

NTT INDYCAR SERIES

News Conference

Friday, March 22, 2024

Kyle Kirkwood

Nolan Siegel

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: We are joined by Kyle Kirkwood from Andretti Global. Great test session here a year ago. Anything carry over from 2023 to 2024 as you sit there and chuckle?

KYLE KIRKWOOD: For us? I don't really know yet (smiling).

We struggled a lot this morning with balance. We're not really sure why. The pace is in the car, it's just we need to get the balance right.

So yes and no. Yes and no. We're a little bit scratching our heads because of the balance thing. The fact that the balance was that far off and we were still kind of mid pack I think is okay.

THE MODERATOR: Questions.

Q. We were supposed to have the hybrid to start the year. Even though we were supposed to get nine hours of testing with it, that's not the case. It's coming mid-season. I'm trying to figure out how beneficial is this, given the fact that this current configuration of engine is going to be different in six races?

KYLE KIRKWOOD: I don't know if I understand your question specifically.

Q. How much can you use from this test for the rest of the season until we have the hybrid drop in?

KYLE KIRKWOOD: At the end of the day it's still the same car. What changes most from the current car that we're in to that car is weight distribution, right? It changes it pretty massively. It's going to change the balance.

At the end of the day we're learning a lot with tires, like gear ratios, balancing, things that we can play with even when the hybrid comes out. They're all relevant. A balance change is a balance change whether it's on a

weight distribution we're running now or the hybrid in the back of the car.

It's all beneficial. Everyone just wants more time on the hybrid, right? That's the main thing across all the teams. Fortunately we've gotten a lot of testing. We feel like it's in a good spot now.

But yeah, every day we get on it, it gets more and more, better and better. This would have been a nice day to have it. I think it's okay it's coming in the middle of the season if I'm being honest. We're at a point now, all the testing I've done in the off-season, we're at a point that the car is similar to the car we're driving now. It's a similar pace, at least at Homestead. Not going to be a huge transition for many people.

Q. Your teammate Marcus had an interesting left front catch fire there. Did you have anything going on with your left fronts?

KYLE KIRKWOOD: That is actually a big topic right now with the new brakes that PFC have come out with. They've cooled a lot. Everyone is trying to figure out what temperature range they want to be running.

That wasn't a test item of theirs, but clearly got hot. I don't know if you noticed at St. Pete, a lot of the cars were catching fire and they couldn't put them out with the blowers. That's from people running them super hot when they come into the pits. Something people are working through, I guess.

THE MODERATOR: Obviously joined by Dale Coyne Racing action Nolan Siegel. I'm sure there's a lot of things being thrown at you right now. How have you adapted, adjusted to everything so far this weekend?

NOLAN SIEGEL: Well, we'll see I guess (smiling).

It's been good so far. I have one day in the car and one day with the team. There are a lot of new things to learn on my end. Everything's gone smoothly. Everyone is working well together. It's a good group of people. They've been super welcoming.

I'm learning as much as I can and taking it step by step. Hopefully by the end of the day tomorrow I'll have a lot more experience and be ready for qualifying. At the end of the day it's all good experience, so...

THE MODERATOR: One day at a time, right?

NOLAN SIEGEL: One day at a time.

Q. Kyle, the way in which you are going to approach the heat races, the main event, is racing for money any different approach-wise, motivation-wise, risk-wise, than racing for points on a normal race weekend?

KYLE KIRKWOOD: Yes and no. I think risk-wise obviously you can take more risks on a weekend like this, right? Push to pass for us, starts and restarts. You're going to see people taking more risks to try to get out front.

This is not going to be an easy place for us to pass on. This is similar to Barber in many senses. Passing is not going to be easy whether you have push to pass or not.

I guess the mentality is still the same. A lot of people might think because it's not a points race, people aren't going to try as hard. They're going to look at it as a test weekend, whatnot.

That truly isn't the case because all of us are out there to beat each other. We all want to beat each other just like any other weekend. It's competition, right? Like a normal weekend where people are trying to collect points.

Q. Have you had any conversations, do you feel like the team is comfortable with you guys risking as much or do you have to approach it as you would approach it and they let you do as you wish?

KYLE KIRKWOOD: That really hasn't been a topic yet. I'm sure it will come up. At the end of the day they want to win, too, right? They want to win for Andretti. They're still going to want us to go for it. At the same time they don't want to have to be putting together cars between now and Long Beach. That's always a risk versus reward on that, though.

Q. Tire deg has been a topic of conversation, how that will impact the final 10 laps on Sunday. At a high-deg track, do you feel tire deg might be the secret in who ends up winning this on Sunday?

KYLE KIRKWOOD: It's definitely a possibility because we're seeing three seconds of deg, three or four seconds of deg at the end of our runs just now. It could be, definitely, a factor at the end of the race after 20 laps.

Adding the fuel in the middle of the race is going to make the car super heavy. You would never go half stint on tires and add fuel. That just doesn't add up to anything that you do, which is going to make tire deg worse. It's going to make all those characteristics come with heaviness.

Yeah, we'll learn more as the weekend goes on. As the track kind of evolves, tire deg will go down some, as it always does. It's still going to probably be a factor at the end of the race.

Q. I've heard a driver mention there could be a strategy of if you don't start up front, to maybe take it easy, maintain your tires, wait for people to make mistakes or for other people's tires to go off more than you. Is that something you would envision?

KYLE KIRKWOOD: Yeah, I mean, I would think if you're starting 12th, you might as well circulate slowly for 10 laps, make sure you don't get lapped, then just have much better tires for the second chance. As long as you don't make up a bunch of ground, because after that it's going to be hard to pass. Rather cruise for 10 laps, try to get it all at the end when you're a second or two seconds faster potentially.

Q. Where do you think passing is the easiest on this track, knowing it's not super easy anywhere?

KYLE KIRKWOOD: I'd say outright turn one, maybe turn six, turn seven. You might see passing like into 14 if people are starting to get bottled up. They make a mistake, end up wide, you'll see pass into 14.

Q. (No microphone.)

NOLAN SIEGEL: That would be great, I think winning here would be great on many, many levels. It would be great. That money would certainly go funding a ride in the future (loss of audio.)

Yes, that is ultimately the main goal. This weekend that's not the main goal for me. It's to gain as much experience as I can and learn. I haven't really thought about that all that much, being completely honest with you.

THE MODERATOR: The rest of your season is pretty much planned out?

NOLAN SIEGEL: Yes.

Q. What advice do you have for Nolan on him embarking on this new experience?

KYLE KIRKWOOD: Man, everything is just so fast-paced

when you come out of INDY NXT. I guess I don't really have any advice. To expect is even days like today, you get two laps to do something and figure out the balance of the car. You have a second of deg on the next run (loss of audio) previous two laps. You have to guess what was done.

Also the time that you get between runs or sessions, it's like now we're in the media center, right? I got five minutes to eat lunch, something else going on I'm sure in 10 minutes, then I'm back into the car. You get five minutes to talk to your engineer, sort out what you want to do in the afternoon. That's going to kind of set up your weekend. You have to use your time wisely.

NOLAN SIEGEL: I'm all right. I'm doing okay for now. We'll see by the end of tomorrow. So far so good. I'm feeling okay.

KYLE KIRKWOOD: Good.

THE MODERATOR: Have a great rest of your day.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports