

NTT INDYCAR SERIES

News Conference

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Indianapolis, Indiana, USA

Louis Foster

Jacob Abel

Nolan Siegel

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: Busy week and month ahead here at the Indianapolis Motor Speedway. It begins with Indy NXT by Firestone and the INDY NXT by Firestone Grand Prix with Race 1 and 2, a double-header, with Race 1 coming up tomorrow evening at 6:15 Indianapolis time. Race 2 comes up Saturday at 1:05.

Joining us to look ahead are the top three in the driver standings in INDY NXT by Firestone. On the left, Louis Foster, drives the No. 26 Copart/Novara Technologies machine for Andretti Global. Louis is currently third in the points standings, and in a tie for first. In the middle, Jacob Abel drives the No. 51 Abel Construction car for Abel Motorsports, and to the right, Nolan Siegel, drives the No. 39 HMD Motorsports machine for HMD Motorsports.

Nolan, we'll begin with you. Just opened the season obviously up with a win on the Streets of St. Petersburg, backed it up with a second a couple weeks ago at Barber Motorsports Park. I think you have seven podiums in your 18 starts in INDY NXT by Firestone. How would you describe so far your start to this 2024 season?

NOLAN SIEGEL: I think it's been a really strong start to 2024. Obviously started the year off with a win and a pole, so that was about the best way it could have gone. Barber I think was a strong event. Jacob was strong there the whole time, but we took good points away, finished second, and ultimately I feel like it was well executed.

So I think if we can continue every weekend to get the best result that we feel as a team we can achieve, then I think that's what's going to put us in contention for the championship, and that's the goal this weekend, to come away with the best results that we feel like we can possibly achieve.

Q. Jacob, Nolan alluded to it, a dominating

performance at Barber Motorsports Park, picking up your first win of your career. A couple top 5s now on the IMS road course, as well, so you know this place pretty well as a lot of the drivers do. People talk a lot about momentum. Do you feel like you have some, this team has some, coming into the weekend?

JACOB ABEL: Yeah, for sure. I think the last weekend at Barber was a really, really big step for us. Everybody has been saying it. We've been knocking on the door for a long time to get our first win. It honestly feels like a little bit of a relief just to get that one out of the way, and now we can look ahead to more focusing on the championship without having that box unchecked.

Yeah, I feel really good about things. I think St. Pete went really well, as well. Barber went well. So just going to kind of try to keep riding the wave as much as we can and see what we can do here at Indy.

Q. Louis, Barber was kind of a weird weekend throughout the course of the weekend, but you helped -- you're a key member of the record-breaking on-track passing that came out of Barber Motorsports Park. You started 21st, finished fifth in that race. Coming back to IMS, you had a second here last year on the road course. What is it about this facility you like, and how do you get back on track for 2024 now?

LOUIS FOSTER: Yeah, I mean, we've had strong pace all year. Last year we had a very good car at IMS at both races. We would have definitely finished second in the one on the ovals, as well.

But yeah, we've got a strong car here, really confident with what we can do. It's all tomorrow really. We're going to go out there with the car we've got, we know we'll be strong, and the aim is to go out there and win two races.

Was a bit hard done by with a bit of luck in definitely Barber for sure, a little bit at St. Pete, but yeah, there's no reason we can't go and win two races this weekend.

Q. Louis, just because you see these two guys running what they've done the first couple of races, do you just kind of knowing that that right now is the

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standard, do you feel like this is the weekend that you've got to take advantage of the performs that you have here at this track and start to build momentum for yourself to go through this championship?

LOUIS FOSTER: Yeah, I mean, I think we've got the pace, obviously. There's no reason, like I said, why we can't go ahead and win this weekend.

I think obviously Jacob had a win at Barber. Talking about momentum, I would say our race at Barber, obviously started at 21st, finished fifth. I think a lot of drivers can start on pole and win a race but I think not a lot of drivers can start 21st and finish fifth. So I think we've got good momentum from that.

I'm looking forward to the weekend. It's two races. It's a track that we've been strong at, Andretti has been strong at. I've got five other cars now with me who we can all look at each other's data and see where we're strong, where we're not.

I'm looking forward to it. I think it will be a good weekend, and just head down and try and utilize the pace that we have.

Q. Jacob, for you, know that there was an outside chance that you might have been able to run in the Indy 500 like Nolan is this month. That didn't come to fruition, but there might be an opportunity for you to get maybe an INDYCAR race under your belt later in the year?

