

# NTT INDYCAR SERIES

## News Conference

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### Alexander Rossi

#### Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: Joined now by the driver of the No. 7 Arrow McLaren Chevrolet, entering his ninth season in the NTT INDYCAR Series, seven career NTT P1 awards, eight career wins, and adds a wedding ring in the off-season to his Indy 500 ring from a few years ago. Welcome to Content Day. How is it going so far?

ALEXANDER ROSSI: It's going. It's going. My suit fits, so that's win No. 1. It's way better than last year. We're getting there.

THE MODERATOR: 2024, looking forward to it?

ALEXANDER ROSSI: Yes, I am. These off-seasons are tough just because it's a long time from when we raced last. But we're now in 2024, so that's a step in the right direction. Yeah, St. Pete is around the corner at this point.

**Q. Just give us your thoughts; obviously you've got a new teammate, the team has some momentum coming off 2023. What are the expectations for 2024?**

ALEXANDER ROSSI: Expectations are high. I think that we kind of had the new team, new car added dynamic last year. That whole thing is behind us.

I think the team has grown and gelled really well together over the whole season last year, and to have another off-season of continuing to work together and get better is a positive.

I think that we were competitive last year, especially the 5 car was really strong in all events, and so I think that taking that positivity and just expanding on it and building on it should set us up really well for what should be a fantastic year.

**Q. Obviously with the arrival of David Malukas to the team, what do you think he brings to the organization?**

ALEXANDER ROSSI: First of all, we welcome him with arms wide open. It's pretty cool to have him on the team. He's very exuberant. He matches Pato's personality pretty

well in terms of his youthful excitement.

We haven't -- despite there being -- we've had some hybrid testing and stuff. We haven't, because it's one driver per day, we haven't really worked together much, but we've done some content stuff together, and we've been in the shop at the same time, and he's a really lovely kid. I think he's a great addition to the organization.

Obviously we're getting to the point where we're getting close to being together on track as a group. But at the moment it's still getting to know each other from an off-track standpoint.

I think what he's done so far in his career is pretty good, and he's going to be ready to take a pretty big step here in 2024.

**Q. In terms of '24, we're returning to Milwaukee this year. How excited are you about that?**

ALEXANDER ROSSI: I mean, it's always great to add events to the calendar, right, and obviously Milwaukee has a great history in the series. I've never been there, so I don't really know. But yes, it's cool to add a new track. It's always great for a driver to go to a place you've never been before and kind of experience it for the first time.

**Q. We talked about the schedule with a bunch of guys. As mentioned, Milwaukee, you've got an All-Star Race coming up. What are some races this season that you're looking forward to the most, and what are some races that you think, we had something there last year, I can't wait to get back there?**

ALEXANDER ROSSI: I think obviously the 500 goes without saying. I think Thermal is going to be a really exciting event. It's pretty cool that INDYCAR is doing like a prize money race and obviously having the Thermal Club members involved there and the format of the event and having it be kind of an elimination round to get to the final, a proper made-for-TV event is really exciting, so I'm looking forward to that and seeing how it all goes and winning a bunch of money; obviously that's cool.

You mentioned Milwaukee.



Like I said, it's great to add an event to the calendar. I haven't really thought about that. I'm just thinking about St. Pete, honestly. That's probably the other one, the first one of the race.

**Q. Are you a one-race-at-a-time guy? How do you keep that focus week in and week out as you draw closer?**

ALEXANDER ROSSI: It's pretty easy, honestly. You have to take it one race at a time in a lot of ways just because it's so -- each race is so unique, and that's what makes this championship so special is that every time you show up at a track like what you did the previous week doesn't really necessarily translate.

Yes, you always have an eye to the 500. You're always thinking about ideas and ways and the team is always developing the car in the off-season specifically for the 500 because it's a whole different car.

Aside from that, it's one event at a time, at least for me.

