

NTT INDYCAR SERIES

News Conference

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Christian Lundgaard

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: Wrapping up qualifying for tomorrow's place. All Rahal Letterman Lanigan and Honda front row, with Graham Rahal and Christian Lundgaard. Third front row start this season.

Congratulations.

CHRISTIAN LUNDGAARD: Thank you.

THE MODERATOR: The team has to be excited about this.

CHRISTIAN LUNDGAARD: Yeah, I'm not going to lie, I think they're more excited about Graham being on pole (smiling).

But no, I mean, we are strong here. Graham was strong already this morning. Every time we come to this racetrack, we know we'll be able to fight for a win. Now we've just given ourselves two chances.

In that matter, I think it's all about executing tomorrow. We've proven that we can do it on one-lap place. We struggled in the May race on the consistency throughout a stint, the strategy decision making. Now we have two opportunities to make up for that.

THE MODERATOR: For you, right from the get-go when you first arrived here at the Speedway, it just seems like you have taken to this course I wouldn't say easily but something about this place that fits your driving style.

CHRISTIAN LUNDGAARD: I think it all starts with the car is really competitive around here. We've shown it every single time we've been on track. I don't necessarily think it's just me that's in the team. I mean, I just got out-qualified by Graham. Technically everybody did.

He's just been really, really strong and difficult to beat today. I think certainly there was some small mistakes that I could have prevented to jump ahead. Right now we put ourselves in a good position, so I'm not going to sit here and say I'm mad about qualifying second 'cause I'm

certainly not.

I think we've made the car better in race trim. We'll see tomorrow or even this afternoon.

THE MODERATOR: We'll take questions.

Q. While it does sting to lose pole at the end, is it less of a sting knowing it's your teammate on pole, you got a good baseline?

CHRISTIAN LUNDGAARD: Honestly, it's a very similar qualifying compared to the May race. We were first, fourth and eighth, now we're first, second and eighth.

Graham definitely took a step forward compared to May. I mean, it is a little bittersweet not getting the pole, but at the same time I would rather finish first tomorrow than finish first today.

As a team, we've given ourselves the best opportunity to win the race tomorrow. We have two cars starting on the front row. I think the last time that happened was in Barber 2018 when Sato won and Graham had an issue.

I hope none of us have an issue tomorrow, but I hope we can fight for the win and may the best man win, really.

Q. Setup-wise how identical is your setup to Graham's car?

CHRISTIAN LUNDGAARD: The specifics I don't really know. I know they're very, very similar. It's a very similar car that we showed up in May with. It's basically been driven since the first race I ever drove here in August 2021. It's been competitive ever since, yeah.

Q. You joked about the team probably liked seeing Graham on pole more than you. After everything that happened in May, what does it mean to do that here and put him on pole?

CHRISTIAN LUNDGAARD: I mean, this will have a way of breaking you and making you, quite honestly. This place, I mean, obviously I think what he feels right now is relief. But from my own perspective, I'm already switched into



race mode. I want to make sure that we have the best car in the field tomorrow.

I know that Graham will be tough to beat. We'll have to beat him by just out-smarting him. How we're going to do that is something I'll have to figure out really. But we're definitely going to give each other -- we're going to race hard and race fair. I'm not going to sit here and say he will be favored, because I don't think he will be, because I'll give him a tough time.

Q. No Penskes or Ganassis in the Fast Six. Does that mean anything? Will it stay that way tomorrow in the race?

CHRISTIAN LUNDGAARD: I mean, it depends. It depends on how the race unfolds. If there's a yellow at some point in the race, that helps whatever strategy they're on. Just trying to do something different, it might work out for them.

We'll have to see tomorrow. It's surprising that none of the Penskes are in the Fast Six. Two of them were already out after the first group. A little surprising to see. I was also surprised to see that Alex wasn't through to the Fast Six as well because he's been extremely strong. Armstrong has been doing a good job, as well.

Q. You talked about at the beginning this track is usually one of the best for your team. When you come into this weekend, is that a big confidence booster?

CHRISTIAN LUNDGAARD: Sure. I mean, it always helps. It's at home. Of course, it's a race we want to win, but it's not the race we want to win. We definitely got some work to do there.

But coming here, we have two shots at it. I think we didn't quite maximize the May race. I think we made up for that today so far. There's definitely things that needs to be improved in race trim that we'll try to see if we can figure out for tomorrow.

