

NTT INDYCAR SERIES

News Conference

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Linus Lundqvist

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: Linus is ready, we're ready, so we're going to go for it. Wrapping up 2024 NTT INDYCAR Series content days with Linus Lundqvist, driver of the No. 8 Chip Ganassi Racing Honda, ready for his rookie season after competing in three races last season with Meyer Shank Racing where he had a best finish of 12th on the IMS road course. Linus is a graduate of the Indy NXT by Firestone championship where he was the 2022 champion there. How is content day going so far?

LINUS LUNDQVIST: I'm almost done, but it's been great, honestly, because now it almost feels like it's for real, like this is actually happening. Yeah, all things still positive.

Q. What has the off-season been like knowing that we've got a full-time ride, a great team, great teammates? There's a lot going on, right?

LINUS LUNDQVIST: I'll tell you what, I've been sleeping a lot better than I have for the last 15 years of my career, because usually this time of year is extremely stressful, trying to find sponsorship and trying to find a team and a ride.

So going into this, having it done so early, as well, helped because obviously the last few races I spent with Chip Ganassi Racing at Portland, at Laguna, and then I've been to the shop basically every single day during the off-season trying to learn, trying to get accustomed to everybody.

I've been enjoying this. I'm enjoying it a lot.

I did get to go back home to Sweden for a little bit for Christmas and New Year's, which was nice to see friends and family.

Q. When you were hired by Chip, a lot of us thought he's got four drivers now; did you have any idea he wasn't finished yet?

LINUS LUNDQVIST: No, no, I wasn't aware.

Q. The fact that it's now a five-car team, that's a lot of

-- those debriefs are going to take forever. They always say more information is better, but how are you going to basically manage five cars, five operations, you being a rookie, Kyffin being a rookie? There's a lot of ground to cover there.

LINUS LUNDQVIST: Absolutely, but that's what I think is so amazing about this team, that they've proven time and time again that they're able to perform no matter what.

As a rookie to come in, it is incredible. To have teammates like Scott Dixon and Alex Palou, who else would you want to lean on and learn from?

During this off-season and the first couple of test days that we've had together, I'm trying to be like a sponge and just soak up as much information as I can.

Q. When you look back to last year, obviously you would have wanted to be full time coming off the Lights at the time. Was it kind of a blessing in disguise that you didn't get to run full time, but you got to learn and be on the pit box. And that information you absorbed are you're champing at the bit to be able to use it this year?

LINUS LUNDQVIST: Absolutely, and the very word I would use myself is a blessing in disguise. At the start of the year being on the center line watching everybody else race, that was probably one of the lowest points in my career. To then get the call up to do a couple races, and then when Chip called to hire me for Chip Ganassi Racing, it's unbelievable.

Obviously we hit those three courses, the road courses and the ovals, so hopefully that experience will help me for next year. Because at the end of the day why I'm here and I know why this team is here is to win races, and that's going to be our goal.

Q. You said you went back to Sweden for a little bit. Has the series gotten a higher profile there with people like you and Marcus and everybody -- there's a lot of Scandinavians. Is that something that people are more -- for a while there I'm sure everyone says, INDYCAR, what's that? Is it more recognized now?



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LINUS LUNDQVIST: It is definitely more recognized, which is great. And I think the one thing that kind of feeds into that is success. We kind of saw that with Felix joining it and fighting for wins and winning at Road America. And then when Marcus won the Indianapolis 500, that was the big thing. You just notice how much more aware the public is about racing in general. And hopefully I can help them feed into that, too.

Q. After all those conversations that we've had, especially in the early part of last year and then to see the situation that you are in now, does it already feel real? Can you believe your luck?

LINUS LUNDQVIST: I mean, yes and no. For a very long time, it felt surreal. I was waking up day after day and checking my own Instagram making sure that the post was still there.

But honestly, during the off-season, I was like, wow, so much work has been put into this from both myself and the team. And I want to believe that, sure, it's luck and it's circumstantial, but I deserve to be here. And I want to prove that on track, as well. Like I said earlier, my passion and what I love is winning, and I think that aligns very well with this team, as well.

We're going to go out there and try to perform the best that we can, which hopefully is going to be fighting for wins.

Q. Is that your main target then, basically to try and win a race as soon as possible, or do you set yourself a target of I want to be Rookie of the Year? What are your personal goals for this year?

LINUS LUNDQVIST: Yeah, I don't have like a specific target, saying I want to win X amount of races or finish in this position, but I want to maximize my own performance. Because I know at the end of the day, this team and this car is going to be capable of winning the Indianapolis 500 and winning the championship. So if I do my part correctly, that's where we should be.

Like I said, we're here to fight for wins and podiums. That's going to be the target. But I don't have to set myself a target saying I have to win X amount of races, for example.