**Q. As you've had a few months here to reflect on last year, finishing ninth in the championship and not where you want to be, what do you feel like boiled down to just not finishing where you guys wanted to be over the course of a 17-race season?**

ALEXANDER ROSSI: It's not one thing. I've been stuck in like a ninth purgatory for now four years. It's really annoying. Yeah, I think we were pretty good on Sundays. We were really, really poor by a lot of standards on Saturday. We didn't qualify well at all.

That's been the sole focus this off-season is to figure out what we need to do different, what I need to do different in order to make sure that -- to be competitive and to win these races, you have to start in the top 6. Yes, obviously there's instances where you can win and not, but to be competitive in a championship you've got to start in the top 6, and I think our average qualifying was like 10th. That's really the main reason in my mind why we ended up finishing ninth was just because we weren't starting high enough forward on Sundays.

**Q. Is there any type of track that you guys are still working on as a team? I know there's always work to be done, but in years past before you joined the team, as McLaren was coming into the fold, Pato would typically tell us one type of track they felt really comfortable at and some things they were still working on, do you feel like that's coming together and you guys have struck a solid balance there?**

ALEXANDER ROSSI: That's hard to say. Obviously I don't really -- it's hard for me to judge last year and how they were relative to how they should have been or how we should have been. I think superspeedways we were very strong. We expected to be strong. I think the short ovals we expected to be stronger than we were, so that was kind of the disappointment, I think, was our performances at Iowa and Gateway.

I think a big focus for the team in terms of just making a step is certainly on the street course performance. Not that it was bad, but there's certainly teams that had a pace advantage on us that we need to close the gap to.

But it's an ever-moving target every single year. Even if we were good at superspeedways last year, you've got to take a step to still be good this year. It's all of them really.

But yeah, I would say that street courses and the short ovals are probably the biggest areas where we felt we were missing last year.

**Q. As we've gone through this long off-season, I know the series has seen some setbacks between the continued delay of the hybrid and some things fans have grown frustrated with. As you have potentially met with some series executives or talked to folks this off-season about where the series is going, from a long-term perspective, what would you tell fans about the direction of where things are going and what are you confident about?**

ALEXANDER ROSSI: It's a good question. I actually had dinner with -- me and some other drivers had dinner with Penske Corp last night and were able to ask questions and get answers to questions.

I think the big message is everything that the fans are saying, like none of that is news to any of us or any of the people that are in charge of the series or the future of the series.

But obviously they are not going to give you a play-by-play and a step-by-step as to how they are tackling challenges and preparing for the future and doing things.

You've got to trust the process. We all do. But ultimately the people that are running the ship and in charge of the direction are the right people to be doing that.

I think there's a lot of positive news that's going to be coming over the next three to five months that people are going to be very excited about. There was obviously great news yesterday with INDYCAR returning to iRacing, which

is fantastic.

I think there's been some negativity towards the end of the year in 2023. There's going to be quite a few positive announcements that are coming to start the year in 2024. That's the way life works. It goes up and down.

Ultimately there's going to be an evolution and progression of the car this year with the hybrid coming on board, and the fact that that's delayed, if people have a problem with that, then that's fine. But ultimately there's a really good direction that the series is heading, and I think people are going to be excited about it.

**Q. You're pretty much a student of racing and you showed your versatility by driving in everything, including the Baja 1000 and some sports car races. Have you found yourself paying a little more attention to Kyle Larson and some of his efforts, especially toward the end of the NASCAR championship last year since he is going to be your teammate here at Indy this year?**

ALEXANDER ROSSI: No, but -- no, I don't think so. In terms of watching races, no. But in terms of -- I was with him in Charlotte when he was on the sim. He was at the track -- I forget what test it was, but he was at the track -- oh, it was the hybrid test.

I was driving when he was doing his ROP, so spent some time with him there. He's going to be a fantastic addition. He's going to be up to speed right away. He's going to be a challenger to win the thing. I don't need to watch him race to know that.