We are here much stronger than we were in May. I think we showed that today. It's not one car leading the pack, it's definitely two cars up there. In my opinion, it should have been three. We definitely had the car today to be 1-2-3.

Q. The May race on this track has a tendency to favor the front row. The July race has been more mixed up. How big of an advantage is it to be up front, know the guys fighting for the championship are going to be way behind you? At least it's a start.

CHRISTIAN LUNDGAARD: I mean, we're teammates so there's no way we're going to go bump each other off. If that happens, I know he'll be on the inside and I know who's at fault (smiling).

But, I mean, we're definitely going to race each other hard, but we also need to be smart. It's the best opportunity for the best finish of the season as a team. I don't see a reason, or I don't think anyone in the team sees a reason to throw that away for a stupid reason.

Q. Taking the 30,000-foot view, seeing him with tears of sorrow on pit lane on Bump Day here in May, now being able to see him quickly be able to come back and experience first pole in six years, how do you write a story like that?

CHRISTIAN LUNDGAARD: You don't. Well, overall I think Graham has stepped up his game. I think he should have had the pole in Mid-Ohio. He didn't get it. I think it was redemption from either that or the month of May he had here. He didn't have any luck in the GP in May. He got hit in turn one. Cycled to the back with a puncture, still raced back into the top 10. I was just kind of floating around in the top five at that time.

Now we're here fighting each other for the win. We definitely have to make sure that we have two cars on the podium tomorrow because everything else will not be satisfied, none of us will be satisfied. We put ourselves in this position. We got to execute.

Q. This is the third weekend INDYCAR and NASCAR shared the weekend here. Are you in favor of it? Do you like it?

CHRISTIAN LUNDGAARD: I mean, I'm yet to see them drive. So far so good. I guess everybody will have to see tomorrow. I know that Firestone has brought a different red alternate tires this weekend that we ran a few years ago. I think we've proven as a team that it doesn't really matter which tire we're on here, we'll be fast. But I think it will be more favorable for a red race tomorrow, which is unlike the May race.

I think a lot in terms of strategy can happen tomorrow. If the NASCAR rubber will make a difference for that, potentially yes, potentially no, we don't know at this point. But I do think that this is our stronger race in terms of the two Indy GPs.

Q. (No microphone.)

CHRISTIAN LUNDGAARD: More race cars is always cooler. I'm a race driver. I like race cars.



Q. On the red tires, supposed to be a more durable tire. Do you think this is going to be the opposite of having to get off of them immediately?

CHRISTIAN LUNDGAARD: From what I'm aware, we're already run these tires I don't know how many years ago, but before, when it was a favored red race around here. They should last.

Q. When they start to go, which goes first?

CHRISTIAN LUNDGAARD: I guess it depends on what the car balance is, how hard you drive the tires really. They also do have a memory from qualifying. When it is a used set of tires, the tires will always remember the balance that you had in qualifying on a max attack lap and it will carry through that way in the race.

Looking at it as it is right now, I think it's a red favored race, which also then kind of dictates your strategy for qualifying 'cause you need to do the least amount of laps on the tires.

I think the drivers that have not made it through to Fast Six, that didn't run another set of tires, another run on the tires, will to a certain extent be favored at some point in the race tomorrow.

In terms of which axle goes off first, I guess it's all dependent on the balance of the car, the setup changes that each team and driver makes to the car.

Q. For the race tomorrow between you and Graham competing, your pit box is much farther forward. Do you think that will give you any kind of an advantage?

CHRISTIAN LUNDGAARD: No. In my personal opinion, it's more for qualifying in terms of how many cars you have ahead of you. For the race, it doesn't really make a big difference.

Q. Could you talk about Graham, do you think he's underrated by the paddock and some of the drivers around? Can you give any insight from inside the team?

CHRISTIAN LUNDGAARD: Personally I don't really think anyone rates Graham low. I think everybody rates Graham extremely high. He's a very established INDYCAR driver. He has a lot of experience. He's a very, very good racer. He's aggressive.

I mean, the fact is, he hasn't had the results, but I think that's determined by a lot of other things. Graham is a great racing driver. I've learned a lot from Graham the past

year and a half. I think he's trying to fight me back now.

THE MODERATOR: Good luck tomorrow.

CHRISTIAN LUNDGAARD: Thank you.

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