

NTT INDYCAR SERIES

News Conference

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Linus Lundqvist

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: As you certainly know, it's May. For the 11th year, begins on the road course at the Indianapolis Motor Speedway on Saturday. For the first time in his young NTT INDYCAR SERIES career, Linus Lundqvist returns to a track where he's already raced at in the NTT INDYCAR SERIES.

Linus, thanks for doing this.

LINUS LUNDQVIST: Thank you for having me.

THE MODERATOR: After a weekend off, had a chance to kind of digest or reflect on the first career podium, what are your thoughts as you look back at Barber?

LINUS LUNDQVIST: Incredibly happy, proud of the weekend at Barber. Getting your first INDYCAR podium, it's a big deal. You only get to do it one time, to do it your first time.

It was good. Happy to see all the 8 crew getting together and getting a little bit of success. Obviously happy for the whole team. I think it's especially cool to have my parents there. I was happy to see them as I was kind of jumping out of the car there.

THE MODERATOR: Certainly there's a little bit of familiarity with IMS road course. Raced there Brickyard weekend last year. What kind of difference does that make, going back to a track you already competed at?

LINUS LUNDQVIST: I think it's just general comfort going back to a place where firstly I've had some history racing there in Indy Lights, did pretty well. More so having an INDYCAR race under your belt on that track, you kind of know what to expect.

Very different situation this time around, but it just adds that little bit of comfort. It's nice. The added podium we had in Barber, confidence grew. It's a nice feeling going into the month of May with that. Hopefully we can kind of keep this momentum going for a good string of results here.

THE MODERATOR: We'll open it up for questions.

Q. Getting a podium third points-paying race, sitting eighth in the championship, 25 points out of fifth, it's early to look at points and you're a rookie, but does this reset your expectations?

LINUS LUNDQVIST: I wouldn't say that my expectations have been reversed in any way, shape or form because I still realize that I have so much to learn. I have a long way to go before I'm going to be consistently I think fighting for podiums week out, week in.

But I think we definitely took a step. I think just proving to ourselves that, hey, when everything comes together, we are able to fight for wins and podiums.

Like I said, it's a process. It was kind of a receipt that once everything does click, we'll be able to fight for these wins and podiums, which at the end of the day this is what we're here to do.

I still realize that I have a lot of learning to do, especially this month with the whole Indianapolis 500 race coming up. We'll get through this kind of Indy GP weekend and set forward from there because there will be a lot of new things for me to learn.

Q. With saying that y'all took a step, what step did you take in Barber?

LINUS LUNDQVIST: Yeah, it's just basically a comfortability question. I'm still working through different setups for me to be 100% comfortable in.

Right now, even if the car theoretically should be the fastest, I'm not really yet at the comfort level to drive it that way. You lose more out of the driver that you would potentially gain from the car, if you know what I mean. It's about finding that sweet spot.

As my confidence grows in the car, what I'm asking for, they can kind of follow along and hopefully spice things up.

Like I said, it's a process. It's a process that neither me or



the team want to rush through. We're not driving around at 90%, but it's still not something that we're overly stressed about. We know once everything clicks, we'll be right up there.

Q. You're one race away from finally achieving something you've worked your entire life for. How do you settle the emotions?

LINUS LUNDQVIST: I mean, it's tough. It's extremely hard. It's something that you've worked your whole life towards, like you said. The dream, it's to compete and obviously win the 500.

I think just take it one step at a time. The goal right now is to try to win Indy GP and do well there. Then obviously there's a quick turnaround and the shifting starts, the focus starts to be shifted towards the 500. Obviously we have plenty of practice sessions ahead, which is nice for me.

Then you kind of digest it into smaller goals. The first one for me is get comfortable in traffic, then we'll see how long that takes. It might take the whole month. Might not even be comfortable after the 500, who knows. I think that's going to be the biggest thing for me, is getting used to having 30-odd cars around you.

Q. After Barber, having had time to reflect on your podium, what do you think you can take away from that experience in Barber going forward to the weekend in Indy?

LINUS LUNDQVIST: I think a little bit of what we touched on before. I think firstly it was kind of a sign and receipt that when things click with me and the team, we're going to be right up there. Obviously we struggled a little bit, especially from one-lap pace. I still have quite a little bit to unlock yet. But it was a good feeling that when I'm happy with the car and the car is in a good place, I'm performing, we're going to be as good as anybody out there, which is nice.

As well, it was good for the guys in the 8 crew to be back on the podium. Obviously I wouldn't say it was a regular occurrence the last couple years, but they've been up there multiple times. Now the next step is to try to bring them back to the top step.

Q. Scott and Alex have had great success at the Grand Prix. What do you think you can learn from them and bring forward?

LINUS LUNDQVIST: The things I can learn from them is too long to touch on here (smiling).

They have had tremendous success. I think they won both races here last year, with Alex in the spring, Scott at the second race. They know how to win around that place. Then obviously the data and the video. We're going to chat to them and see what they did.

It seems to be there's not one recipe for success, there's multiple. That's what I think makes this team so strong, as well. You can adapt to whatever situation or circumstances that you get put in.

I'm just going to go in trying to do the best job I can do. Like I said, I think focus is going to be from us, at least my side, to put more into qualifying and see what we can do to get some speed.

Q. A lot spoken about from Chip and Mike that the drive in Nashville is the one that secured this deal. What did you learn from Nashville that you employed in your very first career podium?

LINUS LUNDQVIST: I mean, the one thing that I did in Nashville was I was basically flat out the whole race. Obviously that ended up with resulting me in crashing. But we were on the move, making passes.

The first couple races this year, both at St. Pete and Long Beach, I was very much on a save fuel, save tires strategy, which from a driver's point of view is not the most fun. That was my first half of the Barber race.

Then my engineers and strategists, they're like, We're not really sure what we are going to get out of this. Let's try to have some fun along the way.

For the last stints we kind of pushed hard, did our last pit stop. They said, Now you're going to have to pass some cars. That's what we did.

It was kind of similar in Nashville in the sense it's push hard, try to make some moves as much as we can. It was kind of fun going back to that because, like I said, I missed that in the first couple races this year.

Q. What was it like being back up at the podium?

LINUS LUNDQVIST: It's funny. I think it kind of works like that for many drivers when you come to the top level and realize how difficult it is, it's hard to go straight back to the top again.

Now actually, I think it was the second to last restart, I was second behind Ferrucci. This is normal. You're not used to being 15th and 20th at the start. It felt pretty good running up front, leading my first couple of laps.

I was honestly a little bit lost because I'm still confused sometimes about these races, like what position we're in. I could almost hear from the tone of the voice that Blair was speaking to me with, All right, we got something pretty good on here. After we passed most of the cars, All right, you're running third. I got super nervous. Don't throw this away now. But we managed to keep it on track.

Q. I assume that you watch videos of past 500s. How does that translate into helping you on the track?

LINUS LUNDQVIST: I think every video that you can watch... You don't just watch the 500, you watch every single, especially previous years. Going into Barber you're looking at the 2023, '22, '21, '20, basically any kind of race you can get your hands on.

Then obviously that translates into the 500 as well. It's like what potentially could happen. This has happened before, it might happen again. You basically build up a scenario and ask yourself what you would do in that situation.

I know that the team does the same thing. We look from previous drivers' onboards, as well, seeing what was good, what was bad, what kind of strategy calls they were making, see if there's anything we can learn from either their success or their mistakes.

Q. You mentioned getting comfortable at Indy this month. The month there can be intimidating even for veterans. Is it just a matter of getting out on the track and getting into the routine, or have you talked to other drivers about Indy, what it's like? Is it just a matter of being there to get used to it?

LINUS LUNDQVIST: I've 100% spoken to other drivers, trying to pick their brains. Especially when you're sitting in debriefs across from Alex Palou and Scott Dixon, they're pretty good drivers to pick their brains about.

It's also one thing to hear them talk about it and look at other drivers doing. Then when you get out there, you get all the sensations you get from driving at 230 miles an hour. There's only so much you can learn about listening to others. Sometimes you have to experience it yourself.

That's what I said, it's going to be about me getting comfortable especially running in traffic. Running by yourself is one thing. Most people can do that. Being good in traffic, making sure you can set up passes the way to do it, yeah, I don't think you can ever get 100% good at it. I think you just keep on learning every single year.

Q. This is your first year driving the American Legion

car. We've talked about the mission behind the Be the One campaign. How did it feel to bring that mission to a podium? How excited are you to turn around and bring that to Indianapolis for the biggest month of racing in the entire circuit?

LINUS LUNDQVIST: It's wonderful. The way that I view it is, I'm extremely proud to be representing the American Legion. It kind of comes from two aspects. Firstly, the American Legion livery, even though its short history in INDYCAR, has had tremendous success, won races, won championships. It's very cool as a racing driver Linus to kind of bring that forward.

Secondly, the mission. Everything that American Legion works for, especially the mission I Would Be the One, it's something bigger than racing. At the end of the day you're saving lives. I think that's one of the greatest honors that one can have.

Being able to bring that mission to the forefront and obviously bring the American Legion back on the podium is amazing. But we're not stopping there. First podium is awesome, but now we want to get that first win. I know that's where the Legion is used to being.

We're going to work hard this month to try to do that, but also obviously it is a special month for all veterans. It's going to be a cool moment for me to go through.

Q. You said post race at Barber that St. Pete was a bit of a reality check for you, as well as the first races of the season. Did you see your first few races more difficult than you initially expected?

LINUS LUNDQVIST: Yeah, 100%. I think that's kind of what you go through, as well, especially when you've had success in junior series. That's kind of been the norm for me. As you go up through the series, basically every car I've jumped into, I've been able to find the front straightaway.

I knew this was going to be a big step, but I also knew I was going to be driving a Chip Ganassi Racing car, which has the potential to be winning races and championships.

When I jumped in at St. Pete, I realized that the thing is that it's not just one, two, three good drivers, that there's 15 probably drivers that are able to win championships given the right circumstances, which means that if you do one mistake, you're going to end up being P18 or P16 or P20. That was a bit of a reality check for me.

In other series, if you do a mistake, you still might be fifth or sixth. That would be considered a bad day. But here to



break into the top 10, you have to beat names like, I don't know, maybe a Scott Dixon or a Pato O'Ward, anybody like it.

That to me, it just really brought forward the challenge of racing in INDYCAR. Not just like on one weekend, but being able to do that consistently, it's hard. People are good.

Q. Looking to the end of the month, what sort of is the most difficult thing to adapt to early on? How successful did you find the test at the end?

LINUS LUNDQVIST: The test was good. It was just a little bit sad that it was cut short. Obviously we had the morning on the first day, then the afternoon rain. Day two it was all good. Didn't get to do as much running as we would like to.

Like I said, luckily we have a couple more sessions here coming up. I think, again, it's just going to be getting comfortable in traffic is going to be the biggest thing.

Obviously working with the car, making sure we're in a happy position. I think most of it's just going to come from confidence, be myself, make moves, get passes done.

Q. In the last few weeks you've seen drivers come over from Formula 2. Do you feel opportunities stepping up from INDY NXT will be more difficult to come with this new crop of talent coming over?

LINUS LUNDQVIST: I mean, yeah, obviously we've seen Theo kind of come over. I think it was Lundgaard starting that a couple years ago.

I wouldn't say it's becoming more difficult. I think over the last five years or so we've seen that uptick in it. I wouldn't say next year is going to be more difficult than it was like two years ago, for example.

It's good to see the European drivers come over here. But I also think the INDY NXT drivers, if you're able to win a championship there, I think you should be given a shot in INDYCAR. That's kind of the way it's worked in the past.

Obviously happy to see Rasmussen in INDYCAR. Obviously I'm pleased for myself that it worked out in the end.

Q. After these first two races in INDYCAR now, how well has INDY NXT prepared you for that experience?

LINUS LUNDQVIST: I mean, firstly it helps you in many, many ways. Obviously you go to the same tracks, which

helps a lot. But I think, as well, your general driving style is quite similar in the INDY NXT car and the INDYCAR. Bridging that gap hasn't been that tough.

When you get up to the top level of INDYCAR, you're looking for the final percent. The final percent is always going to be tough no matter where you come from or what you did before in the past.

One thing that's obviously one of the toughest things going from INDY NXT, it's the whole strategy calls, fuel saving, tire saving, the ability to call a race from within the cockpit. Those things are kind of some of the more difficult ones I think.

Outright pace, you can work on that. INDY NXT definitely prepares you well for it. It's good. The oval side, as well. There's not many other racing series outside of America that offers oval racing. To me, that's one of the crucial parts as well.

If I didn't do Gateway last year, my first-ever oval would be the Indianapolis 500. To me that's kind of crazy. I'm happy I did get a little bit of experience last year in St. Louis.

Q. You mentioned your parents were with you. How was that experience?

LINUS LUNDQVIST: It's amazing. I'm extremely grateful and thankful that they were able to come to my races. They're like my biggest fans. They'll probably be at almost every single race this year, which is good.

There was a moment where I jumped out of the car and obviously I kind of hugged my crew. I didn't see my parents. I'm like, I can't believe they're missing this moment. I know that they're here. I don't know, they were around somewhere looking for me, I think.

It just makes everything so special because as much as it is my journey through my racing career, it's theirs as well. They've sacrificed so much for me. It's special to have them and share these moments of success together.

Q. Are they with you in Indianapolis this month, as well?

LINUS LUNDQVIST: Yes, yes. They're here the whole month. Like I said, they're hardcore fans.