JACOB ABEL: All of that is very, very speculative right now. Our team's main goal is the INDY NXT championship and running both me and all the other cars that we run in INDY NXT to the fullest ability, and until four or five days ago we were still planning on running the Indy 500, so we still haven't really fully made that pivot yet. Everything is very speculative there, but I'd love to race in INDYCAR. I think that's all of our dreams up here. Obviously Nolan has gotten a little bit of a taste of it, and I think it's helped him for sure coming back to this championship.

Yeah, I'd love to, but we'll see. It's still very early days when talking about that.

Q. Jacob and Nolan, it feels like one of those years where the championship is going to come down to just a couple points. How do you manage wanting to win races with knowing, hey, I need to collect points? You both probably made mature drives to finish second the first two races of the year. Is that something you consciously have to think about when you're in the car?

NOLAN SIEGEL: I think when you look at the way championships are won, I think you have to win races, but you have to maximize the result every weekend.

I think we're early enough in the championship now where at least for me the mentality is I want to win as many races as I possibly can, and if I have the opportunity to win a race, then I'm going to make the most of that opportunity. If I don't, then probably wouldn't be the smartest decision to try and finish sixth instead of seventh and crash.

It just depends on the situation, I think, and I don't think it depends as much on where you are in the championship as where you are in that specific race on that specific weekend.

JACOB ABEL: Kind of touching on that, it's a lot more being judged on your bad days when you're looking at a championship, not on your good days. Hopefully all of us up here will be able to go out and win races sometime in the season, but obviously all credit to Louis. It's drives like that that are going to be almost as important when looking at a championship like he had in Barber.

Yeah, I think it's just going to be being as consistent as possible. I think that's one of my biggest strong suits is not trying to over-extract anything and just taking whatever is given on the day, and hopefully capitalize on that throughout the year.

Q. Louis and Jacob, I saw both you guys at Barber were coaching USF Junior programs. Does that help you as you move forward and what you're doing in your program, or is it something more to give back to the kids?

LOUIS FOSTER: Yeah, if you're going to go race at Barber in a week's time, two weeks' time, doing some coaching for sure helps. It gets you brain in the right gear, gets you thinking about the track again. It's just helpful, but at the same time it's nice to go back to the team that I won my championship with in USF Pro 2000 and help the kids that are coming up.

JACOB ABEL: Yeah, I really enjoy the coaching side of things, too. I think it's fun, and yeah, I think you're right, I think it definitely helps for sure because it keeps me honest. I'm kind of going back to the basics a little bit because I think both of us are working primarily with juniors guys, so obviously very young drivers and drivers that are trying to learn the basics of racing and how to navigate everything.

Talking to them about things that we don't necessarily think



about every single weekend, it's just kind of things that we do subconsciously is nice to keep us on top of those.

Q. Are you guys better students or better coaches at this point?

JACOB ABEL: I don't know, I think you're asking the wrong guy.

Q. You're all returning to this championship after running in it last year. Compared to last year, what is different about your preparation going into a race weekend, different onboard footage, you're going to look at INDY NXT instead of earlier cars? Or has nothing changed since last year in terms of how you prepare for an event?

LOUIS FOSTER: For me personally, I've got notes from last year, which helps. Then yeah, you're just a bit more confident going into it I would say. You've done it before. Obviously apart from the ones that are brand new like Nashville this year and Milwaukee.

But it's our second time going there, so you just kind of know what to expect. I think it's the same for all three of us, where once you've done it, it's less nerves, less to worry about, you kind of know what you're doing, and it's just less of a thing. You just kind of get on with it.

JACOB ABEL: Kind of the same thing he was saying. I've been very diligent taking notes the past few years just because I've known I'm probably going to be back here for this season and wanting to make sure I capitalize on it, so just trying to build that literal notebook as big as you can is something that's really important to me.

NOLAN SIEGEL: Yeah, I agree with everything that they said. For me, I feel like even weekends that I felt were really strong and when I won, there were mistakes that I made throughout the weekend, and I think that learning from every mistake that I made last year is going to make me better this year, and if I can not make those mistakes this year, theoretically every weekend will be better than it was last year.

Got two more positions in the championship to kind of overtake this year, so we'll see if we can make that happen.

Q. Jacob, double-header weekend this weekend. Obviously there's another one later in the year. Is this where you start maybe to see some separation in the top 5 in points knowing there's two races, and do you change your approach knowing that you have basically double points coming up?

