

NTT INDYCAR SERIES

News Conference

Friday, September 1, 2023

Kyle Kirkwood

Felix Rosenqvist

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: Wrapping up practice for Sunday's BitNile.com Grand Prix of Portland. Again, joining us here, wrapping up practice on this Friday, Kyle Kirkwood is on his way, second quick, joining us already.

Fifth quick in that practice session, Felix Rosenqvist, of course driver of the No. 6 Arrow McLaren Chevrolet. His fourth start this weekend here at Portland International Raceway. His best finish of second back in 2019.

Right on cue, Kyle Kirkwood, second quick, of course, first driver of the No. 27 AutoNation Honda for Andretti Autosports. Finished 13th here last year in his lone appearance in the Portland International Raceway, at least in the NTT INDYCAR SERIES. Two-time winner, of course, this season.

Kyle, we'll begin with you. Nice start to the weekend for you. Your thoughts?

KYLE KIRKWOOD: Yeah. I mean, quite happy. It seemed like me and Lundgaard were one of the ones to go kind of early on red tires there. That probably benefited us because we didn't get trafficked. It looked like a bit of a traffic jam out there towards the end of the session.

Granted, the track does get a little faster as the run goes on. I was happy to get out early and get our lap in.

We are happy with the car. We were a little bit different than our teammates, and I imagine because of that, you'll see my teammates take a step tomorrow.

THE MODERATOR: Felix, just your thoughts opening practice here? You've been here before. Had a little success at the podium your rookie year in the NTT INDYCAR SERIES. How was your practice today?

FELIX ROSENQVIST: I had a little off in the beginning. Apart from that, it was fairly smooth. It seemed like a little bit different balance from last year. We were a bit lost

initially, and we kind of worked ourselves back to it.

Kind of a weird result, like Lundgaard and Kirkwood. We were kind of, like, in the distance lap time-wise. We have a little bit of a gap to close tomorrow, but overall we're P-5, so kind of in the mix, but yeah, a lot to work on.

THE MODERATOR: For sure. A lot to work on in the overnight. We'll take some questions.

Q. For both of you, because this track is fairly flat and I understand it doesn't have that many bumps, would perhaps you want to run two sets of reds in the race and one set of blacks?

KYLE KIRKWOOD: I mean, that's kind of been the trend here the past couple of years. Granted, when we get our information from Firestone, it says that it's likely to wear faster for this weekend.

So it's still a little bit of an uncertainty, I would say. You never really know until after warmup, but I would say based on practice one field, the fact that we were able to run a certain lap time and then go back out and still be quicker than the primary tires indicates kind of towards a red race, but like I said, we won't know until warmup.

FELIX ROSENQVIST: Yeah, I mean, historically it's kind of been a red race. So I thought the gap lap time-wise was pretty big. It was like a second I think for most drivers. So, yeah, that's what I'm predicting.

Q. Felix, if you could talk a little bit about your moment where you drove off course. What happened? Obviously it didn't affect the car any because you ended up in the top 5.

FELIX ROSENQVIST: I don't know. It was kind of unexpected. It was just really low grip in turn 12. I don't know if we have too much grip in the simulator or something (laughing); coming to the real deal it was a bit slower?

Yeah, in my second lap I just over-pushed it and under-steered off. So, yeah, just a little mistake there, but yeah, that corner is always a bit tricky. It definitely caught

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some of us off guard a couple of times.

Q. Hate to keep bringing this up, but you are always a driver that everybody wants to know what's going to happen next year. We're at the stage of the year where we want to know what's going to happen next year?

FELIX ROSENQVIST: I think you'll know soon. If you wait a little bit more, you'll get your answer.

Q. How many days?

FELIX ROSENQVIST: Between two and six. Between two and six.

Q. Two and six days?

FELIX ROSENQVIST: Yeah.

THE MODERATOR: The wait is almost over, Bruce.

Anyone else?

Q. Kyle, you've won I think five races here through the junior formulas. Is there anything that you can take from that into your second race here as an INDYCAR driver? Is there anything that you learned from that time as to how to control the pace, how the draft works, you know, the best lines to turn 12?

KYLE KIRKWOOD: Yeah, I mean, some of it. Obviously I can take a lot more from last year driving with AJ Foyt Racing. It was one of our better weekends, to be honest.

Some of these high-speed, flowy tracks tend to suit me. So if there was two categories of tracks that I think that I thrive on, it's street courses and then high-speed, flowy tracks.

So Here, Mid-Ohio, Laguna tend to be tracks that suit me best. Yeah, I mean, I kind of came into this weekend pretty excited, hopeful that we would be fast. Being P-2 isn't too bad for practice one, you know. Yeah, so hopefully we just continue that trend.

Yeah, there's definitely stuff that I learned from my junior categories that I'm carrying on to now. I think that proved last year when I came out of the junior formulas and then went into INDYCAR here for the first time and was quick pretty much right out of the box. Almost transferred into the top 12 in qualifying.

So, yes, to answer your question, shortly.

Q. I have a question for Felix. Engineering-wise is this

racetrack very tricky to set up, to find the best setup?

FELIX ROSENQVIST: It really isn't because no matter what you do, the strengths will benefit you on one end and then you will lose time on the other end.

So I feel like to do a good lap time isn't really hard -- or it's always hard, but any car can kind of be quick, but it just depends where you want to be quick.

Like, you can be quick in 10, 11 and 4 and 5, but then you'll be slow in turn 2 and turn 7 and turn 12 or the opposite. So I've kind of had all different kinds of cars here.

It seems like you can always kind of make the lap time happen if you have a good balance.

Q. I don't know if they made it through the first turn, but it seemed in practice a number of drivers were getting right up to that Armco barrier, and it does seem like there's a dip there. You have to go over the curb. Did either of you try that, and what's that like?

KYLE KIRKWOOD: Are you talking about turn 1?

Q. Turn 1, yeah.

KYLE KIRKWOOD: I think everyone uses every bit of track that you can find, and over the years that's kind of gotten ground out, so that's the new line. It's all the way to the wall.

Q. It looks pretty iffy.

FELIX ROSENQVIST: I think Dixon invented it two years ago. He did it in qualifying, and he was .2 quicker than everyone there. Since then, I think everyone kind of learned to cut.

You can get it wrong if you touch the curb a bit wrong. Like it kind of throws the car out, but it seems like we kind of grinded it down. I remember it was pretty rough, and now it's pretty easy to do it.

Q. This is for both of you. How did you expect the track to evolve over the course of the weekend?

KYLE KIRKWOOD: I didn't get the first question.

THE MODERATOR: How do you expect the track to evolve over the course of the weekend?

FELIX ROSENQVIST: It's going to be grippier probably.

KYLE KIRKWOOD: This place doesn't have a ton of track



evolution. Just gets a little bit faster, you know. It's not like, boom, you get a bunch of front grip or rear grip. It's pretty equal.

FELIX ROSENQVIST: It's very temperature-sensitive. If the sun comes out, you lose a lot of lap time and grip. If it gets cool, you can find a second here pretty quickly if there's just some cloud cover.

So it's more about that, to be honest. If you get, like -- if the track condition goes more hot and you go out late, maybe you can get caught out, but I think honestly it probably won't get much quicker than it is right now, so...

THE MODERATOR: Have a great weekend. Appreciate you coming in. Kyle Kirkwood and Felix Rosenqvist.

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