**Q. But you as a fellow racer, do you sometimes -- how impressed are you about his versatility? He's at the Chili Bowl this weekend --**

ALEXANDER ROSSI: Oh, he's phenomenal. I've said for a long time, he's one of the best in the world. That doesn't come easily in what he's accomplished in his career. It's pretty much second to none.

**Q. There's a lot of former drivers that are up and down pit lane working in various capacities. You have one of them with Tony Kanaan. What's it going to be like having him as a little bit of an advisor this year for the entire team?**

ALEXANDER ROSSI: Yeah, I think he's more than an advisor. That was kind of his role last year, and he was so good at advising that he got promoted. He's a very integral part of Arrow McLaren and the management group. He brings a lot of information in terms of -- he's seen teams

operate at their best, he's seen teams operate really at their worst. He knows kind of signs of good and bad, and he's able to help give guidance from that experience to all of us, whether that's us as drivers, whether that's to engineers, mechanics, to Gavin, to Brian, relaying stuff back to Zach. He's a really key part of the organization.

He also brings a huge amount of enthusiasm to the team.

With him, Pato and David, it takes a lot of load off of me from that standpoint.

**Q. Obviously looking at your first season, it was a decent season, but now you've got that first season at Arrow McLaren under your belt. Do you think winning races is achievable or matching Pato's form is achievable for you?**

ALEXANDER ROSSI: Oh, yeah, for sure. It's hard to win races in this series, but yeah, it's 100 percent achievable. You just have to -- when you have the opportunity and you have the car to do it, you've got to get it done. That's really what it comes down to. You're not going to be the best car every single weekend, but the weekends that you are the best, you need to figure out a way to finish it off.

That's kind of been a big team focus this off-season, as I already mentioned for me specifically on the 7 car. We've got to make a step in qualifying.

But assuming that that all goes according to plan, then yes, I think we'll definitely be much improved on how 2023 was.

**Q. Following up on Nathan's question in kind of a two-part way, how did that dinner that you had last night change your perspective on the bigger picture stuff and put you in a different frame of mind? They say it's about trusting the process and they know what fans are saying, but how do you convey that message when obviously not all of the fans will be in those high-level meetings and be able to hear what you guys hear that assuages your concerns?**

ALEXANDER ROSSI: Yeah, it's a good question. I don't know that I necessarily have the answer to it. But let's use an example of Apple. Like their stock prices have plummeted in the past couple of months. Are consumers, people that are not on the board who are investing in the company expecting executives to give them an explanation as to how they're going to rectify it and what their solution is going forward and why X, Y and Z happened?

No. Because INDYCAR prides itself on being so fan centric, I think obviously there's a lot of good that comes from that, but then there's also, for lack of a better word, a

small amount of entitlement that comes from that and expecting that just because we're such an open book with everything that we do, that doesn't mean that there's things that go on behind the scenes that need to be kind of worked on and improved and kept under wraps until it's ready to be kind of laid out for the world.

That's the way most businesses and organizations work, so I don't think that should be a surprise for people, that when a bad news situation comes out, there's not an immediate rectification response as to what the solution is because maybe that solution hasn't been created yet, but that doesn't mean it's not being worked on in the background.

I think that the people that are in charge, the people at Penske Corp, the people at IMS, the people at INDYCAR, they all have the same love and passion for the sport that we do, and so they're not going to allow things to just fall by the wayside. They may have a different approach and way of problem solving and going about addressing issues, but it's still with the goal in mind of growing the series, keeping the Indy 500 as the greatest single day sporting event in the world, and making sure that the on-track product we have is better than anything else, and I don't think that there's anything historically, especially over the past nine years that I've been involved in this series, that should have anyone be casting doubt on that because from year to year, it has grown, it has improved.

As I said, in the next couple months, I think there's going to be some things that come out that people are really excited about.

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