

# NTT INDYCAR SERIES

## News Conference

Thursday, November 2, 2023

## Romain Grosjean

### Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: Juncos Hollinger Racing, completing their 2024 driver lineup this morning by announcing Romain Grosjean will drive the No. 77 Chevy-powered Dallara. 2024 will mark the fourth season for Romain in the NTT INDYCAR SERIES, last season the 37-year-old with a strong second-place finish at Long Beach and Barber Motorsports Park.

Romain joins us today. Romain, congratulations. Thanks for doing this.

ROMAIN GROSJEAN: My pleasure. Thanks. Hi, everyone.

THE MODERATOR: Let's get to it. How did it come together for you?

ROMAIN GROSJEAN: Yeah, pretty late in the year. I think the first discussion was Portland, then Laguna Seca, then post Laguna with Ricardo. Got to a point where we found an agreement. Excited to go racing again in INDYCAR. As you know, I really enjoy the series. I really enjoy the atmosphere.

Of course, it's a new challenge, a bit different than the last two years. I mean, I'm excited about trying to keep building the momentum of Juncos. I think the last few races they've done really well. Excited to see what we can do together.

I think on top of joining a new team, it will be a challenge for all of us, but nothing that we're scared of.

THE MODERATOR: After three seasons now in the NTT INDYCAR SERIES, certainly you've learned a lot about the style of racing, the competitiveness. In your opinion, what does it take to be successful in this series?

ROMAIN GROSJEAN: Well, I don't know. I haven't won yet (smiling).

THE MODERATOR: You will, though. Just a matter of time.

ROMAIN GROSJEAN: It takes a lot. You have to be very versatile, be good on superspeedway, on short ovals, on street courses, as well as road courses. Be good every weekend on the strategy and understanding the race and making sure that the car you drive is the one you really feel like you can be competitive with.

I think in 2022 we saw that I was suffering a little bit in terms of performance to get things going on my car. By the end of the 2022 season, we finally understood what I needed in the car. '23 was a lot better.

I think it's just fine-tuning the car to your liking, then be a good racer.

THE MODERATOR: Obviously going to have that opportunity to expand what you've been doing in the last couple years in the NTT INDYCAR SERIES now with Juncos Hollinger Racing.

We'll begin with questions.

**Q. Romain, does this mean you're not driving for Andretti next year? Is this the final confirmation of that, kidding aside.**

ROMAIN GROSJEAN: (Smiling.)

**Q. Tell me about this new relationship where we know you're a perfectionist. When you aren't getting what you know you should have or feel you should have, you definitely let your last team know, a fiery thing at times. The team you're joining is a very passionate one. How do you keep things calm and on track and focused while knowing this is a passionate team and driver coming together? How do we keep this from exploding?**

ROMAIN GROSJEAN: Well, I try to avoid explosion as much as I can (smiling).

We'll see. I think time will tell. I'm aware of all the questions. I think that's a big talking point right now. We may be surprised in good, we may be surprised in bad.

I think we'll see. I'll do my best on my end for sure. I'll try



to improve. I think you can always improve in life. Thanks God I'm not perfect.

I also feel like it could be a different atmosphere and feeling, ongoing relationship with Juncos. So far I've really enjoyed the time I spent with Ricardo. I got lucky to spend quite a bit of time with him in Austin during the Formula 1 weekend, which was nice.

I think we're aware of that potential situation, so we'll do our best on each end.

**Q. Your first three seasons in INDYCAR, you had the amazing Olivier Boisson to work with as your race engineer. This will be a new team for you, but first time working with someone other than Olivier. They have great talent. Tell me about you're not just driving for a new team but you're getting to know a new mechanical team and especially for you a new engineering team.**

ROMAIN GROSJEAN: Yeah, for sure it's going to be different. It's going to be a new team. When I joined Andretti, I had Olivier coming with me. That made the transition a little bit easier, I would say.

Also I'm excited to discover new talent, new people, new way of working in INDYCAR. Of course, with Olivier, we became much more than driver-engineer. We are friends. We're still going to be spending maybe a bit of vacation together, time together. There's also a new chapter for me and new people to discover.

That's something I've gone through all my career. I'm excited that I get the chance to do that. Well, it's good that Yves is French at Juncos. I get a chance to practice my French still over the race weekend (smiling).

**Q. Could you give any update on your arbitration proceedings? Anything changed in terms of what's happened with Andretti, or is that still process ongoing?**

ROMAIN GROSJEAN: Well, I won't have any comment on this. I think today we're here with Juncos Hollinger talking about the future, meeting the fans in St. Pete, so on. I'd rather focus on talking about positive future things.

**Q. The setup at Juncos, a team that has had some understeer over the course of the last season. What are your hopes and realistic goals going into next season knowing that the team, maybe the car needs a little bit of adaptation to get it to where you need it to be? What do you think is possible?**

ROMAIN GROSJEAN: I don't know. I don't know. It's very difficult to judge, very difficult to know. I joined Dale Coyne in '21, and the car straightaway suited my driving style, did really well. Took a little bit longer over the last two seasons, but I think I've got a better understanding now of the car.

Saying that, everyone is in the same boat. That may change the car quite a lot. We may have to restart from a very fresh baseline, especially for the teams that are not on track these days. We don't have any idea what really it's going to do and what's going to happen.

Ready to tackle that. I think we've got the simulator. I'm excited to discover the Chevrolet simulator and see how we can work. Saying that, I also want to thank Honda HPD for the last three seasons. I had an amazing time with them. I think the quick adaptation to 2021 was a big part due to them and the simulator and getting me up to speed in INDYCAR.

**Q. The last couple teams you joined, what are your thoughts of bringing in that experience to Juncos? Have you learned enough at this stage that you feel like you know how to be that team leader, what they need at this point of their early INDYCAR venture?**

ROMAIN GROSJEAN: Yeah, I definitely have a big experience in INDYCAR, when I came or after the first season. Saying that, it's never easy to fine-tune things. You've seen how competitive the field is, how tight it is time-wise. You just need to, if you want to do well, nail everything and be on top of it.

I'm not expecting to repeat the pole position from St. Petersburg 2023. We're going to try, but I'm not expecting that. Maybe we repeat that straightaway, but also I think it's going to be my 25th season of racing next year, professionally, since 2010. That experience is valuable. I'm hoping to bring it in the right way, in a good way, but also to listen to what was done at Juncos.

I think over the last four races of the 2023 season they did really well and they were very competitive. I'm actually excited to discover something new and maybe putting a little bit of my sauce on top of it.

**Q. From Coyne to Juncos, not the size of Andretti. Do you feel maybe less pressure in this situation? Is that more of a comfort zone for you, per se?**

ROMAIN GROSJEAN: Not really. I think I can already see the articles of you guys writing if we don't do well and say, oh, Grosjean didn't succeed, and Coyne was like a year that was good, but the rest was bad. If we do really well,

it's the opposite.

The pressure is on, but the pressure is on for myself. I feel like I can still win races, feel like I can still be very competitive. I want to do that.

I left Formula 1 because I felt like I just didn't want to be on the grid to be on the grid. I wanted to be competitive. There was no option. Coming to INDYCAR, I felt like I could be competitive with Coyne, I could be competitive with Andretti. I'm hoping we can be competitive about Juncos Hollinger and do well.

We're all going to do our best. We're all going to work as hard as we can, and time will tell if it was the right move or not.

**Q. Speaking of the parity and competitiveness of INDYCAR, when you came over here, ovals were a no-go, you weren't interested. You seem to like them now. What kind of conversations behind the scenes with your wife and family in that 2021 decision to run the ovals, take us back to what went into those conversations.**

ROMAIN GROSJEAN: Yeah, I think there's a few reason behind the fact that I do ovals. Obviously time helps to heal, so more of the way we were going from the 29 November 2020, easier it was to kind of go back to a life.

Number two, when the whole family moved in the States, it was also easier for my wife to be present at the event, not too far. For her, on ovals, I mean, I crashed a few times, so I know it's always a pretty big one. For my wife, knowing that she's in the same country and she can reach me pretty fast, not like Bahrain where it took a lot of logistics to get to me. Finding someone to look after the kids, finding flights, flying over here was easier. That's just a practical thing. Psychologically that was important that she felt she was in the same country as I race.

For me, I think I was ready for the beginning. As I say to all of my family when we got back to racing, it was a team decision. I was going to go back racing, but I wanted them to feel comfortable with what I was doing.

I think through the time and through the experience, they like it. I can tell you they've already booked their flight ticket to the 500 next year.

