

NTT INDYCAR SERIES

News Conference

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Indianapolis, Indiana, USA

Romain Grosjean

Tom Blomqvist

Linus Lundqvist

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: Continuing on with Row 9 with the 108th running of the Indianapolis 500. Linus Lundqvist is on his way up. He starts 27th. Starting 26th, making his third Indy 500 start, driver of the No. 77, Juncos Hollinger, racing Chevrolet, Romain Grosjean. Starting 25th, also making his Indianapolis 500 debut, driving the No. 66 Auto Nation/Arctic Wolf Honda for Meyer Shank Racing, it's Tom Blomqvist. Linus Lundqvist will be coming up shortly.

Romain, how has your week gone?

ROMAIN GROSJEAN: Sunny (laughter).

No, I mean, last week was not as good as we wanted in qualifying, but I think Monday we got to a better place with the car. Obviously I wish we were driving a little bit more rather than sitting around. I guess we have a last taste on Friday, then let's see when we race actually. Let's see what the weather does for us.

THE MODERATOR: Tom, how is your first Indy 500 week playing out so far for you?

TOM BLOMQVIST: Yeah, it's just been a learning curve. Pretty steep one. It's my first oval race coming up on Sunday. Thankfully we've had a little bit of a time in the cars because last week was the first time I'd ever run on an oval in traffic. That's a whole different thing to get your head around. That's probably been the most difficult aspect of this whole thing.

Qualifying itself, I'm a bit nervous going into Carb Day with the extra hundred horsepower. But my car has been pretty good. I just missed a little bit of car speed, to be honest. My teammates seem to have a little bit of a rocket ship, and for whatever reason we missed a little bit.

It's been a really enjoyable couple of weeks so far for me

learning everything about how to go racing on a speedway. I'm still so far away from, I guess, feeling as prepared as you probably want to going into the biggest race.

Yeah, I'm excited to get out there.

THE MODERATOR: Starting 27th, making his Indy 500 debut, the 2022 INDY NXT by Firestone champion, driver of the No. 8 American Legion Chip Ganassi Racing Honda, Linus Lundqvist. We've been talking about race week. How is everything playing out for you?

LINUS LUNDQVIST: Sorry for being a little bit late here, as well.

THE MODERATOR: Fine.

LINUS LUNDQVIST: Yeah, I mean, this whole experience has been amazing. You've been watching this race for so many years as a kid growing up. I've been a fan many, many years. The past four or five years. You get goose bumps when you watch the start of the race as a fan. I can only imagine what it's going to be like to actually do it.

I still have plenty of work to do. I think, like Tom said, to get comfortable around this place, it's tough. It's really, really tough. I'm happy that we have another two-hour practice tomorrow.

THE MODERATOR: Questions, please.

Q. Romain, the last couple race weekends you've had a couple run-ins with Santino. As you look at this race on Sunday, how do you approach racing him?

ROMAIN GROSJEAN: I don't think we play in the same field, so... I just focus on racing everyone the same way, doing the best I can. Don't care if it's car No. 14, 28 or 3. I'm here to do a good job for Juncos Hollinger Racing. I'm here to do a good job for myself.

I think I didn't do anything wrong, so I'll just do my thing and not worry about the rest.

Q. Have you had a chance to talk?

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ROMAIN GROSJEAN: We met in the paddock a couple days ago, yeah.

Q. Was it positive, productive?

ROMAIN GROSJEAN: What can I say? He asked me if we were good. My answer was no, because he put me three times in the wall or the grass for no reason. I don't think we can be good. As long as he doesn't apologize and explain why, I don't think we're good.

Does that mean I'm going to do anything on track? Not really. That's really the type of driver I am. As I say, I'm going to drive and race everyone the same way.

Yeah, the rest is the rest. I don't care. As I say, we have bigger fish to fry.

Q. Tom, do you have Helio's 2021 chassis?

TOM BLOMQUIST: Yeah, I do. The reason he wanted a new one is because he thought that one was slow. I'm a bit annoyed (laughter).

He's the boss. It's cool we're racing that chassis. If that was a winning car, that's pretty special in a way.

Q. Linus, you build all of your career for this moment. With everything you've been through, considering how far you've come, what's the feeling now that you know you're days away?

LINUS LUNDQVIST: I'm not going to lie, I'm a little bit torn, actually. Kind of two camps within me.

One is you've been chasing your whole life and career towards this one dream. It's kind of upon you right now. You're going to start the Indianapolis 500. But I'm also a very competitive guy, which means that I'm not really happy until we're fighting at the front and being competitive. I just haven't been this week.

At the same time it's not super enjoyable because I'm annoyed if we're not at the front. That's kind of what I mean when I'm a little bit torn between the two.

At the same time I still want to enjoy this because I'm extremely privileged to be one of very few people to get to experience the Indianapolis 500. There's a little bit of two camps within myself.

Q. Linus and Tom, one of the old sayings is that you have to be comfortable being uncomfortable. Have you gotten to that point yet or...

TOM BLOMQUIST: I've had a few people say that to me. Going around this place by yourself is one thing. We're racing drivers. After a while you can, I guess, be confident in doing that. I was kind of actually nervous during qualifying. I didn't actually realize that's probably not as difficult as I first anticipated.

The real stuff is the race running. Obviously at these speeds, I feel like your senses are heightened. You're super sensitive to everything that's happening underneath you. Things are changing all the time.

Obviously your car handles different if you're the second car in line, if you're in the front, third, fourth, way back, right? It's a completely different style of racing. There's a lot more thinking. You have to plan ahead a lot more. Obviously judging those gaps. Those gaps differ whether you're trying to get a run on someone or trying to not mess up and get run by. There's so many different ways, it's almost a little bit like chess. You have to play your cards right, but you also have to be so comfortable and confident.

