

# NTT INDYCAR SERIES

## News Conference

Thursday, January 11, 2024

### Marcus Ericsson

#### Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: Joined by Marcus Ericsson, driver of the No. 28 Andretti Global Honda, beginning his sixth season in the NTT INDYCAR Series, with a win at St. Pete last season to go with his three podiums and four top 5s. And of course he is the 2022 Indianapolis 500 presented by Gainbridge champion.

Marcus, new colors, new team, new year. Happy New Year.

MARCUS ERICSSON: Yeah, it's exciting. It's going to take a bit to get used to not being in red because I spent like four years with that.

Yeah, super excited about this upcoming season. It's a lot of change, of course, when you come to a new team. A lot of people to get to know. It's been an interesting few months, but yeah, can't wait to get going here in St. Petersburg in a couple months.

#### **Q. How would you characterize the transition to the new team?**

MARCUS ERICSSON: It's been super good. It's been easy to come into the team. Very welcoming. And also with Kyle and Colton, I know them a bit from before, of course. But doing more stuff with them, it's been really fun, and they're two really good guys.

So far, it's been great.

#### **Q. How long did it take for you to feel that you're an Andretti driver as opposed to a former Ganassi driver?**

MARCUS ERICSSON: I don't know. I was lucky to get a few tests here in the off-season, and that's been good to sort of speed up that process. Now I feel very much as an Andretti driver.

It's a cool team to be in with the history and the Andretti family. I'm very proud to be part of that.

#### **Q. Both teams were highly engineering based, so how**

**do you compare the engineering you had at Ganassi with the engineering they have over at Andretti?**

MARCUS ERICSSON: I think they're quite similar in many ways. They have very talented people that you get the chance to work with. Over at Ganassi I was with a great group there and worked with a great engineer in Brad Goldberg.

And now coming over to Andretti, I'll be with Olivier, who is a very good engineer, and we've gotten along very well in the first few months. So I'm excited to go through the races with him and the rest of the engineering department there at Andretti. There is a lot of clever people there.

It's a new challenge, but like I said, I'm super excited about it.

#### **Q. Do you like the look of your new fire suit? I know when we last saw you, you were at IMS in a plain black one, but a few more logos on it.**

MARCUS ERICSSON: Yeah, it's good. Like I said, it's going to take a little while to get used to not being in something red, but I think it looks good, and the dark blue, I think, suits me.

#### **Q. Is it dark blue or black?**

MARCUS ERICSSON: People think it's black, but it's actually dark blue.

**Q. I know you got a chance Tuesday evening along with some drivers we spoke with yesterday to meet with some members of the Penske Entertainment leadership group to talk about some developments that are upcoming for the series here in the next few months and next year. And I know you can't give us any specifics on things that haven't been announced, but the drivers we spoke with yesterday that were also there came away very positive despite what's been an up-and-down off-season that we've had the last four months since we finished up at Laguna. What was your take on the high points of what you learned about that evening, and how would you say your position on the direction and the trajectory of the series is coming**



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**away from that on Tuesday?**

MARCUS ERICSSON: Yeah, it was interesting to sit there and chat a bit with the people.

I think the biggest takeaways for me is all the work that's going on in the series. There is a lot of work behind the scenes, people that's pushing a lot to bring this series forward. You don't see that from the outside, per se, but I think from what I understood and got told in that dinner, there's a lot of good things that's going to come out here in the next few months about the series, about the direction we're going.

If all of those things come true, I think there is a lot of excitement for us as a series.

I think sometimes it's easy to focus on the negative parts. This off-season, like I said, has maybe not been the smoothest one for INDYCAR, but there's a lot of things we should be proud of and happy about, and exciting going into this new era with the hybrid. And the grid is the biggest it's been for a long time. A lot of strong and healthy teams. There's a lot of good things happening in the series.

That was the main thing, just to sort of hear what the vision is for the next season but also beyond that.

**Q. Was the biggest takeaway just you learned about some more things going on behind the scenes and the work than you maybe had a perspective of, or were there some big-picture things that you learned about that you can't tell us that was maybe the biggest takeaway?**

MARCUS ERICSSON: Yeah, both, to be honest. For me, it was interesting to hear a bit how much they're working on different fronts to strengthen the series.

Sometimes, like I said, it's easy to sit and say, we should do this, we should do that. But it's obviously a lot more complicated than that usually. Just to hear that and hear some of the things that's in the works, for me that was very interesting and sort of good to hear that for the future of the series. Because there has been some discussions, like I said, in the off-season.

