

NTT INDYCAR SERIES

News Conference

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Indianapolis, Indiana, USA

Théo Pourchaire

Press Conference

THE MODERATOR: We continue on today, and welcome Arrow McLaren who just moments ago, in case you missed the press release, announced a return for that man in the middle, Théo Pourchaire, who will drive the No. 6 Arrow McLaren Chevrolet. Saturday will mark Théo's first start in the NTT INDYCAR Series, and then he'll return for the Chevrolet Detroit Grand Prix presented by Lear and continue for the remainder of the 2024 NTT INDYCAR Series season. That's one part of the announcement.

Part 2 is to unveil the livery this weekend. Up on the video monitors, let's check out the No. 6 Smart Stop Arrow McLaren Chevrolet.

The Smart Stop Chevy will be making its on-track debut for 2024 this weekend, as Théo, you make your own racing debut here on the IMS road course. There's a lot to talk about here. Let's talk about the car. What do you think?

THÉO POURCHAIRE: The car looks amazing. Yeah, it's going to be great to drive for the first time with the Smart Stop sponsored crew No. 6. I enjoy working here and driving INDYCAR, so this livery looks good. I like it, with a bit of white, light blue, and the papaya, of course.

Q. With the NTT INDYCAR Series after the Indianapolis 500 throughout the duration of the 2024 season. Just your thoughts on your increased role with Arrow McLaren now?

THÉO POURCHAIRE: I'm so happy to be able to drive more in INDYCAR. I just would like to thank Arrow McLaren for the opportunity. I developed a good relationship with the team since I arrived in Indianapolis, and right now I have this opportunity to finish the season with them, except the Indy 500, of course.

Yeah, it's unbelievable. Also I have to thank Sauber. I'm part of the Sauber Academy, and I'm still a reserve driver for them, so they made this possible, as well. So big thanks to everybody, and I'm super happy.



Q. Busy time, too. That means you'll be on ovals then after Detroit. You had your first taste of an oval on Monday at Worldwide Technology Raceway. What was that like?

THÉO POURCHAIRE: Yeah, it was amazing. I had my first test in Gateway. It's really impressive. Ovals are crazy, super fast, and at the end I was so tired because I was really -- I was a bit stressed, and I didn't want to do any mistakes because at that speed if you do a small mistake, it can be really bad.

But I enjoyed it. Driving close to the walls and trying to feel the car, it's really important to work with your engineers, feel the car and have a lot of confidence.

I really can't wait to do my first oval race. It's going to be new to me. But that's why I'm here now in INDYCAR. I love it. It's a great championship.

Q. Théo, how do you look at the way the journey life takes you on because up until about a month ago, you probably had no idea you'd be ever a full-time INDYCAR driver, now here you are.

THÉO POURCHAIRE: Yeah, it's crazy when I think about it. A few weeks ago I just received a call from Arrow McLaren to replace an injured driver for one race in Long Beach, so I just took my suitcase with not so many things inside, just told my parents I will come back soon, but apparently not.

It's good. It's an amazing opportunity, as I said. Again, a big thank you to the Arrow McLaren team. For me it's amazing to be able to drive for such a brand, a legendary name.

It's like a childhood dream to drive for McLaren. I will give my best and enjoy it, improve myself. It's not going to be easy, but I'm happy to be here.

Q. Now that you are part of McLaren, what were your thoughts on seeing land owe get his first career victory on Sunday?

THÉO POURCHAIRE: I think it's amazing for McLaren.



Land owe deserves it, of course. I watched the race on my phone. I was traveling to Gateway for my first oval test.

It was really impressive for McLaren. I think they deserve it.

I watch F1, as everybody. We always keep an eye on F1.

Q. Is there a little bit of you that wishes you were getting a run in the Indy 500 this year?

THÉO POURCHAIRE: It's a superspeedway, of course. A few weeks ago I was only here to drive in Long Beach, then I did Barber, then I didn't know what I was going to do. I had my first oval test, the Indianapolis superspeedway. It's really quick. It's the most important race of the year for every team. I think it's important to stay calm and I will have the time in the future to do this race hopefully.