Confidence is key around here, right? If the thing doesn't feel right, and I've been told this also by many others, I have experienced teammates, if the thing doesn't feel right, pull her in, sort it out, try to build up that confidence again. That is a very true saying.

Every lap I've felt better and better. It's just getting the miles in. Different scenarios under your belt to kind of understand what you need to do, what the car feels like.

I mean, you're also competing against guys that have done this many, many times. It's going to be difficult for us.

LINUS LUNDQVIST: I think Tom covered it pretty well there. I think especially just kind of relaying the difference of having one or two cars ahead of you versus having 20-something cars that we are all going to have here at the start. The car behaves very differently.

The question is, do you want a car that's reasonably good with 20 cars ahead or do you want a car that's pretty good with five cars ahead? There's a difference in however you tune in to that.

Obviously driving, like Tom said as well, setting up passes, it's way trickier than you think. It's very much like a game of chess at 220 miles an hour.

Q. Tom, what's been the best advice you've gotten from Helio and Felix about this place? When you're talking with your teammates, do you feel like they're not telling you everything?

TOM BLOMQVIST: Yeah, I was expecting big things from Helio, being super generous. He's been useless because he still wants to win a fifth (smiling). No, I'm joking.

I mean, I think this style of racing is so different. I think the biggest thing is, what I've also witnessed from Helio is this is his 24th or 25th, something ridiculous. He still goes out there in a methodical way and kind of, like, builds up to it, right? I think that shows how much respect you need to give this place. Someone who has done it so many times, won four times, finished second I don't know how many times, yet the car has downforce on it, he'll peel that off if he wants to feel more comfortable, he needs more speed, blah, blah, blah.

There's so many ways that gives you confidence as a rookie that you can go about this in the same way, right? This guy has won it so many times and he's going about it the same way as a rookie would. I think that's been encouraging.

Felix, I guess, is maybe someone I can relate more to because he's a later generation of driver. He's come through a similar path to me. He's new to this series in the last five years in a same sort of generation of car. He's been super helpful to me. We sit across from each other in the engineering truck. Yeah, we speak a lot.

Honestly, I've got a great bunch of guys to lean on. Not only that, we have a technical alliance with Andretti. I've got bucket loads of data and video and everything to go through to help me. I've been very fortunate.

Q. With Felix, does he feel almost like the captain of your team right now? You're sort of the rookie quarterback? Is that the relationship right now?

TOM BLOMQVIST: Yeah, I guess so. That stuff naturally happens in racing when one guy has the performance. In my case, obviously it's less so, I'm new to it all.

Yeah, he's super open. He's very willing to help out. Like I said, we've known each other for so long, we have a good relationship regardless, which helps things.

But, yeah, he's definitely been leading the ship.

Q. Romain, when you first came to the series, I think you were not real keen on ovals. Where are you now? Why was it so daunting to turn left?

ROMAIN GROSJEAN: I came here after something that was pretty significant in my life and in my family's and friends' lives. The first year not doing ovals was a mark of respect to my family because ovals are dangerous. You

can put it anywhere you want to put it, when you drive a car 230 miles an hour next to a wall, I have had two impacts here in the last two years. We do as much as we can in motorsports for safety, but they're dangerous. Definitely on the high end out of that.

Out of respect, I think the first year was the right decision not to do them. As a competitor, I want to do them. I want to be here. I must admit that this week, even though qualifying we didn't have the speed, which nothing you can do about as a driver, which is very, very annoying, qualifying is all an engineering race. It felt like in traffic the car has come alive over the last couple sessions, and I feel good.

I'm here doing the best we can for Juncos Hollinger Racing and myself. I think I'm very fortunate to be racing the Indy 500, and in a month's time, I'll be in Le Mans 24 Hours with Lamborghini in the Hypercar. On the résumé of a driver, that's pretty bad ass.

Q. Chip Ganassi, Alex Palou and Scott Dixon, how about those legends supporting you during this month?

LINUS LUNDQVIST: I mean, that's one of the many privileges of driving with Chip Ganassi Racing is having teammates like Scott and Alex to kind of lean on. I kind of alluded to that earlier throughout the week, as well. Obviously we have three rookies now going into this race with myself, Marcus and Kyffin. I think it takes a little bit of pressure off of us in the sense that we don't have to focus too much on developing the car and extracting performance. You can leave that to Alex and Scott. You can take your time. It's not like we're doing laps and doing it for the fun of it. You're still learning and developing, but you don't need to push it to the absolute limit and try to find another 10th of a mile an hour. You can leave that to Scott and Alex, which I think has been good for us.

Looking at quality, it wasn't what we hoped or expected. I also think we'll have better race cars. I think this place chooses its own winner. You just have to position yourself to be fighting for it the last 20 or 30 laps or so.

Q. Tom, how about work with Mike Shank...

TOM BLOMQVIST: I've known the team for a long time. I feel pretty embedded there and very comfortable. They know me and I know them pretty well. That helps me as a newbie.

Yeah, as well as obviously having Helio and Felix and all their information and data and so on, I also have basically all of Andretti. Honestly, I've got so much data, info and



help. So many people to listen to.

You also need to be able to pick and choose what you need to take from that information, right? Not to get distracted. Like Linus said, for me, to be honest, the car we rolled out with was pretty decent. The focus for me was more on myself than going through and changing a million things throughout practice. I let the others do that.

Thankfully in my position I can pick and choose what's sort of best, go on that, yeah.

THE MODERATOR: Tom, this will be your boss' 24th start in the Indianapolis 500. You have a ways to go.

TOM BLOMQUIST: I couldn't imagine (smiling).

THE MODERATOR: Thanks, guys. Good luck on Sunday.

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