

# NTT INDYCAR SERIES

## News Conference

Thursday, May 23, 2024

Indianapolis, Indiana, USA

**Marcus Ericsson**

**Katherine Legge**

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: Good morning, everyone. Beginning with Rolan, the winner of the 2022 Indianapolis 500, driver of the No. 28 Delaware Life Honda for Andretti Global, Marcus Ericsson. Starting 31st, she holds the record for the fastest qualifying lap by a woman at the Speedway, driver of the No. 51 e.l.f. Cosmetics Honda for Dale Coyne Racing, Katherine Legge.

Marcus, kind of a busy weekend, hectic weekend for you. Have things settled down? What do you think about the race coming up on Sunday?

MARCUS ERICSSON: Yeah, a couple days to recharge. It was a tough few days after the crash on Thursday. It's been a bit of an uphill battle. Obviously all the drama and everything that happened on Sunday was pretty tough.

We had a really good practice on Monday. Then, yeah, a couple days where we could not relax, we've been pretty busy, but a little bit recharged. I know the team has been working quite hard on my car to sort of fine-tune on that. I think we needed to give it some love after what it's been through.

Yeah, it's looking good for the weekend.

THE MODERATOR: Katherine, you've been doing many appearances the last couple days, gearing up for Sunday's race. What has race week been like for you so far?

KATHERINE LEGGE: It's been pretty busy actually. But it's good, it's great. Because the e.l.f. Cosmetics car is getting a lot of attention. It's great for them. It's great for me, in turn. The team, as Marcus said, has been really busy as well in the background trying to find us some speed and stability. Hopefully we can test it out on Friday if it doesn't rain and we have a little bit more confidence going into the race.

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

**Q. Marcus, the simplest question is, how do you win this race on Sunday?**

MARCUS ERICSSON: By having patience. I think we've already talked about it the last couple of days, that it's such a long race. If we have a good race car, which we believe we will have on Sunday, you don't need to overtake 15 cars in the first 10 laps. Like, it's a long race. You just need to pick off a few every stint and do a good pit sequence.

I always say this race is about being there for the last 20 laps. Everything before then, it's all about positioning yourself for those last 20 laps.

I'm not so stressed about starting in the back. I'm more focused on making sure on Friday I get the last sort of fine-tuning on my race car. If I can get that feeling I need from it, you can win from anywhere on this grid.

**Q. We know how the car was in qualifying, how on edge you were. In race trim, does this feel like you have something you can attack with, feel more comfortable?**

KATHERINE LEGGE: Right now, no. We tried a bunch of stuff on Monday. We have a direction that we think we're going to go in, but we really need Friday to be a thing. We really need it not to rain. We're missing time from last week. When you just do Indy, you're not in the car week in, week out, it's tough to be able to say exactly what the car needs.

I can say what the car is doing, but I need so many things from it, that it's tough to exactly pinpoint where that's coming from. I think we have a direction, and I think if we have Friday, it will be a lot better.

Right now we didn't have any speed on Monday. We found a little bit of balance, but we lost a whole bunch of speed. I didn't have anything to fight with. I couldn't suck up on any cars. In fact, even when I was in the slipstream, I was getting dropped when I was flat.

We still have some work to do, I think. Not having Nolan

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there hurts us, as well, because he had similar issues to me. We started with the same setup. When you have more than one car, you can try different things and eliminate them quicker. When it's only you, you have to go through everything step by step. The engineers have been working super hard. We may do a wholesale throw it at the wall and see if it sticks change on Friday. Unless the track comes to me or the car comes to me, all we can do is trim out so we're fast enough to be there, and like Marcus said, be patient.

**Q. Marcus, how is the race car feeling in terms of how far off it is compared to the car you had before the crash?**

MARCUS ERICSSON: I thought it felt quite good on Monday. Before the crash last week, we were really, really strong in race trim. I think on Thursday, Colton and myself were probably two of the strongest cars on Thursday practice. That still hurts a bit thinking about that.