Q. Are you only doing INDYCAR or are you also still going to be doing some Super Formula races, as well?

THÉO POURCHAIRE: From now on, I will only race in INDYCAR because of course, as I said, an amazing opportunity to race there. It takes a lot of time. I have to focus myself right now fully on my INDYCAR program, and I'm not going to race anymore in Super Formula.

Q. Can you take us through a little bit of the dynamic with Sauber, like the process for them essentially loaning you out to Arrow McLaren, how this came about?

THÉO POURCHAIRE: I'm still a reserve driver for them, for a stake F1 team. I'm part of the Sauber Academy, but right now I'm fully focused on INDYCAR, driving for Arrow McLaren. That's my main priority. I want to do great here.

But yeah, of course, as I said, my main focus is on the INDYCAR, but of course there is an agreement with Sauber, as well.

Q. To follow up on Joey's question, I know the release said that you were running the 2024 INDYCAR season outside of the 500. Have you had any talks or have you thought about what you want to do beyond this year? I don't know how that would work with Sauber, if you would be able to, say, run a full INDYCAR schedule in 2025 with what your responsibilities are with them. How do you visualize this going past the end of this year?

THÉO POURCHAIRE: Well, to be honest, I don't even know because a few days ago I didn't know what I was going to finish the season here. I'm just -- at the moment, I

know I'm going to finish the season in INDYCAR, so I'm going to do my best and try to give my best, do great results here. It's a great championship, as I said. I would love to race in the future there again. But we will see.

At the moment, I don't even know.

Q. I know the Sauber stake F1 team has signed one driver for the future; their two full-time drivers I understand right now are out of contract at the end of the year. Do you feel like you're under consideration for an F1 opportunity? Do you feel like that's passed you by? Where do you feel like your F1 aspirations might be?

THÉO POURCHAIRE: I'm only 20 years old, so I feel like I have still at least two, three years maybe to get another opportunity in F1, but right now I think that's for sure the biggest opportunity I got in my life, to be able to drive in INDYCAR. Right now I'm not thinking too much about F1, I'm thinking a lot about INDYCAR because it's an amazing opportunity, and driving for Arrow McLaren.

I'm focused on that's my main priority to hopefully win here one day.

Q. From what you know about the rest of the races on the schedule that you'll be running, is there a track that you are most looking forward to, whether it's one of the oval races, your first oval race, wherever it is, or one of the road courses that you'll be on?

THÉO POURCHAIRE: I would say probably Laguna Seca because that's a legendary track in the United States, especially the corkscrew. I know this track very well from the video games, and as I said, it's a legendary track. So this one and many other tracks, especially the ovals. Just my first oval race, I really can't wait to do it because there is a lot of strategy, a lot of work to do with the engineers to set up the car very well. So that's new to me.

Q. Ahead of your first oval test, what were the nerves like, and how were you able to overcome those nerves as you got up to speed at Gateway?

THÉO POURCHAIRE: At the beginning it was a bit difficult because when you arrive that quick into the first corner, of course it looks like an oval, it looks pretty easy because there's only like two corners or two -- I guess four corners, but you have to commit, and you have to really be confident in the car.

Yeah, I was nervous at the beginning, I have to say. I was really nervous. But then after a few sessions, I was more and more confident, and by the end I think I was doing

good. The team was happy with my performance, and I was also happy to discover the oval. So yeah, it was good.

Q. What surprised you about learning how to drive on an oval, and how did that process go?

THÉO POURCHAIRE: Yeah, I mean, it's not easy for sure, especially, as I said, to have a lot of confidence to push hard. But the team is really experienced. Of course they have a lot of experience. I had also Alex helping me to shake down the car, so that gave me a lot of confidence, to have an experienced driver to do that for me, especially my teammate.

I had also Tony there helping me, giving me advice to -- just for myself to feel confident in the car. It's very important to not do any mistakes.

Q. Oval racing growing up I'm guessing wasn't something that was on your radar. Did you watch the 500 every year or NASCAR? Was there any oval racing that you watched growing up before you went over to single-seater road course racing?

THÉO POURCHAIRE: Yeah, especially the Indy 500. I watched this race every year because it is at the same time as the Monaco Grand Prix. Usually for the last three seasons I was driving in Monaco, normally finishing on the podium. It depends if I was driving well. And then watching the Indy 500 at home. Yeah, that was cool. With my dad, we are watching every year.