Q. What is next in this rookie year? This is an answer like a person, please, not as a driver.

LINUS LUNDQVIST: As like a person...



Like I mentioned before, the podium was awesome, but I still know I have so much to learn. At the end of the day we want to be able to consistently be fighting for podiums and wins, not just have one-off podiums, getting a win here and there. We want to be able to do it consistently and we want to fight for race wins.

I don't put down a result target, like I need to win a race by this race or whatever. But I want to be able to feel that I had the speed to consistently be fighting with these guys. Doesn't mean that you're going to win every single race, but at least you have the pace for consistently top 10, fighting for the top fives. You know if you have that speed, you're going to get your podiums and your win.

I think it's just working towards the consistency of doing that every single weekend.

Q. You as a rookie, how motivated or how nervous are you to face your first Indy 500, not just only in racing terms but also in all the aspects that Indy 500 has outside of the race?

LINUS LUNDQVIST: Not so nervous at the moment. I'm sure I will be before the race. Now I'm just very much excited.

I'm looking forward to it. I'm very privileged to be one of the few people that are going to do or attempt to qualify for the Indianapolis 500. I think I kind of owe it to myself every now and again take a moment and appreciate this journey that we've been on, the moment that we're going to experience it.

I also am a firm believer, as it comes to, as you're coming into the car, getting up to Carb Day, up to qualifying day, all these moments, I think it's important to realize that I'm here to do a job and I'm here to perform at my maximum. You can't be thinking about all these other things.

I've never really had a problem with that in the past. We'll see how this goes. It is so much bigger than anything I've done before, but I think as you show up there on race day, you're not going to be thinking about anything other than wanting to be the guy with the milk at the end.

Q. The fact that Ganassi has five cars, the mechanics could have some problems, the question is how can it affect the fact that the team has five cars in order to prepare better this race?

LINUS LUNDQVIST: I don't know. I have firm belief in the team that they will deliver, as they do year on and year out at that Speedway. It is incredible to watch them roll out.

I think a lot of people had a little bit of doubts going into this year with them expanding to five cars. I think they've proven throughout the year just so far over the last three, four races that they have not stopped. We're still delivering at the highest of levels.

I have no doubt that we will roll out with five very quick cars come here in May.

Q. The Indy Grand Prix, the race preparation, how important is it for you to make a good result, a good setup? It's not the same track as we can find at the end of this month, but it could be a great motivation. How important is it for you to take a good result this weekend?

LINUS LUNDQVIST: I mean, I think just moving on from last weekend where we got a podium, it's all about momentum. Indy GP, obviously a good result there would be to continue that momentum, especially going into the Indianapolis 500 race.

At the same time it's important from momentum sake, but the focus is the Indianapolis 500. A bad result at Indy GP won't really ruin our motivations to do well at the 500. I'll put it that way. It's very much the focus of this month, of course.

That doesn't mean that we're going to do everything that we can to win this race this weekend.

Q. What will be a great result for you in your first Indy 500?

LINUS LUNDQVIST: Like I said, I don't have a position saying I'm going to be happy with that or sad with that. I think it's about maximizing whatever we got. If that's 10th, then I'm going to be happy with 10th. If it's a win, obviously I'll be happy with that. Even if it's a P15, if that's what we had on our day, we did a good race, I'm going to have to be pleased with it.

Doesn't mean I have to be happy and satisfied, but you have to look at parts of the race, whatever we had, and make sure that we maximize whatever package and position we were in.

THE MODERATOR: A mature way of looking at it. All the champions say, If you have a fifth-place car, you don't want to overdrive it, take risks, vice versa.

LINUS LUNDQVIST: Yeah.

THE MODERATOR: You're wise beyond your years is

what I'm saying.

Q. Looking ahead to the Indy 500, obviously you've got Scott who has won it. What has it been like working with Dario? How beneficial has it been for you to have him in your corner?

LINUS LUNDQVIST: Dario, man, he's great in every way, shape or form. Firstly he's just a fun guy to be around. When it comes to race situations, anything you have, any questions, you have a slight wonder about it, he knows the answer to it. It's incredible.

It happens so many, many times over the past couple of weekends where I'm feeling a little bit lost. You ask him, Hey, I'm struggling with this. He takes a look at it and will give you a straight answer as well. He'll tell you whether he thinks it's you, something to improve in the car or something for you to try.

It's been a great, great resource. Obviously for the 500, we've already started doing some work for that. You can just tell the amount of experience, knowledge that he has.

I'm just slowly, steadily picking his brain trying to retain all the information. We'll see what we can do. He's been a great help.

THE MODERATOR: We'll leave it there for now. Linus, thank you for your time.

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