Q. You mentioned being on the sidelines last year was a bit frustrating and waiting for the opportunity. Was there any doubt in your mind that opportunity wouldn't come for you? Were you always confident that something would eventually happen?

LINUS LUNDQVIST: No, I had serious doubts for long

periods of time. But I also said to myself that -- I wasn't really ready to give up, and that was a conscious decision that I made, as well. I wasn't going to sit back home on my couch and watch all the races. I was going to be at every single race, make sure that I'm in the top of people's minds. Like I said many times earlier, almost hassling the team principals and bosses into meeting me and not forgetting me. I'd like to say that it paid off.

Q. Obviously you did those three races towards the end of last year, subbing in for Simon Pagenaud at Meyer Shank. How much did you learn from those three races on three different types of tracks, as well. Do you think that gives you a slight head start this year compared to what you would be otherwise?

LINUS LUNDQVIST: 100 percent. Obviously I've done three races more than I would have done before. Not only the races themselves, because they're fairly straightforward I would say, but the whole INDYCAR weekend concept. What I need to get in the right zone to be as efficient as possible, how practices and qualifying works. We basically just cut everything a little bit smoother, I would say, by doing the three races.

Like you mentioned, to be able to do a street course, road course, and an oval, as well, that was like the cherry on top. But I also know that it's going to be a huge challenge going into next year. But that's what I feel so great about being part of this team, that I know they're going to guide me through it.

Q. Those three performances, did you feel like that gave you a boost getting a full-time ride this year?

LINUS LUNDQVIST: Yeah, I'd say it was essential. Without those races, I would not be sitting here today. I don't think so at least. But obviously I was doing my best to even be in some contention during the year, talking for 2024. But yeah, it was basically that Nashville race, everything kind of changed for me.

When Chip called sometime after that and said that we can make this happen, it was a no-brainer. It's a dream of every driver to be able to race for this team. I'm trying to make it one better by winning for this team.

Q. Do you keep some kind of advantage from the experience of last year to be competitive on a team with five cars?

LINUS LUNDQVIST: If I have an advantage? I mean, depends on what you compare it to. Some of the other drivers, rookies that haven't raced, yes. But if you look at some drivers like Scott Dixon, then I wouldn't say that my

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three races did a lot.

But obviously, like I said, it just streamlines the whole learning process a little bit for me. But it's been a big project getting to know everybody within the team and how they operate, because obviously there's a slight difference between every team.

Five cars, I think it's going to be awesome. My experience in the junior series, as well, it's a little bit the more the better, because we can be very efficient with the amount of information that we collect. I think it's going to be exciting. It's been good to see obviously all the guys and girls back at the shop. They've been hard at work to make this thing happen, and it's looking good.

Q. Obviously the first goals on the first race of the season will be to take the car home but inside of the top 10 or top 5, I don't know.

LINUS LUNDQVIST: That's a great question. Like I said, I don't really have hard targets like a top 5 or a top 10. I want to maximize myself, whether that's 10th or that's winning the race or 15th. That's less important.

I just want to feel that I did a good race and note things to improve for the next one. Because obviously the first couple of races, there's going to be a big learning curve for me, even with the races that I've done.

But again, I know my own performance. I know what I can do. I know what this team can do. When we pull everything together, I expect us to be fighting for wins and podiums.

Q. Although Marcus Armstrong also wore that uniform, it's more identifiable with arguably the most successful dominant driver in NASCAR with seven championships and the most dominant driver in INDYCAR last year with Alex Palou. So in a lot of ways that's a pretty big sponsor to live up to. What goes through your mind when you're wearing that uniform?

LINUS LUNDQVIST: No kidding. It feels amazing. I'm not going to lie. I feel proud and honored to wear this and work with the American Legion. Because for me it's a little bit twofold. One is exactly like you said, especially he won the championship last year. But more so like you're part of something bigger here. You're part of a message and an organization that helps to save lives.

Being able to be integrated and understand the veteran community and how I can play a small part in that is great. It's honestly an honor to work for them. I hope to make them proud on track, and I know that they have a record of

winning races, so yeah, we're going to try to keep it up.

Q. Also throughout the year you're going to meet a lot of really interesting people and go to a lot of American Legion posts. You're probably going to have your fill of Legion cheeseburgers or fish fries or things like that. In a lot of ways is that part of the adventure that you're on?

LINUS LUNDQVIST: Oh, 100 percent, and even over the last couple of weeks and months, getting to know everybody at the American Legion and getting to visit some of the posts already has been incredible.

It's always good to see how passionate they are about racing. And obviously even last year when I was there just attending almost as a fan, you saw some of the Legionnaires. It's going to be really, really cool to be wearing this suit on the racetrack.

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