

NTT INDYCAR SERIES

News Conference

Sunday, April 28, 2024

Jacob Abel

Nolan Siegel

James Roe

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: Good morning, wrapping up INDY NXT Grand Prix of Alabama. Jacob Abel led all 35 laps today. First career win in his 30th start.

We'll start off with you, Jacob. Your thoughts on finally getting win number one for you.

JACOB ABEL: Yeah, 'finally' is right. I was trying to play it cool. It's all right, fine I haven't gotten a first win yet. Definitely still in the back of my head there for a while now. A lot of close calls last year with it.

Yeah, to get it done is pretty special. To get it done this early in the season is really important. We're really aiming squarely at that championship. To get this first win out of the way is really important for that. Now we can focus more on that.

Yeah, super proud of all of the Abel Motorsports guys. We've been working really hard for this for the past three years, honestly my whole entire career, to get a win of this scale. It's been pretty special.

THE MODERATOR: Nolan Siegel joins us, finishing second.

Nolan, your thoughts on trying to wheel in Jacob, but couldn't happen today.

NOLAN SIEGEL: Yeah, Jacob has been super strong all weekend. So congrats to him. Congrats to him on his first win. He did a great job. Didn't make any mistakes.

I came close a couple times. Thought I might have had him one time in five. Didn't quite have enough then. Decided to save everything for the end of the race, then the yellow came out. Would have been nice to have another shot to try and challenge him, but didn't happen.

Second today is ultimately the best we could do. It's all right.

THE MODERATOR: You were about half a second or so behind, maybe less. Do you think you may have had something on the last lap if it stayed green?

NOLAN SIEGEL: That's what I'd been saving everything for. It would have been nice to see. Obviously I cannot tell you I would have passed Jacob. I think it would have been nice to have the opportunity to try to. But they were super strong today, so... Ultimately didn't have what it took to win.

THE MODERATOR: James Roe, congratulations rounding out the podium today.

Your thoughts on your morning today.

JAMES ROE: Thank you. A great weekend for us. Rolled off strong on Friday. All weekend had good pace. Pretty happy with that. Obviously this guy here has been pretty quick out of the box, so we were chasing him all weekend.

For me to get the first podium of the season, first Andretti car home, is always nice. Probably a little too conservative on push to pass today. I settled in the start, didn't use any for 20 laps, sat behind Nolan. At the end about 10 to go, the engineers said you can use 15 seconds a lap. All right, I better get on it. But too late.

Look, it is what it is. You live and learn. These races are so competitive. I'm happy to get some points on the board and on to Indy.

THE MODERATOR: We'll begin with questions.

Q. Looks like the tires were going off at the end. A couple cars that lost five, six spots. Were you feeling that delta, that speed difference? Or you had it right and they had it wrong?

JACOB ABEL: Yeah, I was in a little bit of a different scenario because I got clean air basically the whole entire race. Not much of an issue for me. I was able to dictate on how fast I pushed based on how far Nolan was behind



me. There was no really big falloff. I could see it if I was stuck in dirty air all race. All good there in the front.

Q. Nolan, did you think you would try to pressure Jacob to see if you could wear his out a little bit?

NOLAN SIEGEL: I tried to pressure him at the beginning. Then through the middle, knowing how bad the aero wash is, I tried to protect the left front for the middle part of the race. I backed off to a steady gap with Jacob, didn't have any deg. I started to push at the end and tried to close the gap up a little bit.

But, again, the yellow... Didn't get to see what would come of that. No, I didn't think the deg was massive. Yeah, I mean, ultimately it's tough to pass here anyway. Jacob was super strong. Whether I had deg or not, I don't think it really mattered.

Q. Nolan and Jacob, can y'all just give your respective thoughts on the small little battle that was there.

NOLAN SIEGEL: I think in turn five you can run a lot of different lines. Jacob was running pretty wide there, so I tried to run tight. Went in deep, tried to get the over/under, run that alternate line. Ultimately ending up on the outside of turn seven is not ideal. He went in deep. Figured that was a pretty low-percentage move. Might have a better chance later in the race.

Tried to get it done when I had the opportunity. Didn't quite work out. It was close. Yeah, I did what I could. It didn't happen, but that's all right.

JACOB ABEL: All respect to Nolan. We've had a lot of battles the past couple years. Him and a bunch of other guys in the field I really trust racing around. I can't say that about everyone in the field, so I'm fortunate he gave me enough room on both ends of that.

Yeah, like he said, I was running a bit of an alternate line in turn five all weekend long. When he tried the over/under I was pretty happy because I got to go back on my line on the outside under acceleration.

I think all good. We were able to move on with it. Kind of tried to focus forward a little bit more after that.

Q. James, this good momentum going into the month of May, with Notre Dame, sporting a gold helmet...

JAMES ROE: Good the Fighting Irish are going to be onboard for that weekend.

