You're now ninth in the standings.

KYLE KIRKWOOD: Just inside the top 10.

THE MODERATOR: Questions, please.

Q. Alex was saying they thought there were going to be a lot of yellows. Was your strategy predicated on a long green?

KYLE KIRKWOOD: I can't answer that right now. I don't know what Bryan's decision was. I don't understand strategy well enough to know exactly what's decision

making factors were there.

I'm sure a lot of it had to do we were on the primary tire, we were trying to carry the primaries as long as possible because the green tires weren't as good for a duration of time. I think everyone on the primary tires stayed out and kept going. I'm sure that was probably the ticking point on the teetering point to make that decision. Obviously played out in our favor.

I think this year with everyone being so it's going to be a crash fest, crash-ville, sort of that thing, maybe there's a hesitancy from all the drivers. We had that last year at Detroit where everyone is, it's a street course, we expect some yellows, get off the greens early, blah, blah, blah. Next thing you know Will started on primaries, walked away from everyone, it stayed green the entire race. Things like that happen where people have hesitancy due to last year.

Q. You're still processing how it worked. You said you passed only a couple cars on track before you cycled. During the long green stretch, that allowed you to leapfrog Scott?

KYLE KIRKWOOD: A lot of things happen in the pit strategy. The first pit stop, a lot of things happened there. I passed a few cars. Wasn't a bunch. I passed Colton, Malukas and I think Will technically for position. We kind of overcut Romain and got McLoughlin and Palou pitted. I think that's kind of what cycled us up there.

It wasn't like I drove through the field from eighth place. It was more like we played our strategy, played our cards right, did everything right when we had clean air. It cycled us up to the point.

Q. A day like this where it seems like the execution of everything was flawless versus a day where you're tearing up through the field, do those days feel any different? Is one more satisfying than the other?

KYLE KIRKWOOD: I think they're both extremely satisfying in different ways, right? As a driver, if you just drive through everyone, you feel like you race super well, you get a satisfaction I guess within yourself.



You also get a satisfaction on days like today where the team executed. Then you have this aura around you, you have kind of this feeling within the team that everything's clicking, which is something that's so important for future races, not only just that one race.

Honestly, I think ones like today are even better than ones where you feel like the driver is on top of the world.

Q. (Question about Grosjean.)

KYLE KIRKWOOD: I'm sorry?

Q. Is it difficult to not get too excited the fact that you jumped one of your biggest competitors in the first one of pit stops?

KYLE KIRKWOOD: Are you talking about Romain?

Q. Yes.

KYLE KIRKWOOD: I tend to not consider teammates as competitors. I think we all work together super well.

In the first stint, I told the team to tell Romain I'm not going to pressure him, we're going to kind of cut through some people. It worked out in my favor that I saved some more fuel and I was able to overcut him and put in a really good lap on that pit. I worked out super well for us.

Q. How do you feel like your working relationship has evolved with Bryan?

KYLE KIRKWOOD: It's clicked right from the start. We've done super well together. Bryan is a wealth of knowledge. I always trust on him to call the best strategy, no matter what. I've never doubted him, not for one minute. Neither for any of the guys on my crew. Everything is going super well.

Q. Was it your call having green tires for second stint? Did you know Grosjean went to black tires?

KYLE KIRKWOOD: They told me that he did after we did it. I think our plan going in was to do that, so that's what we did.

I'm not sure why Romain deviated and ended up running them at the end. A little bit curious on that. I'll know more afterwards.

It wasn't my decision. It's ultimately the team's decision. We kind of had that plan in place, though.

Q. McLaughlin was irate about restarts. Do you have any thoughts? Does INDYCAR need to get tougher or ways to enforce restarts on street courses?

KYLE KIRKWOOD: I'm not sure what happened, to be honest. I hope I wasn't somebody that was doing it.

It's hard to do it here though, right? Where are you going to put it that there isn't something sketchy coming up right afterwards?

Q. The frustration was you could pass before the green, so something happens in the back.

KYLE KIRKWOOD: All year long we've had jump-starts. You don't see the green flags. Green flag is actually called before. People are jumping in and expecting the green flag to come. It's a bit vague. I feel like that's kind of been what it has been all year, to be honest.

You saw a lot of it this year. I don't know if it's the structure, exactly what happens. That's more from the pit stand to understand when they call the green. We never really see the green. We just call it and then we go. It's a little bit strange. It's a little bit strange.

Q. Would it work better if it was like Long Beach, more straightforward?

KYLE KIRKWOOD: It's really straightforward at Long Beach because you have such a tight sector leaning onto a front straight. Everyone kind of accords out. It's pretty easy there. Everyone is hesitant to dive into the last corner. Here, everyone accords, then you feel like you have all the room in the world until you get to the middle of the corner.

THE MODERATOR: He was saying you can't pass until the start/finish line.

KYLE KIRKWOOD: Oh, I'm sorry.

Long Beach, everyone is hesitant to do it there. We've mentioned it before that we should do it. Some people disagree on it. I think the majority of drivers agree there should be a no passing zone until a certain area, because of things like, that jump-starts, things like that, big runs.

Yeah, some places I think that should be enforced in some way, shape or form because the guy that's not the leader is under the gun of someone potentially getting a lucky start.

Q. (Question about running so well on street circuits.)

KYLE KIRKWOOD: I'm not sure to be honest. I wish I

knew exactly what it was so I could pin it down for the other places I go to, as well.

I think a lot of it has to do just with comfort around walls, adaptability. I feel like there's some drivers that just have outright raw pace. I feel like I'm one of the drivers that can adapt to things really quickly. I might not have, like, the super pace that some of these guys pull out of a hat randomly sometimes, but I adapt to tracks really well.

That's a reason why last year I come to new tracks and I'm already pretty quick. I think it just has to do with that, that the track is always evolving, I feel like I'm already up to speed.

Q. What do you feel like it's going to take to see more of these types of weekends out of the team as a whole?

KYLE KIRKWOOD: Honestly, the team has done a great job. Every weekend we've gone into, I think we've done everything pretty much exactly how it should be played. I think we just had a lot of incidents this year, whether it's my fault and I've done something dumb, or we got into something that was like a dumb incident that we can't control. There's been a lot of both, to be honest.

Just executing. Today was just such a smooth race. Strategy played in our favor. I was hitting my marks the entire time and everything worked out well for us.

Q. You mentioned the fear of this race going crazy. Fairly straightforward one, red flag, you're the leader. What were your thoughts?

KYLE KIRKWOOD: Yeah, I was pretty calm, to be honest. A lot calmer than I should have been (smiling). It was good that I had that middle stint that I was behind Palou.

That's kind of what gave me the confidence, because I was behind Palou and I was stuck there doing two seconds off of what I could have done. I couldn't get around him. I couldn't get within a second of him.

That gave me confidence, I get a good jump, make it through 10 and 11 fine, they're not going to pass me. I had enough push to pass. That gave me confidence that I want to restart this race and get this thing over with.

Q. How do you celebrate this one?

KYLE KIRKWOOD: We'll see. I'm not sure yet. I haven't talked to anyone.

Q. Anybody here with you this weekend?

KYLE KIRKWOOD: I have my girlfriend. My parents. I'm not sure if my parents are leaving tonight or tomorrow morning. Maybe I can get them to stay tonight.

Q. Stay in town?

KYLE KIRKWOOD: I'll stay in Nashville tonight.

Q. Back to Indy?

KYLE KIRKWOOD: Back to Indy.

Q. The short turnaround week, does that diminish how you can celebrate?

KYLE KIRKWOOD: No way, not after today. I'll make my girlfriend drive me home to Indy.

Yeah, so it is a tight turnaround, right? You're only as good as your last race. That celebration period only lasts a few days as always. It would be nice if we ended the season with a win so you could go into the off-season with a pat on your back the entire time.

Quick turnaround. I'm already focused on next weekend. We have to execute. Things play in our favor for next weekend. Hopefully we have a good weekend there, as well, just like we had there.

THE MODERATOR: Congratulations.

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