I do think my car on Monday was getting close to that. I think we were probably a top 10 car on Monday practice, which is promising. I think Colton was the best car out there again on Monday.

We have a couple more things we are going to do to go a little bit closer to his car for Friday. But also when you have a big crash, you sort of build up a little bit, as well. I think there's a little bit more in me to get there.

But, yeah, I thought Monday was really promising. I think the feeling in the car was really good. I could go through and pass people deeper in the pack. I don't think there was a ton of cars that could do that. That's obviously what we need to do a lot on Sunday.

Yeah, I thought my car felt pretty nice.

**Q. You said coming into May you wanted to bring something to help this team move forward. Do you feel like you've done that and happy with that? Do you feel you've been part of an improvement in this team?**

MARCUS ERICSSON: I've given them a little work, though, at least, that's for sure (smiling).

I think, I'd like to think I've helped us push in the right direction. I think us, together with our technical partner in Meyer Shank Racing, we've been the strongest Hondas in qualifying. Felix and (indiscernible) was the best Hondas. I think that says something.

I think the team Andretti has done a really good job in the off-season, leading up to the month of May, giving us really

good race cars and even qualifying cars.

Yeah, I think my feedback and my way of working with my teammates and engineers has been pushing the team forward, as well.

**Q. The snake move we've seen win the race, you've been on the receiving end and giving end, are you happy to see that being moved aside now?**

MARCUS ERICSSON: I'm not sure. Like, I need to clarify what the rules are exactly on that. I know with the white line, but I don't know exactly how they're going to enforce that snaking thing. I think it's one move or something like that. I think we're going to have some more driver meetings about it before the race to have a very clear instruction there.

With that said, when it comes down on the last lap, I think all bets are off around this place.

**Q. With e.l.f. Cosmetics becoming part of the Indianapolis 500, that doesn't affect anything with Dale Coyne Racing?**

KATHERINE LEGGE: No. We actually brought e.l.f. to the Speedway. They're doing a Roblox activation, which is an online game, for those of you who didn't know, which I didn't. They're doing a drone show on Saturday night. A whole bunch of really cool stuff in collaboration with the Speedway. All that does is elevate our program, honestly.

**Q. How neat has that whole process been, activating with e.l.f.?**

KATHERINE LEGGE: Honestly having e.l.f. as a partner has been a dream. I had no idea how meaningful it would be to people. When you see the young girls, women and even guys saying, I had to go by e.l.f. Cosmetics for my wife, daughter, whoever it may be, I think they feel represented. I don't think there's been any female-centric products on any race car, definitely not at that level.

I think that they see the pink car. While you and I my think, Oh, it's pink, how cliché, it's actually representing a whole demographic of women that haven't been acknowledged yet.

**Q. Katherine, you mentioned how the 500 is the one race you kind of prepare for and focus on. When you're coming at it from that perspective, what does your preparation and training look like both mentally and physically leading up to the race?**

KATHERINE LEGGE: So, physically I haven't done



anything specifically different just for Indy. It's not a physical race, per se. It's not like jumping in one of these cars at Barber where I'd have to be in the gym for six months and never leaving.

I think physically it's more endurance, right, so you can keep mentally switched on and you don't have to worry about that.

Obviously, because I'm not in these cars every weekend, just watching the races, trying to learn, speaking to the engineers, and doing a lot of studying. That's basically all I can do.

I would love if we had had more testing just because of the rain, but we didn't. Hopefully we will on Friday. I'll just keep learning, keep asking questions, keep leaning on the people in the team.

**Q. Marcus, obviously you race year-round. Is the preparation different for the Indy 500? There's more pomp and circumstance surrounding it. You might have less free time.**

MARCUS ERICSSON: Yeah, I mean, it's always a unique race, the 500, and the buildup, practice and qualifying weekend, everything that goes into it. It makes it very different to a lot of other races.

At the same time when you jump in the car on Sunday, you need to look at it in some ways as any other race. It's about executing and having a plan, doing all the things you do in a normal race.

I think there's a fine line there. You obviously want to bring your A game, but if you think about it too much, try and do things differently to what you normally do, I don't think that's going to work out.

It's a balance there that you need to sort of find within yourself. At the end of the day it is the biggest race in the world, but it's just a race as well.

**Q. Do you feel it's any harder to prepare for, keep your focus, with all the different things going around it?**

MARCUS ERICSSON: No. I wouldn't say so. I think it just adds to the whole experience. I love everything that goes on around the race, before the race, all the stuff we get to do, all the interactions we get to do with fans and people around here.

I think that just adds to it. For me, it gives me energy. It gives me even more sort of, I don't know, motivation is maybe the wrong word. It's just really cool to be part of a

race like this. For me, I love to do all these activities that we get to do. The parade on Saturday is always one of the highlights for me. I think that's super cool.

Yeah, I don't really see it that way. I think it, yeah, gives me even more motivation almost.

**Q. Katherine, you've driven for Dale before, but a while back. How similar or different is the team now?**

KATHERINE LEGGE: It's pretty much the same team. There's even still some of the same people. But Dale is just like a stalwart of INDYCAR racing, right? He's well respected, super passionate about it. You don't find that very often. These teams kind of come in and go out, but there's a handful that have been around forever, and Dale is one of them.

Dale actually give me one of my first opportunities back in Champ Car back in the day. We have a really good relationship. He's trying really hard. He's ebbed and flowed throughout the years in terms of competitiveness depending on how much budget he has to work with. Back in the Justin Wilson days, they did a really, really good job with very little. They were fighting against the big teams with less than half the budget.

Can't fault him in any way, shape or form. The guys have so much heart. They're such a great team. It's almost like - what's that? David and Goliath. Sorry, mental block (laughter).

It's like you're the underdog basically. They've got so many fans and they've got so much love that it feels very supportive. It's a very close-knit environment and you don't get that every time, so it's really cool to be part of.

**Q. Katherine, you've done this race before, but now with the new sponsor, having a voice, do you ever pinch yourself to know you're carrying this banner for women at not only the Indy 500 but racing in general?**

KATHERINE LEGGE: No, not really. I think if I thought of it like that, it would be a lot of added pressure (smiling).

At the end of the day I'm just a race car driver trying to do the very best job that I can do. I do pinch myself at how lucky I am because I got to live my dream. I've worked very hard to live my dream. I've been in racing for, like, 20 years now, which is an achievement in itself I think.

I believe that I do the best job that I can to represent the women. I often think, I'm running in the woods or whatever, I'm thinking, positive thinking, what am I doing here? I think if I can make Roger Penske proud, my dad,

and if I had a daughter by doing what I'm doing, if I could make those three people happy, I'm doing the right things. That's where my mentality is to try and do from a sponsor perspective, from a team perspective, from a training perspective, everything else, try and do the hard things that would impress those people, then I think I've achieved something.

**Q. Marcus, there is some specific thing that is harder to get from a replace car after the original one?**

MARCUS ERICSSON: Yeah, no, for sure. Since Thursday when I had my crash, we have been struggling with the backup car. I think it comes down to the primary car they've been working on for six to 12 months, with preparing everything on that car. When you crash that and sort of have to go to a backup car overnight, it's going to be hard to get that close or the same to the primary car.

It's been a bit of a battle. The team has done a tremendous job to make it better every single day. But I think, especially for qualifying, every little detail really makes a difference around here.

It's hard to get the speed out of a backup car in qualifying trim. I think, like I said on Monday in race trim we felt a lot better. Now we've had a few days where we can make sure everything is what we want it to do, fine-tune a bit, work on the car, rub on the car, try and make it as good as possible for the weekend.

Yeah, like I said, the team has done a really good job. I put ourselves in a quite difficult situation with that crash.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you both for coming up. Good luck on Sunday.

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