

NTT INDYCAR SERIES

News Conference

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Romain Grosjean

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: We are joined by Romain Grosjean. Tell us about the transition to the new team. How is it going, and are you looking forward to 2024 here?

ROMAIN GROSJEAN: Yeah, the transition is going well. Everyone has been very welcoming in the team. Already spent the day yesterday, some time in December with everyone, and it's been great. That's very cool, and excited for the season for sure.

A lot to discover, a lot to understand, a lot to know where we are, but the good thing is that we got a couple of tests before we go to St. Pete's that should help us get started.

Q. Seems like this team is moving forward. We saw a lot of progress out of them over the last two years. Talk about the relationship moving forward, both you looking for your first win, this team is on the growth, moving up, had some great runs last year, and then talk about some places where you know in your head you want to improve coming up in 2024?

ROMAIN GROSJEAN: Well, I think it may be early to speak about wins. For sure we're going to try to do everything we can, but we also have to be realistic that we are, as you said, up and coming. The team has been doing really good for the last few years, but it's still a three-year-old team.

So a lot to do, but I think everyone is very motivated and very aware of what we can achieve and what we cannot achieve. That's good.

Places to improve, the Indy 500 for sure. At least try to see the checkered flag would be a good start.

Q. I just wondered have you had any reaction to what was going on at Haas today with your former engineer and Guenther?

ROMAIN GROSJEAN: Yeah, I saw the news as most of us. Very happy for Komatsu. First of all, he's a very good friend of mine. I've competed at every of my 181 Cup wins

and Formula 1 wins with him working on my car somehow. His kids are the same age as my kids, so we've been very good friends, and I'm excited for him. It's a huge challenge in front of him, so I'm excited for him.

I don't know what happened. I don't know more details than you do, but I wish Guenther all the best in his next chapter. He's definitely a man that's got a lot of ideas and things to do, but for me the main thing is very happy for Ayao.

Q. You have a new contract with Lamborghini as a GTP driver and LMDH driver. How does that impact your confidence going into the new year for 2024?

ROMAIN GROSJEAN: I think the GTP program with Lamborghini has been very exciting. We had a good start last year. Did a lot of testing. Did the official Daytona test and then we went to COTA. We've got more testing coming for Sebring, and then I believe Sebring 12 hours is going to be the start of the LMDH in IMSA, so I'm excited about that.

In the meantime with Lamborghini I've got Daytona 24 coming which is also going to be fun with the GT3, but is definitely a nice project alongside of INDYCAR. That's the main focus.

But next week I'm very excited Lamborghini and hopefully going to Le Mans 24 will be something really nice.

Q. You're in a new team now. How does joining a new team in the INDYCAR Series help you in your direction for the new season?

ROMAIN GROSJEAN: Well, it's the third one in four years, so I'm getting used to it. Obviously it's always a challenge. It's always positive. There's always things we need to adapt. But as I say, everyone is super open minded.

I'm excited to see what we can do together. I'm realistic of where we are and what we need to do. But it's INDYCAR, and everything can happen on track. We'll make sure that we seize every opportunity that we can.

Q. When you look back at the last two years, how do

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you judge what happened? Obviously I would imagine you're disappointed in how things played out, and then obviously going to a new team, you're obviously excited about that, but the last two years, how can you analyze what happened both on and off the track for you?

ROMAIN GROSJEAN: Well, I think we tried and we had a lot of belief that we could fight for the championship, and we did not achieve that. I had an amazing time with some great characters over the last two years, made a lot of good friends.

But right now I'm more interested in focusing on 2024 and seeing what we can do with Juncos Hollinger Racing than moaning about the past. As I said, a lot of good friends up there, a lot of good times, a lot of good positions, podiums. It just didn't play out our way. But the next chapter is the important one.

Q. Obviously you had a very successful time at Dale Coyne when you came into INDYCAR and enjoyed working inside that team. I guess Juncos is maybe a similar size to Dale Coyne when you were there. Wondered if there was anything that you enjoy about working in a team like this. Obviously in Formula 1 you were working in much bigger atmospheres. I guess the chance to work in smaller teams means you can be more hands on and enjoy the experience more than in previous teams?

ROMAIN GROSJEAN: I think it's positive working in both small teams and big teams. For sure small team is more family based small type of feeling. I really enjoy the Latin American, Latin type of relation that we have, that I'm closed to friends in Switzerland, where with Ricardo and everyone in the team, that's for sure.

There's also a lot of beauty about being in a bigger team. They are the ones selected by the manufacturer to do all the hybrid tests so they have got a lot more knowledge than we do on all of that. They are more research on certain things.

But I'm definitely excited about what we have coming and very happy with everyone that I've met and everyone I'm going to work with.

Q. Do you have any update on the arbitration with Andretti, how everything has played out there, or can you still not really say anything about how that's all played out?

ROMAIN GROSJEAN: Yeah, no comment, sorry.

Q. You were talking about the relationship in Latin American style that you have with people like Ricardo. I would like to ask you about your new teammate Agustin Canapino. How did you get on with him in the first days and can you give any assessment on his rookie season in 2023 and what can you bring together as a team?

ROMAIN GROSJEAN: Yeah, sure. I think the team has been very welcoming. Agustin, as well. We've had a great time at the factory together. I know he's excited to work with me. I'm excited to work with him, as well.

I think he's got an incredible background in touring car, and there's definitely a lot of things that I can learn from him on that side and that driving style that he can bring into single seater, and I think for him it's also important to have for 20 years or something like that, and has got a lot of experience.

I have a very good relationship. I'm looking forward to working with him. I think we're both at a time in our life that is all about working together and working well for the team, so that's going to be exciting. His first year in INDYCAR, there was some very impressive performances. There was some that were less good, but also you have to remember that INDYCAR has got so little test that when you come as a rookie, it's not that easy.

Q. Do you think he has been progressing throughout the season? At the end of the season in 2023 Juncos Racing was fairly close to being in the top 10. Do you think you can raise even more that benchmark?

ROMAIN GROSJEAN: Well, we're definitely going to try to be in the top 10 at first and then see if we can do top 5 and even more. But step by step, we know where we are and we know where we want to go.

Q. When did you say your first test in a Juncos car is going to be?

ROMAIN GROSJEAN: It's going to be Homestead-Miami between the Roar and the Rolex, so I think it's 22, 23 and 24. It's going to be a day and a half somewhere in that week.

Q. I know the last two years at Andretti, it was easy to kind of gauge what success was going to look like. It was going to look like poles and wins and podiums and things like that. You mentioned wins may be too soon to expect at a team that's still just three years old. When we get to the end of this 2024 season, what would you at this point call a successful year in your first year with JHR?

ROMAIN GROSJEAN: It's the same question, and to be honest with you, I didn't think of it. I don't have an answer. I think we have to see where we start in St. Pete, in Thermal, and then see where we can move from there. I think success would be to improve and get better race after race, and see what we can do, see if we can get a decent Indy 500. That's a big race in the year.

It's not easy, and the team is like, okay, we need to rely on you in the Indy 500, and I'm like, I'm going to be fair with you, I don't know what a good car is. I can't tell you. We have to learn together.

I think, yes, it's difficult to exactly -- as I say, top 10 and top 5 would be awesome, try to be somewhere near that in the driver's championship by the end of the year and see what we can do, but definitely try to get every opportunity we can.

Q. When things were going well in your part-time season with Dale Coyne Racing when you were achieving podiums and poles and things like that and seemed like you were really happy both on and off the track, what can you tell us about what was going on, like what that experience was like with a smaller team when you were able to achieve those results that they weren't always achieving both before and after you had been there?

ROMAIN GROSJEAN: Yeah, I think with Dale, we had a very strong relationship, and I love Dale as a character, and I think he understood me pretty well. I was lucky, as well, to work with Todd, the chief mechanic, that was absolutely outstanding, and Olivier. I think that combination of us worked really well.

I know that I'm a human being, like all of us, and to get the best out of me, Dale was able to do that, and I'm hoping that with Ricardo we can achieve the same thing and get me into the sweet spot but also get the car to where I need it to be for me to perform really well.

Q. Because a lot of the smaller teams didn't get a chance to do any of the hybrid testing, were you a little bit relieved when INDYCAR delayed that until the middle of the season?

ROMAIN GROSJEAN: Yes. I think for us, it was tricky. It was an advantage for some that was pretty significant, and when we were doing the drivers' meeting early in December, the guys were asking a question about the hybrid, and I had no idea what they were talking about. Definitely kind of happy that it's been postponed.

It's also going to allow us to start with a known concept on the car and move from there and see when the hybrid comes in, and hopefully by then we do have a lot more knowledge on it.

Q. Also on the IMS road course, you've been successful with two different teams, so obviously it's driver feel that you have for that course. Is it beyond the realm of possibility to expect you to have a really good performance, both in qualifying and in the race on the IMS road course?

ROMAIN GROSJEAN: Yeah, I don't know. I think the team looked really good in Portland and Laguna Seca last year. So that's going to be good. We're going to try to bring that for sure to a lot of different racetracks.

Finding time to go testing on road courses is not easy. The weather obviously in the winter is impossible, and then the season starts. It's definitely something I'm trying to put a lot of effort on because I think it's important that we find the right package for the road course, but too early to say anything.

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