

NTT INDYCAR SERIES

News Conference

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Marcus Armstrong

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: Joined by the driver of the No. 11 Chip Ganassi Racing Honda, beginning his second season in the NTT INDYCAR Series, first full time, though, with ovals added at the 2024 schedule of course, including the Indianapolis 500 presented by Gainbridge, Marcus Armstrong. How is content day going so far?

MARCUS ARMSTRONG: Content day is going well. I didn't realize it went until 5:00 p.m., but --

Q. Breaking news, it goes until 5:00 p.m.

MARCUS ARMSTRONG: I'm enjoying myself. I feel like my cheeks are a bit sore from all the forced smiling.

Q. At least you know what to expect now. The rookie year is out of the way. Now you're going to a bunch of tracks you've been to before outside of the ovals. I suppose that's the story for you is heading back into an oval schedule for you, right?

MARCUS ARMSTRONG: Yeah, certainly. In one aspect it's nice to know what to expect on all the other circuits. The ovals, obviously it's a different beast, but it's something I've been looking forward to for many years, and certainly last year watching from the sidelines, it's nice to know that I'll finally be competing in those races.

Q. What do you think it's going to be like going from kind of a part-time schedule to a full-time ride this season?

MARCUS ARMSTRONG: I'd say two things spring to mind. I'll be busier, which is good. I thought it was probably a bit of a disadvantage not being able to get into a rhythm every single weekend, and having a break, for lack of a better word. Then again, it was great to be able to be at the track and watch the experts, the oval experts and learn from them.

But it's nice to know that I'll be able to get into more of a rhythm throughout the year.

Then obviously ovals, I think certainly Chip has told me that ovals help your road and street course racing a lot more than you think, just with the basics of driving, the speed and where to put your eyes and everything.

It's certainly going to open my mind up to a few new aspects of this category.

Q. What is going to be the most challenging aspect of getting used to oval racing, and have you done a lot of sim work or is it more on-board camera viewing that you've done over the last several months or weeks looking ahead toward the ovals?

MARCUS ARMSTRONG: I do like to watch a lot of on-board footage. I always have. It's my favorite way of learning, let's say.

I have to say that there's a lot of experienced people inside the team on ovals. I spend quite a lot of time with Dario Franchitti, and he is extremely passionate about teaching. He is very passionate about ovals. I have a good teacher in him.

I think that I need to obviously put in the effort, study as much as I can, ask as many questions as possible. And then when it finally gets down to the nitty-gritty, just be comfortable and confident to go out and experiment for myself out on track.

Q. What is going to be the oval that you're going to be looking forward to the most? Probably the 500, right?

MARCUS ARMSTRONG: Is that a trick question? I am, I'm looking forward to the 500 the most. But it's easy to say now because when you're in the season, you want to focus on following the -- just try and improve every single day.

Certainly, yes, the 500 is a phenomenal race that everyone highlights on their calendar. But as well, I just want to focus on every weekend as it comes and every day as it comes.

Q. You're part of a pretty large team with Ganassi, five cars this year. Do you have individual people that you



look to for different types of advice that you kind of keep going back to because they've helped you more in particular areas?

MARCUS ARMSTRONG: Between the drivers you mean or --

Q. Between the drivers and consultants and just the team in general.

MARCUS ARMSTRONG: Yeah, like I said, there's a lot of people in the team with a lot of experience with winning races and championships. Certainly Scott, I share a driver lounge with. He's more than happy to share everything with me, as far as I know, which is extremely helpful. Dario, as well, like I said.

I have to say that all the strategists, all the engineers, they have very good information to share.

When it comes to race day, usually I will go to a few people that I usually go to to get a second opinion on, whether it be strategy or race craft in one way or another, and then it's down to me to go and do it.

Q. The carryover from last year, obviously now it's a full-time gig, which is fantastic. Are there many guys on your car rolling over from last season with you? Are you carrying them over with you or is it a bunch of new guys for you?

MARCUS ARMSTRONG: Well, actually I have quite a new-looking squad. I have Taylor Kiel as strategist, Angela Ashmore as race engineer, and certainly there's a few fundamental pieces that have changed. In saying that, I know everyone very well because they've all been inside the team previously. It's nice to have familiar faces for sure, and obviously Jason Beck as crew chief.

Very experienced people on the team, and there's obviously 180 men and women at the factory -- I call it the factory, everyone else calls it the shop -- that are at home base working extremely hard, and it's inspiring to see the energy and determination everyone has to succeed.

Q. When you look at it and you look at the phase of his career that Scott is in right now and Alex in a very dominant season last year and then you at the beginning of an INDYCAR career and now your two new teammates, do you consider yourself to be part of the new generation Chip Ganassi Racing squad in that sense?

MARCUS ARMSTRONG: I'm not sure if it's that black and white, that there's a new and old generation. But certainly

there's a lot to be learned from Scott and Alex, who have obviously proven themselves. I think there's eight championships between them. Clearly there's some expertise there to be drawn upon.

I'm in a very fortunate position really where, yeah, I'm surrounded by fantastic people and a great team, strong teammates to work with, share data with, and push forwards with.

Q. Something that really sort of springboarded your career, the Toyota Racing series kicks off again, now known as CTFROC, next week, at Taupo. If you look back at those times, and I know there's six drivers coming down from America for the five weeks down under, but how important was the five weeks of racing for you in the early stages of your career?

MARCUS ARMSTRONG: Yeah, certainly it was very valuable back in the day for me. The circuits in New Zealand are quite tricky. I would say they're even comparable to some of the American circuits, quite tight and twisty, Mickey Mouse, and no runoff, as well. So if you go off, you're probably going to have a crash, which I like that sort of style of circuit.

Yeah, again, it's five weeks back-to-back, so you get into a rhythm. And you have to learn quickly, otherwise your championship is over -- championship hopes are over fairly quickly if you don't figure it out straight away.

Q. Your dad is back in his Porsche in two weeks' time. Any advice for Rick and the Porsche?

MARCUS ARMSTRONG: Yeah, my dad is racing. He's improved a lot, actually. I'd say -- well, yes, Chip did approve of me helping my dad out in the Porsche the other week, and Rick has closed the gap on me.

Obviously it's all relative, but you can at least overlay the data now and understand what he needs to do better. He's actually really passionate about trying to improve, and he actually listens to me, as well. He's improving very quickly.

I think he won a race; is that right? He won a race recently in New Zealand.

He's only getting better, so I'd look out. He might be going for the Porsche Carrera Cup Australia Championship next year.

Q. This year of course we'll go to the hybrid engines after the Indianapolis 500. How do you work out with the team how it's going to work? Of course Chip Ganassi Racing is one of the teams who has tested

these hybrid units the most. How is it going to affect the championship for you?

MARCUS ARMSTRONG: Certainly there will be nuances to how to perform at its maximum, which always takes a bit of time to understand with the energy deployment and regeneration. Eventually there will be a way of being the most efficient on that side.

There will be a bit of trial and error certainly. And obviously whether or not the driver has the most input on that, it's yet to be determined. But it will take some time to understand the way to maximize that whole package. And obviously there's a different weight distribution and center of gravity and everything that goes with it. So that will also have a bit of an adjustment on car setup, I imagine.

Q. Obviously this year you will have four teammates in addition to Dario working as the advisor. As a young driver, how do you manage that much information that's going to come? You're going to have a lot of data from your teammates, pointers from Scott Dixon, Dario Franchitti, for example. How do you work out that much data?

MARCUS ARMSTRONG: Well, I've always been one to study data, so I would say that it's business as usual, really. Last year when I was having my first race weekends, it was quite a lot of information coming at me. Ultimately you just need to drive the race car as fast as you can around the circuit, if you put it really simply.

Certainly this year I'm going to try and get into the details as much as possible and improve.

Q. There's been a lot of new faces coming into the series in the last few years like yourself. A lot of them were in European series before coming here. We are talking about very strong series. INDYCAR is also incredibly hard, yet I don't think it gets the attention it deserves. What attracted you here, and what advice would you give to other drivers in similar shoes? Why is it a good place to race here?

MARCUS ARMSTRONG: I would say that INDYCAR has gained a lot of -- a big following overseas. Certainly I think, say, from February 2021 over in Europe there was a lot of hype and buzz around INDYCAR already. And obviously before that. But it's obviously Europe and the F1 fans certainly became more aware of INDYCAR around then.

There's a million things I could say about the championship. I would say the racing product itself is quite phenomenal, really, the wheel-to-wheel racing and the ability to follow closely and the overtake, the Push-to-Pass.

Everything is well-suited to wheel-to-wheel racing.

I'd say oftentimes there's not enough camera angles to show all of the overtakes that happen and all the action that happens on track. It's very entertaining, I would say, and it's great from a race craft perspective.

The cars are quite robust, so it can accept contact to a certain extent, so that gives the driver a bit more confidence to race. I remember times when I was racing in Europe, you'd just touch a little bit and you'd either have a punch or the front wing would be off. That sort of takes away a bit of confidence, if that makes sense.

The circuits, as well, are very twisty and challenging. I'd say the racing product is quite phenomenal.

Q. If you could take the series to any overseas location, which would it be?

MARCUS ARMSTRONG: Oh, easy one. I've been thinking about this all off-season. Macau. I was lucky enough to go there a couple of months ago, and man, INDYCAR around Macau would be, like, unreal. Like seriously unreal.

Q. Rookie no more, but how much will change the feedback between teammates inside the season because we race on CGR with two more rookies with Linus and Kyffin. It's similar to the question before, but I am more specific.

MARCUS ARMSTRONG: How will it change with two rookies in the team? Is that your question?

Q. Yes, with Linus and Kyffin. Because last season, your rookie season, no rookie drivers on the team.

MARCUS ARMSTRONG: I'm not sure, to be honest. I'm not sure how it changes too much for me. My job is to drive as fast as possible. It'll be good to have a different perspective. Obviously Kyffin and Linus will have their input on the engineering side, and it's always interesting to see new drivers' data and how they drive and also how they want to set up the car, so it's always nice to have a new voice in the room.

Obviously there's two experienced guys in Scott and Alex who as ever will be helpful to me.

But I'm not sure having two rookies in the team -- two new rookies in the team, is going to affect my job too much.

Q. This year will be less complicated to catch your first victory? How close are you to your first victory?



MARCUS ARMSTRONG: I would love to -- I'm not really a guy for labeling my goals publicly. But it's certainly no secret that I'm out there to win races. I mean, it's a difficult question to answer because I want to go out there and win straight away.

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