

NTT INDYCAR SERIES

News Conference

Wednesday, October 11, 2023

Marcus Armstrong

Linus Lundqvist

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: Good afternoon. Wrapping up day one here at the Indianapolis Motor Speedway, the racing capital of the world. Day one of IMS Rookie Orientation out of the way.

Joined today by both Chip Ganassi Racing drivers. Indy 500 rookies, let's call them. Driving the No. 8 Honda for Chip Ganassi Racing, he is the 2022 INDY NXT by Firestone champion. Great to see Linus Lundqvist today all day long here at the track.

Driving the No. 11 Chip Ganassi Racing Honda, he's the Rookie of the Year in the NTT INDYCAR SERIES, great to have Marcus Armstrong as well.

Marcus, we'll begin with you. Don't know about the nerves that you had maybe going into it, but what were your thoughts on today's Rookie Orientation Program?

MARCUS ARMSTRONG: Yeah, not a lot of nerves, to be honest, but it was good to get this Rookie Orientation out of the way so we can sort of crack on when it all kicks off next year.

But it met my expectations, with honors, so it was a lot of fun. I must say it was perfect conditions. No wind, cold, and obviously our car was pretty rock solid today. So it wasn't difficult circumstances. But yeah, I loved it.

THE MODERATOR: One day out of the way. Now you're good to go for the Indy 500 Rookie Test when that rolls around next year, and obviously in the month of May.

Linus, obviously a handful of races last season. Parlayed that into a great full-time ride for 2024 with Chip Ganassi Racing. One of those boxes you checked off is that ROP program. How was it today?

LINUS LUNDQVIST: It was great. It's something so special being at this place, driving around this track. So many years I've been on the sideline hoping to be one of

the guys driving around it. So now to finally do it, and then to make my debut for Chip Ganassi Racing as well, at least in unofficial session, it's very, very cool.

It's been a good day, a positive day. Managed to get through the program, which was obviously a good thing, but also managed to feel quite comfortable around this place.

So, yeah, I'm excited for May. That's for sure.

THE MODERATOR: I know you did a lot of media here when you wrapped up your Rookie Orientation Program at the speedway, but wanted to open things up here for this 5:00 Zoom call for anyone that wasn't available, that wasn't able to make it to the Indianapolis Motor Speedway. We'll take a couple of questions here to wrap up the day.

Q. Obviously, Marcus, this is aimed at you. You ran at the speedway on the road course back in May. I saw the glint in your eye back then about being at what is the greatest racetrack in the world. There's absolutely no doubt about that. But how did it feel today to drive out of that pit lane down around the other way?

MARCUS ARMSTRONG: Yeah, it was special, honestly. I didn't -- I didn't know what to expect in many ways coming here. I've obviously done a few laps around Texas before.

So having not a lot of oval experience, coming here, it's not easy. It's very high speeds, a lot of nuances to this track, a lot of details.

So if I'm honest, I wasn't nervous about doing it. It was more so just about trying to get the first run out of the way so we know what to do better next time.

But, yeah, to drive on this circuit at proper speeds after phase 3, I would say still it's a long way off quallie speed, but it was incredible, you know, to watch -- I mean, I have watched this place since I was a kid. So to drive around here in anger at flat-out is pretty crazy. It's pretty special.

But I don't really want to think about that when I'm driving because that's never a good thing. I can reflect on it now, but when I was in the moment, it was quite smooth sailing,



to be honest.

Q. You've got someone like Dario on your corner, and I know Dixie was there, but I saw Dario at the test today. They're there as coaches for you, but what advice does he give to you before you go out for that very first time, other than don't ding the car or anything like that?

MARCUS ARMSTRONG: Dario gets pretty specific with his advice and everything, which is relevant after you've done a run, you know, after you understand where the turning points are and this and that and how it feels.

And then Scott would just says say, Go flat-out. So there's two very contrasting opinions. But, yeah, there's a whole lot of people on the team that have a lot of experience around here. It was very structured. It was a very structured day.

Obviously with the Rookie Orientation you drive at this speed and then that speed and then you can go flat-out sort of thing. But in saying that, even if there wasn't a Rookie Orientation process, us as a team would have had -- well, we do have a structure to make sure that we get through the day properly and don't have any accidents.

THE MODERATOR: Linus, do you want to chime in on that? He brought up the fact that Dario Franchitti is hanging out with you guys and helping you through that program. What's it like to have a three-time Indy 500 winner there in your corner?

LINUS LUNDQVIST: I was just saying it's so invaluable really to have somebody like Dario on the team. And then even having teammates like Scott Dixon or Alex Palou that know their way around this place, and together with the experience and the knowledge of everybody else on the team, it's an incredible place to be as a rookie.