For me, at least, after that dinner, I was pretty excited to hear what they were saying.

**Q. You mentioned the rollout of the hybrid that's coming after the 500 this year. You've also had a chance to test it a couple times. You're someone that's been in the heat of the championship hunt these**

**last couple seasons. What do you envision a change like that -- how might that affect the championship, and what do you feel like it's going to take for someone to be able to come out of this unique championship hunt that we're going to have in 2024 on top?**

MARCUS ERICSSON: Yeah, it will definitely be a bit of a game changer when we introduce that. It's obviously not a solid -- like we don't know exactly what race it will be, so that's going to be a moving target.

But I think we might see a season where it's sort of two phases, where some teams are really strong up until the hybrid, and then when the hybrid gets introduced, there might be a change of -- some teams might figure that out quicker than others. That's going to be the big challenge.

I think for me -- and for us really -- I think it will be good. I think we have a lot of clever people in Andretti and a lot of really good engineers.

We have the Formula E team that we can sort of lean on a little bit, as well.

I'm excited about the hybrid. I think it will be really good.

I think also it's going to be a hybrid that requires drivers to think and plan and be a step ahead. For me, that's something that excites me because I like to think I can manage that better than some of my competitors.

**Q. I'm not sure if I see the logo, but have you and Huski Chocolate continued your partnership or are they not working with you anymore?**

MARCUS ERICSSON: They're not with me at this moment, no.

**Q. When you were at Chip Ganassi Racing, Scott Dixon was obviously the senior driver on the team. Now you and Colton have come into the series at the same time. Is that difficult now that you're one of the more experienced drivers on the team, having been there for a while, or in INDYCAR, compared to what you were at Ganassi where you were just the new guy on the totem pole?**

MARCUS ERICSSON: Yeah, things are changing. I'm not getting younger. So that was the thing at that dinner Nathan talked about. They were introducing us, you veterans, it's nice to have you veterans here. I guess I'm getting into that phase now in my career.

But no, it feels good, I think, the setup we have there. Like I said, Colton has been in INDYCAR as long as me, but

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he's quite a bit younger, so I'm definitely sort of the most experienced in the team.

That's a bit of a different situation, like you said, to Ganassi where Scott is a guy who's been there forever and has so much experience and such a strong and good leader and shows by example how to be a Ganassi driver.

It will be fun to have a bit of a more senior position, whatever you want to call it, at Andretti. And that's one of the challenges that I'm excited about going into the season, to sort of try and be that leader in the Andretti team both on and off the track.

**Q. You're not getting old, you're just seasoned.**

MARCUS ERICSSON: Yeah, that's right. I'm getting into my prime.

**Q. Obviously joining a new team, have you set yourself any targets or any goals for the upcoming year?**

MARCUS ERICSSON: Not result targets. I don't like to put like the pressure of having like result-based targets. Of course we'd love to win. The ultimate goal is to win. But I like to sort of focus more on the performance. I want to perform at my best. I want the team to perform at our best and maximize our potential.

Every weekend we need to maximize. Some weekends that might be we finish eighth. Some weekends that might be we finish fifth. Some weekends we win.

I think that's important for me going into the season, especially coming into a new team, to not put this pressure, oh, we need to finish on the podium, we need to be in the top whatever. It's go out there, maximize every weekend, get into a rhythm, get into your team in a good way. And I think if you do it that way, I think we're going to be good.

Again, it's a longer term project, so we just need to take our time and get up to speed and get going together.

**Q. In terms of Milwaukee, how excited are you to go there?**

MARCUS ERICSSON: I mean, I love the ovals. I think we should -- the more ovals, the better, I think. So Milwaukee is going to be a lot of fun. I've never been there, never really seen -- I need to start studying that track a bit more, as well. I think we're going there testing before the race, from what I understand, so that'll be good.

But just in general, I love -- the short ovals are some of the

best racing in the world, so I think it's a great addition, especially being a double-header, as well.

**Q. Getting back to the leadership question, when you were at Ganassi, is it just natural the first time a conversation comes up, do you defer to Scott? Is there that kind of wait to see what Scott says before -- is there that kind of relationship?**

MARCUS ERICSSON: Yeah, I don't know. In some ways, yes, but in some ways, especially for me when I was there for a few years, you're getting into the team and you get to a position where you get listened to by everyone, as well.