**Q. The '24 season, we have words in Mexico called 'do more with less'. Next season can be kind of a 2.0 of rookie season but with experience?**

ROMAIN GROSJEAN: Yeah, we'll see. We'll see. I think

the team is really pushing hard and giving its best possibility to do well. I think they're excited to have my experience, also the experience of a car. I drove a car that was on pole in Indy GP, in Barber, in St. Pete, very well in Nashville and some other places. I've got experience of a fast car in INDYCAR, but I'm also excited to discover what the team has to bring to me, what they do differently, what was done maybe in a better way.

I think it's not so much about do more with less, it's about do as good as you can with what you have.

**Q. Had a chance to test the hybrid car?**

ROMAIN GROSJEAN: No, not yet. Not yet. I don't know what that's going to happen. For sure some drivers are testing it now. I'm a bit jealous because they get some good mileage.

But it is what it is. I get to spend time home. Well, I've been traveling a lot. I train hard in the gym and get ready for the season.

**Q. Your teammate, you will be racing alongside Canapino. What did you learn from Agustín this year? What do you expect from him next year in Juncos?**

ROMAIN GROSJEAN: Yeah, I think I was very impressed with Agustín's performance through the year, learning a lot. We spent a lot of the last race, Laguna Seca, together, especially the beginning of the race. I was saving fuel. He was staying in my rear wing, and I thought he was not saving fuel, but he was. Bad news for me.

He's done a tremendous job. I'm excited to get to discover him, with his experience in GT cars, coming to single-seater was not easy, and he's done really well. I'm excited to discover that.

I've had few chat with him. Very nice and gentle guy. I'll be able to improve a lot my Spanish, which I'm excited about, and also to learn from him. I'm excited to get to spend time with Agustín.

He's a great champion in Argentina. I'm sure he can be a great champion in the U.S.

**Q. Do you expect there to be much of a difference between the Honda power unit and Chevy next season?**

ROMAIN GROSJEAN: I don't know. I think INDYCAR generally has done a good job of getting both manufacturer, and both manufacturer have done a good job of trying to get as equal as they can. I think that we



know that some -- one has got maybe some strengths over the one and vice versa.

For sure I've been talking to drivers that have done both. Simon Pagenaud was a good one, came from Penske to Meyer Shank Racing. We had that relationship with Andretti. I could speak with Simon about it.

I'm also excited to discover what the Chevrolet is doing. I think they've done really well this season. Obviously we mentioned the hybrid, that's going to be a challenge for everyone. I'm excited to discover the support. I'm excited to discover the simulator. I'm excited to discover what we can do together and try something new.

Yeah, as I say, I had an amazing time with HPD. I want to thank them again. I'm excited for the future with Chevrolet.

**Q. Looking ahead to the season, Milwaukee coming back, how excited are you to go to Milwaukee with it being a track you haven't raced at before?**

ROMAIN GROSJEAN: Yeah, super excited about it. I wanted it to come back to the calendar already this year. It's a cool oval. It's maybe a little bit more like just a fast road course, high-speed corner, from what I heard from drivers that have been there.

I'm excited that we go back to Milwaukee. I think it's going to be a great show. Hopefully everyone started from new, from fresh, can give us some help.

**Q. Juncos is a smaller team than Andretti. Does that also imply that you have to lower your own goals for next year, or are you confident that, like with Dale Coyne in the past, you are able to fight for poles and maybe even podiums and victories?**

ROMAIN GROSJEAN: We'll see. Only time will tell us. Only time will tell us.

I think first to achieve poles or victories, it's not so much achieving it, it's what you achieve on the way, the work that you do to get there. We have to start with the first steps and move on and get everything together and everything right, especially in INDYCAR.

You score pole for few hundredths of a second, that's going super quick on the track. It's all about the way you get to your pole or your win. It's not about getting the win.

**Q. From your years in Formula 1, is there any crossover information that will be handy for you with the hybrid technology come next season?**

ROMAIN GROSJEAN: I think it's a very different one. I think, of course, it's always going to have that experience, but I think it may be a little bit different in that aspect.

We'll see. I'm excited to discover it. I'm excited to see what we can do with it. I've discovered it in the LMDh with the Lamborghini. I was amazed in the simulator. In INDYCAR, I don't know yet. I'm hoping it can be good. I'm hoping the driver has good input and we can use that to our advantage.

**Q. Are you enjoying flying yourself to all of these circuits this year? Looks like you have a lot of fun in that plane.**

ROMAIN GROSJEAN: I do. I've got no wi-fi, no signal. I'm on my own. ATC is my only friend.