Since I arrived in the United States, I watch also a little bit of NASCAR now, so it's fun. Oval racing is fun.

Q. Did you talk to Mr. Hoshino about this? He must be really disappointed losing you.

THÉO POURCHAIRE: Yes, I talked -- my manager is in contact with him. Unfortunately the situation is like this. McLaren gave me the opportunity to become a professional racing driver, an opportunity that everybody dreams of one day. I have to give them credit for that. It's unbelievable. They trust me, and of course I cannot continue in Super Formula, but I enjoyed it. I enjoyed it driving there, and the Hoshino family, as well, they helped me quite a lot.

Q. Theo, you're going to miss two races, but you still think you can win the Rookie of the Year?

THÉO POURCHAIRE: It's going to be tough.

Q. Is that a goal? Is that something you'll set as a goal?

THÉO POURCHAIRE: I mean, yeah. Not participating in the Indy 500, it's going to be difficult because you can score a lot of points here. But the most important I think for me is to perform well, do some great results during the season, and the team will be proud and happy about myself.

I just have to -- let's see. There are lots of races remaining, so probably we can still win this rookie championship, even though there are some really good rookies in Barber. Lundqvist finished on the podium. So he's really quick.

Q. Obviously coming from Europe, I think you're the first F2 GP2 Euro 3000 champion to come to INDYCAR straight out of the bat since maybe Justin -- Justin actually did F1. Maybe Juan Montoya then. What do you think the reaction is going to be in Europe?

THÉO POURCHAIRE: I think everybody knows that it is very complicated nowadays to have an F1 seat for some reason, and a lot of very talented young drivers, they want to drive, they don't want only to be a reserve driver in F1. Sometimes it's tough, when you win a championship you stay on the sidelines, you do simulator, you just wait. What we want to do is race.

There are some great championships, for example, the Super Formula, the INDYCAR. They are two great championships.

So yeah, for me a lot of -- I think more and more young drivers will come here in INDYCAR.

Q. Obviously today is exciting for you to be with Arrow McLaren for the rest of the year, but I can't help but think you're a reigning F2 champion. There's nowhere to go in F1. Doesn't that kind of piss you off a little bit?

THÉO POURCHAIRE: I mean, yeah, for sure. I cannot say I'm happy to not go to F1.

But today I'm just like a 20-years-old racing driver, really, really, really happy to be a professional racing driver for Arrow McLaren. For me that's a great achievement.

I'm doing my best from my side. There are some good people that trust me. The rest, it's like that. I'm not so, so, so disappointed.

Q. You say you watch some NASCAR races, so how cool is it going to be to get to know Kyle Larson as your teammate?

THÉO POURCHAIRE: Yeah, sure. I will not be driving in the Indy 500, but excited, yeah. I already met Kyle because he's doing a little bit of simulator. He's preparing himself for the Indy 500. I saw him at the Open test day, and yeah, he's a NASCAR legend. So it's cool.

I watched as well the Netflix series. Also there is a series about INDYCAR, there is a series about NASCAR. I enjoy the motorsports in the United States. It's cool.

Q. (On the Kansas Speedway NASCAR finish.)

THÉO POURCHAIRE: I saw the race. It's crazy because before that I was not watching any NASCAR race, but now, yeah, I watched it. Yeah, I was at the hotel and of course it was Sunday in St. Louis, and just after the F1 race, I watched the NASCAR race, and yeah, the finish was crazy. We don't even know who truly won. It was like they needed to have a good photo finish, but it's cool. It's cool racing, as well.

Q. Keeping in mind that you didn't really have INDYCAR on your radar until a month ago, I have a hypothetical question. Let's say you really enjoy your season and you turn this into a career. Is that a successful career path in your mind to end up here in INDYCAR?

THÉO POURCHAIRE: For sure, for sure. For me, a few months ago, I didn't have anything before going to Japan and doing my first Super Formula race. I didn't have anything. I was a reserve driver in F1, which again, I say it, it's great, but I was not doing anything, just simulator and working in the gym and looking at the other drivers racing, whether in Formula 2, INDYCAR.

Right now I'm full-time INDYCAR driver for Arrow McLaren, so I don't know, it's crazy, and for me, yeah, I would love to spend more time here.

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