You've got plenty of people to ask and get advice from, but like Marcus said as well, it's one thing to hear everything beforehand, but it actually makes sense after you've done a run at this speedway and you start to get a little bit comfortable and know all the references and what they're talking about.

Yeah, it's going to be plenty of hours spent in conversation before the month of May.

Q. How beneficial is it for you to kind of get the Rookie Orientation Program over and done with now rather than waiting until the new year?

LINUS LUNDQVIST: I think it's beneficial for both

ourselves because obviously we can go over Christmas and New Year's and kind of the break of having the confidence of already been here before. You can kind of hit the ground running when you come back.

But I think also for the team, you know, the boys and the girls, they work extremely hard, especially come beginning of the year and come up to the month of May. So I think it's nice for them to get it out of the way as well.

It's just one day less that you have to be at the track for those guys, so I think it's a win/win if you are able to do it.

Q. I have one for you, Linus. I believe your car stopping in the morning was the reason for the yellow. Was that just a tire issue, like I saw, or was there more to it than that?

LINUS LUNDQVIST: No, that's correct. That was me stopping off of turn two. Yeah, we had a tire issue on the right rear. That's why we came to a close.

Q. And for both of you, you both wrapped up the official orientation in the morning session but then went back out in the afternoon. Did that extra time running at full speed -- was that nice as well, rather than just the actual getting first used to it, you kind of had a second shot at it in the afternoon, right?

LINUS LUNDQVIST: Yeah. At least for me that was the most fun part. Getting through the program, you have to do it, you have to pass. Then you're done with.

After that you're actually able to get in to try a little setup work and just play with yourself as well in the sense where you try different lines and get comfortable with everything. Because this place is fast, and there are plenty of things that can go wrong, so it's important that you feel safe and comfortable out there.

Q. That the same for you, Marcus, that in the afternoon you got to try out a few different things?

MARCUS ARMSTRONG: Yeah, that was ideal, really, when they told us that we could do a few more laps after we finished the three phases.

Obviously we're fairly limited on tires, but it was enough to do quite a decent run really. I think we got -- yeah, we got quite a few laps in. I think the more laps the better. Especially when you haven't driven here.

Even if we are circulating at just flat-out, every lap you are learning something.

THE MODERATOR: Linus turned the most laps today at 102 total laps during the two sessions. Marcus, you were second in that category with 93. Tom Blomqvist had 90 laps on the two and a half mile oval. A few more questions.

Q. I have one for Linus. Although you have already experience in ovals in Texas and Gateway, what does Indianapolis make something special, the environment, everything? What's special of it?

LINUS LUNDQVIST: I mean, firstly, like I said, it's the place itself. It's the speedway. You know, the history and the legacy of this place, you feel it as soon as you enter the track. It's a special place to be.

And everything, obviously, correlating to the Indianapolis 500, but the speedway itself is very impressive to drive. I mean, Texas, another speedway is hectic.

Obviously, Marcus knows this as well, but comparing to all the other ovals, the speedways and the speed that you are doing here, the way that it's so big, you know, you've got a lot of time in the straights to have a think about things. Sometimes a little bit too much time, I would say, because you tend to overthink things in between.

But it just makes for a great experience, together with the adrenaline rush you get at driving at 220 miles an hour around this place. It just makes for a very special moment.

Q. Then, Marcus, thinking now in next season, you've been the Rookie of the Year, you may have some pressure on you. But does having Alex and Scott in the same team remove you some pressure?

MARCUS ARMSTRONG: I mean, there's no external pressure, if that's what you're asking. I would say it actually removes a bit of pressure, if anything, because I don't have to learn a lot of the tracks for the first time, which was quite -- you know, not an easy thing this year.

So going around and doing the circuits again for a second time will certainly give me a lot more confidence and comfort I would say.

And then having Alex and Scott and Linus and Kyffin as references is also really, really good as well because we have quite a lot of talent on the team and a lot of talent in the engineering office too. So, yeah, I'm confident for the upcoming season.

THE MODERATOR: We'll cut everybody loose. Linus, congratulations. Marcus, it's on to the Indy 500 open test. Good to go when that rolls around next year. Thanks,

guys, for joining us.

LINUS LUNDQVIST: Thank you.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you. For everybody that's also joining us, Kyle Larson, the 2021 NASCAR Cup Series champion, he'll get his shot at ROP beginning tomorrow at 11:00 a.m. Eastern.

We'll have a news conference when that three-hour time frame wraps up, approximately 2:00 p.m. Eastern tomorrow. Kyle will join us as well as Tony Kanaan, who is a sporting director from Arrow McLaren. And also from Hendrick Motorsports Rick Hendrick and Jeff Gordon will be joining us as well. Again, that's approximately 2:15 tomorrow afternoon Eastern Time.

Thanks, everybody, for joining us. Have a great rest of your day. Appreciate you. Thank you.

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