We're happy. This year has been a step forward. Pace

was strong in St. Pete most of the weekend. Didn't really go our way at the right times. Rolled out here, we've been strong.

We're fine. Again, in this series you never know. It swings every weekend. Not complacent at all. Head down and keep working.

THE MODERATOR: Do you care to explain the Notre Dame helmet?

JAMES ROE: May 10th and 11th, we're going to run a Notre Dame team helmet in a partnership with the University of Notre Dame. Obviously being an Irish driver in INDY NXT, and Notre Dame Fighting Irish based out of Indiana, a pretty cool partnership.

The helmet, in fact, was painted by them. It's not me doing a replica. They took it in and painted it the way they paint their own football helmets.

We launched it two weeks ago. Went down pretty good. I'm excited to roll out with that.

JACOB ABEL: Any of Notre Dame's rivals that want a helmet, I can do the same thing. If anyone is worried about that...

THE MODERATOR: Louisville maybe?

JACOB ABEL: Butler (smiling).

Q. James, with Indy coming up, you haven't done so well there last year, what do you think you learnt from Barber that you can bring forward?

JAMES ROE: Just track position is everything in this series. Doesn't matter how quick you are. If you qualify up front, you run up front. It's as simple as that. There were a lot of moves today, but that's very unique in this series.

That's basically what we learn: every time you start up front, you finish up front. That's our mindset. Yeah, we'll just keep pushing.

Q. Jacob, does this feel like a weight off your shoulders at this point in the season?

JACOB ABEL: Yeah, 100%. I'm just happy that it was able to happen so early on in the season. Honestly, looking at the calendar before the year, Barber would have been the least likely places I expected it to happen. We really struggled here last year. Definitely not complaining about that.

But yeah, definitely a weight off of our shoulders which is really good. Now we can look squarely at the championship and really focus on that for the rest of the season.

Q. Nolan, since St. Pete you've been in the INDYCAR twice. Have you learnt anything there which you've brought back to INDY NXT?

NOLAN SIEGEL: Yeah, I absolutely think that I'm a better driver after running in the INDYCAR, doing those races. Hopefully the races that I do in the future in INDYCAR will also teach me more that I can bring back to INDY NXT.

Definitely learning a lot there. I think it's showing. I think it's paying off. If we can keep running up front here, I'll keep learning in INDYCAR, I think it's going to be a good year.

It's never easy in INDY NXT. We're tied for the championship lead. I think that shows you how close it is already at this point. It's not going to be easy, but I'll continue learning as much as I can there.

Q. James, you said you didn't use most of your push to pass towards the end. Do you regret going too conserve at the start of the race?

JAMES ROE: I don't know. I mean, it's so hard to pass here, as you saw, even with the guys. I mean, it's one of those things you settle in after the first five, six, seven laps. This is the pace. You get in a rhythm. Are you going to pass by spraying a load of (indiscernible) around here? Probably not. For me it was more so if the yellow came at the end or the guys had massive deg we could capitalize on that. Yeah, it is what it is.

For us, there was no deg. I really looked after my tires. At the end we were running the quickest laps of the race that we did for the whole race.

Yeah, it is what it is. Maybe tomorrow I'll tell you I should have used more, so let's see.

THE MODERATOR: We have a big doubleheader weekend coming up on IMS road course. Your thoughts about some points to be made, gained. How big is that weekend for you guys?

JACOB ABEL: Yeah, I think it's really big. Obviously I think it's a more limited practice schedule. We kind of had to get up to speed much quicker. Fortunately we were all familiar with that place. I think it's in all of backyards. We go there a lot. Hopefully there shouldn't be too many questions going into that weekend.

Yeah, just kind of trying to maximize the most points throughout the weekend being two races.

NOLAN SIEGEL: Yeah, that's going to be an interesting one. Obviously it's super important with two races and limited practice. I feel like everyone's been there a lot. I feel like every time we go, there are different people that are strong. You go one time, Wow, the car is really good, I'm feeling really good. You go the next time, you're not. We'll see.

I think it's going to shake things up. Hopefully we end up on the good side of that.

THE MODERATOR: James, you like racing at that place, don't you?

JAMES ROE: Yeah, no. It's been good for us. Andretti has been strong there. Having said that, I know the guys aren't sitting around and assuming we're going to be strong. There's a lot of work going on in the background.

Yeah, we'll roll out and see what we got. As Jacob said, one practice session, that's unique. That's a busy day. You practice, qualify and race that first day. Not much time to get out of trouble if you're in trouble. It's important that you roll off strong.

Yeah, two races, a lot of points. Over eight weeks, we've only had two races, so we're going to do two in 24 hours. Things can sway pretty quickly.

THE MODERATOR: Congratulations all three.

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