But of course with Scott, he's such a unique guy. Being in the team for 20 years or whatever, that doesn't happen. I think for him, Chip Ganassi Racing and Scott Dixon is almost one.

I think that's very unique. But Scott is also the perfect guy to be there. He has no ego, and he's the most open teammate you can have.

I think that's one of the secrets why Ganassi has been so successful over so many years is that Scott has been there, as well, along with a lot of other talented people.

But of course for me, being teammates with him for four years, I've tried to learn as much as possible from him, and I'm going to try and implement that in what I'm doing here in Andretti.

**Q. If there is that brief hesitation when you defer to Scott, if that happens, I would think very quickly you've not felt that at Andretti, or is it different?**

MARCUS ERICSSON: No, but that's what I mean. I want to be the sort of leader there. I have great teammates in Andretti, as well, with Colton and Kyle. And Colton and Kyle both have been with Andretti for most of their careers. So they know the team very well, so I can still lean on them.

And I think the key for us this year, being three drivers, three cars in the team, is going to be to work together. If us three can work together and help each other, push each other forward and get the best out of each one of us, we're going to be really strong as a team.

I think there might be some different dynamics compared to what I'm used to, but already we've been doing a lot of stuff together, and it's been working really well. We seem to get along in a very good way already.

**Q. You've been a part of that Ganassi culture the last**



**few years. How similar so far have you guys worked together? Does that culture seem similar? Are there any differences between Ganassi and Andretti?**

MARCUS ERICSSON: I mean, there's always differences between race teams, how people do things and how teams are set up and everything. I think in general, the way they go racing is similar in many ways.

Obviously I haven't raced yet, but the testing and all that is similar how everything works.

Also for me, I have my preferences how I want to work, what I want before a test or after a test. I can implement that. And I think Olivier, my engineer at Andretti, has been very open to try and sort of figure things out, what I want, what I need and so on.

I think so far, it's been really good, and also it's been very positive. I jumped in the car at the speedway and straight away felt really happy with how the car felt. It reminded me a lot of the feeling that I had in the Ganassi car, so that's promising.

Also on the road courses we've been doing some tests, it's been also straight away. I feel happy with the car. So that's also important because we've seen some guys changing teams, and it takes a while because the car setup is very different from team to team. But from what I've seen, the Andretti car is suiting my style of driving very good straight away, so that's promising.

**Q. It's probably unfair you haven't been through a race weekend yet, but the downsizing at Andretti from four to three, are there advantages or disadvantages from your short time there yet?**

MARCUS ERICSSON: I think it will be an advantage. Slimming down will be good for the organization. We can really focus on getting three great crews on the cars, great group of engineers on each car. It's more people that's focusing on fewer cars, so in theory, I think that should be better.

I think there's a reason why the team did it, and I'm hoping that when we get to St. Pete and the season, that's going to pay off.

**Q. With the Indianapolis 500 in mind, I feel like you're the perfect guy to ask this. Any rule changes that you would like to see, which would be the drag-in which worked for you when you won. Last year you were that second guy in line looking right at that attenuator coming in line. Obviously maybe a red flag situation. Any rule changes you would like to see possibly**

**coming for the 500?**

MARCUS ERICSSON: Yeah, if I'm second with a lap to go, I'm hoping it will be red flag again if there's a crash.

No, I don't know. The swerving there, I think it's going to be hard to police that, especially at the end of the race. People are going to do whatever it takes to win that race. It's the biggest race in the world.

I think that's going to be hard to sort of block that. But I think we can do something about that swerving down into pit entry. I don't think that's a good look, and it's been pushed more and more each year. I think Josef took it to new extremes last year going very deep into the pit lane and sort of out there again.

I think that for me is the biggest one because it goes with safety, as well. We don't want an accident there to happen because that would be bad.

I think something about that. And I know that's in the works, as well, so that should hopefully be good.

**Q. Bigger picture, you've had five full seasons in INDYCAR now. This is starting your sixth. You did five seasons in Formula 1 before you came here. Did you imagine that this would become your home when you came over in 2019?**

MARCUS ERICSSON: I mean, that was a goal, but I also knew that it was very different racing world coming over here to America. And you never know, you might be here less than a year and be out again.

I did go all in. I moved here. I moved all my life over to America and here to Indianapolis to really give this a shot, and it's worked out pretty well, so I'm happy to be here. And like I said, that was the goal to come here and stay for a long time.

Yeah, starting my sixth year, and hopefully there's many more to come after this one, as well.

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