JACOB ABEL: Yeah, it's pretty crazy looking into this weekend. We spent a ton of time preparing for Barber and St. Pete, and obviously a ton of time at those weekends. But this weekend is going to be worth the same as both of those combined. It is a little bit of a different approach. It's very, very important. I guess we'll see what happens. Louis has always been strong here, so maybe he closes up. Maybe Nolan and I have a good weekend. Obviously I'm going to do the best I can to have that, but we'll see.

I think there's a lot of points on the table, and the most important thing is just capitalizing on that and being as consistent as possible.

Q. Nolan, big month for you, as we know, the 500 coming up. You're excited for the two races this weekend, but it's got to be in the back of your head you're running the 500 later this month. How do you just keep that to a check? I know you're not a rah-rah type of guy, but you're a guy that's focused forward. How do you keep your eye on this weekend without looking too much ahead to what's coming up starting Tuesday of next week?

NOLAN SIEGEL: I think it's very important to separate the INDYCAR side and the INDY NXT side for me. Obviously yes, I'm doing both this year, and I'm really excited to be running in the 500. But this weekend and every weekend that I'm in INDY NXT, INDY NXT is the primary focus, and the main goal is winning two races this weekend.

For the next couple of days, I'm going to try not to think about the 500 at all and just put everything into INDY NXT, and I think that is going to be the way that I can succeed on both fronts.

Q. Louis, can you maybe talk us through what you go through mentally on a weekend like you had at Barber? How did you overcome not really running before you get into the race, and how valuable is it to have that experience of running mid-pack and sort of in the traffic?

LOUIS FOSTER: Yeah, I mean, I'm kind of someone who if I can't -- if I can't do anything about it, I don't get worried about it, so with the electrical issue, I'm not going to get all flustered and upset about it because I can't change it. If I have a bad qualifying, it's a different thing; I beat myself up over it.

But yeah, I was just trying to help the team out as much as possible, helping out the Cosworth guys and the engine guys, giving them my feedback on what was happening with the car so they could better diagnose the issue.

Then yeah, we were really hoping we could get out for qually, which I think qually would have been hard. I doubt we'd have been up near the sharp end with the limited amount of laps that we had, but we'd have been I would have hoped top 6 maybe qualifying. But yeah, we didn't get to run in qualifying, either.

Yeah, going into the race with barely any laps at all practice was quite tricky. But yeah, I've driven that track enough to kind of know my way around it, and then it was just pressing forward really, just focusing forward, making sure we could get as many passes as possible. Made advantage of mistakes of other drivers further back in the field, and got a pretty damn good onboard from it.

Yeah, it was a good race. I think it's hopefully a few team owners of INDYCAR teams have been able to watch that and seen what I can do there. It's not great for championship, but it's not the worst race in the world in my books.

Q. For Jacob, what were your interest levels in possibly running the 500? Were there opportunities for that in the recent weeks? Do you understand ultimately why the team came to the decision to not run the race?

JACOB ABEL: Yeah, my interest levels were as high as they probably could have ever been. I think if any driver told you other than that, they'd be lying. I would have loved to run the race.

Obviously it's our dream when we're working up through the junior level series is to race in that race.

But I understand why the team came to the conclusion. At the end of the day the Indy 500 is really, really expensive to run, so the partners weren't really necessarily all there for it, and we were going to potentially run somebody else, but at the end of the day, we really just didn't have a car ready in the first place. Some part shortages and things in INDYCAR are affecting the whole entire field. It's not really anyone's fault. It's just kind of the nature of it.

But yeah, unfortunately we're not running, and unfortunately I'm not running, but our full focus is really on this championship and trying to do whatever we can to win that or at least give it our best effort.

Looking back, I don't want to look back and see that I've left anything on the table. That's the biggest goal.

Q. Nolan, how confident are you of bouncing back this weekend after just coming short in Barber, and also

how confident are you feeling heading into the sort of fortnight on the oval?

NOLAN SIEGEL: I'm excited for both, and it's hard to know what's going to happen in the 500. I did realistically like half a day on the oval and just did the ROP. So we'll see. I'll do my best and learn as much as I can. We'll see how it shakes.

On the INDY NXT side, this was a place where I felt I didn't maximize the potential of the car or the weekend last week, and it was one of my worst tracks, so I feel like there's a lot that I can improve on this year, and I'm going to try not to make the mistakes that I did last year, and hopefully it's a better result.

I feel like the two events that we had here last year were two of the events that I kind of regret a lot of the things that I did and the approach. I'll see if I can change that this year.

THE MODERATOR: Best of luck to all of you guys. Appreciate it. Louis, Jacob, Nolan, looking ahead to the INDY NXT by Firestone Grand Prix 1 and 2 this weekend.

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