I like flying. In the U.S., we got the chance to be able to do that with quite a lot of ease. Yeah, I'm just happy to be traveling like this, not have any delayed or canceled flight.

**Q. No extra pressure by flying yourself and worrying about finding the airport rather than being on a commercial flight?**

ROMAIN GROSJEAN: Well, there's some stressful moments. There's storms and stuff like this around, icing. I really enjoy it. Yeah, I'm hoping that I get to do a lot of races next year with my plane. Just keep enjoying life, keep realizing how lucky we are.

**Q. Obviously the team-driver dynamic is important in any series. Especially with new hybrids coming in, how important is that going to be with giving the information to the team, seeing what you're able to work on?**

ROMAIN GROSJEAN: Yeah, I think in every team, the dynamic between the driver is key because you get so much more information out of two or three drivers than out of one.

For sure I'm excited to discover what Agustín is like to work with, what his feedback is. We'll have to have a bit of an adjustment initially to find out what the wording is because that's always the hard part, what the driving style is.

I think he's seen a lot of different cars from INDYCAR as well. Through a change like we are facing for next year, I think it's important that you have experience. I'm excited to discover that and to start working with him.

As I say, I think he's a very talented driver with a unique



career. I can't wait to spend some time with him.

**Q. Obviously you're going to be in the Lamborghini next season. With this being a full-time ride with Juncos, how does that affect your schedule at all? Is it still a full-time gig? How does that affect your schedule coming up next season?**

ROMAIN GROSJEAN: Yeah, no, with Lamborghini, I am the third or fourth driver. The one from the (indiscernible) races. We have Daytona, Sebring, Watkins Glen, Le Mans 24, Indianapolis and Petit Le Mans. All of those races are free from INDYCAR, or INDYCAR is free from those races. That's a good calendar.

I think with the Formula 1 on top, I think I'm going to end up doing 30 race weekends next year. I'm still very passionate about it and like it. The day you don't like it, you can always say I'm stopping. Right now I love it.

It is time away from the family, it is consuming. I'm home right now and I miss racing. I think it's a good sign.

**Q. Regarding Agustín, the off-track potential of the team is massive in the Spanish-speaking world, so many fans of Juncos. The link with McLaren as well. How do you see your position coming into the team? Obviously you have a worldwide fan base coming into Juncos. Do you see it more as a positive that there's so much room for growth, or do you have any concerns about the kind of social media that we've seen over the past year with Juncos?**

ROMAIN GROSJEAN: I'm excited about the opportunity to grow our fan base, both to Juncos Hollinger and myself. I'm excited to discover a new culture, Argentinian. I'm starting to learn Spanish just because I wanted to do it anyway in Miami, but also know there's even more reason to do it.

If you go on my social media, you can see that I'm far in hate resistance. It is what it is. Some people don't like me. Fine by me. I think you lose time coming in my social if you don't like me anyway.

Hopefully everything goes well, but I'm aware of what happened with Callum. It wasn't ideal. I felt for him. If it happens to me, yeah, I just don't go on social, keep doing my stuff.

**Q. Agustín learned English in like three months. You have to get pretty quick with Spanish.**

ROMAIN GROSJEAN: I think he's going to beat me on that one. I'm doing Duo Lingo every day. (Speaking in

Spanish.) I can say women are drinking milk and the kids are reading the newspaper (laughter).

**Q. How do you plan to adapt the new environment on this team, like dynamics, strategies, your new teammate, as you make this transition to Juncos Hollinger Racing?**

ROMAIN GROSJEAN: That's a very good question. I think it's going to be time, time together. I'm planning coming to Indianapolis to meet with some of the team members and get to start talking with them, get on the simulator and understanding the -- start the steering wheel and the button and the strategy to use, the different strategy with the Chevrolet engine, what's going to come with the hybrid.

I think the real time that we get to understand a little bit more, all of us, is when we go racing on the track, when we're testing. Hopefully that's sooner than later.

**Q. What are your goals for next season on the new team?**

ROMAIN GROSJEAN: Try to do best we can. Try to be consistently not too far from the top 10 or within the top 10. If we can do more, we do more.

It's difficult exactly to assess coming to a new team. It's about learning the new team, about developing the team, trying to optimize everything we can do.

I can tell you a little bit more after the first few races, but right now it's difficult to know exactly where we're going to be.

THE MODERATOR: We'll leave it there. Again, congratulations, Romain. Have a great holiday season.

ROMAIN GROSJEAN: Thank you.

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