

NTT INDYCAR SERIES

News Conference

Thursday, May 23, 2024

Indianapolis, Indiana, USA

Marcus Armstrong

Ed Carpenter

Kyffin Simpson

Press Conference



MARCUS ARMSTRONG: I'm looking forward to that a lot. Like Ed said, there's been a lot of rain delays over the course of the month. Every lap is valuable for me in particular. I mean, tomorrow I'm hoping for warm and windy conditions really, as hot as possible, just try and get some sort of dress rehearsal for Sunday.

THE MODERATOR: Questions for Row 6.

Q. Kyffin, you are a rookie at the Speedway. You can count on a lot of people around you, especially Sebastien Bourdais. Can you tell us about how he's helping you to deal with the track here?

KYFFIN SIMPSON: Seb has been a huge help for me this entire 500 week. Honestly, the whole year. He's been at a lot of races to just help me out, help me understand how INDYCAR racing goes, help me understand the tracks and the car.

It's been a huge help all year, but especially here at the 500. Yeah, he'll be back around for this weekend to help out some more.

Q. Marcus, it's your first time here on a big oval. How do you get along with everything you have to do? With Ganassi it's tougher in qualifying than the previous years.

MARCUS ARMSTRONG: I think this year obviously it's my first season, but I've been following it pretty intensely for many years. It seems like this year there's a lot of cars capable of winning. At least when we're doing race running, there are a lot of cars that are fast. There's no proper standouts, I would say.

In saying that, I would say as a team we are stronger in race trim than quallie this season for the 500. Once again, for me personally, it's a bit of a learning curve for sure. But I expect to just make the most of tomorrow's practice and be in the best possible position for Sunday.

Q. Marcus, how different is this to any other discipline you've driven in the past? Can you describe the sensations, the processes to adapt.

THE MODERATOR: We will begin with Row 6. Starting 18th, in his first Indy 500, driving the No. 4, Journie Rewards Chip Ganassi Racing Honda, Kyffin Simpson. Starting 17th, he just surpassed with 200 starts last year in the NTT INDYCAR SERIES, not that we're counting, driver of the No. 20, Guy Care Chevrolet for Ed Carpenter Racing, it is the aforementioned Ed Carpenter. Starting 16th, last year's Rookie of the Year in the NTT INDYCAR SERIES, driver of the No. 11, Ridgeline Lubricants Chip Ganassi Racing Honda, it's Marcus Armstrong.

Kyffin, we'll begin with you. How is your race week going?

KYFFIN SIMPSON: It's been a pretty good race week so far. I think we had practice on Monday and I thought it went pretty well. I was feeling a lot more confident with the pack running, getting a few more laps in, feeling good about where we are.

THE MODERATOR: Ed, the Monday practice, what did you get out of that?

ED CARPENTER: I thought it went well. The cadence of the month has definitely been different with more delays than we've had in previous years.

I thought it was a good practice. You go from so focused on qualifying to running no downforce to getting back into the rhythm of race running, race downforce, locking in your timings and all those things.

All three of our cars, we're quite happy with the way they feel in traffic. Just doing everything we can to be prepared for Sunday.

THE MODERATOR: Marcus, to Ed's point, how much do you look forward to last couple hours of practice tomorrow?



MARCUS ARMSTRONG: Yeah, it's certainly different to what I'm used to. First oval race in my life. I think the whole game is a bit more about momentum than what I'm used to. Obviously road racing and street racing is a bit more stop-start. At this point in my career, that's very natural and instinctual. I don't really need to think about that too much in order to maximize the car I have underneath me.

This is probably a bit more mentally demanding in the sense that everything is not quite as natural as it should be yet. I mean, I sound like a broken record, but it's a learning curve.

In saying that, I believe when I get into race mode on Sunday when we're racing, it's sort of a different mentality. You do the best with what you have.

Q. Kyffin, what are your overriding emotions as a rookie? Has it been fear, nerves, excitement, a combination?

KYFFIN SIMPSON: It's just been a lot of excitement. It's been really cool to be out here on such a cool track, such a historic track, just learning how to race it and learning how to drive it. It's been just so much fun for me.

I'm just really looking forward to getting out there and doing 500 miles on Sunday.

Q. Ed, the delays, from your perspective, how much does that alter and impact the program you have planned?

ED CARPENTER: I was probably a little worried about how the schedule played out for Christian, but in the end he got really comfortable really quickly. Seemingly has really taken to our car and this track.

I'm not really that worried about him at this point. He's doing a fantastic job. On Monday he was probably our best car of the team, so... He's fitting in and feeling less like a rookie all the time.

Q. Kyffin, obviously every race so far this year you've managed to come through the field. How much of that allowed you to place a major focus on Indy 500 qualifying?

KYFFIN SIMPSON: Yeah, I mean, I think the whole year qualifying has definitely been a struggle. Being able to maximize the reds has been a big struggle for me. Here you have lots of practice time on Friday to just do quallie runs. We were able to get a lot of quallie runs and that made me a lot more confident in what I had, what I needed

to do for my quallie run when it was actually time to put it together. I think all of that just played out really well for us to be able to maximize what we had.

Q. Ed, last year Josef Newgarden mentioned that he was sort of mentally at peace with the idea that he might not win this race. That helped him to relax. Have you ever taken a similar approach?

ED CARPENTER: I think every year's a little different. There's been years that I've gone into this race feeling like we have the absolute best car and best chance of winning, had it not pan out. There's been years where I didn't feel as confident as I wanted to be, and we've had really good races.

I try to just take all the experience I have from all my starts and be prepared for whatever comes at us on Sunday. I would say as time goes on, I worry less about where I start and more so just what I have under me. It's such a long race. There's so many opportunities to work your way to the front.

Not really stressed about that. Just want to make sure we get a good, clean start, start executing our game plan.

Q. At Indy, what is the biggest challenge you think there will be on race day and how do you plan to overcome them?

ED CARPENTER: The challenge is always the same here: just being your best and having the car be its best for that final stint, final run after whatever the last restart is, whatever it may be.

It's easy to get caught up in things happening early in the race. The hardest part is just being positioned properly in the end and having the balance where you need it to make a run. That's always the most challenging part, I think, and the hardest to get right.

KYFFIN SIMPSON: I kind of agree with that. I think just figuring out the cadence of the race, the pacing of it, will be probably the toughest part for me. Just making sure that I'm ready for the last stint, making sure the car's in a good place for the last stint.

Yeah, just figuring out little things with each stint.

MARCUS ARMSTRONG: I'll echo Ed here. I feel like it's important to keep it simple. It's obviously a very long race with many pit stops, as well. Getting through the pit lane cleanly is important and probably underrated. As well, just doing all the simple things right, in and out laps, making overtakes when they're possible, not doing it when they're

not possible. Ultimately be in the best position you can to capitalize on other people's mistakes, I suppose.

Q. Marcus, Kyffin, the team's qualifying wasn't the best one. Have you had any conversations in order to, at the beginning of the race, make a team strategy to make some progress or every driver for himself?

MARCUS ARMSTRONG: Kyffin, go for gold, mate (smiling).

KYFFIN SIMPSON: No, we haven't had a team discussion. Team meeting is usually the morning of the race. If we were going to have a talk, it would be then.

That decision is more up to Chip, though. Yeah, that's probably more of a question for him.

As far as us, we all want to be the best we can and try to move forward, put these cars up front, where they should be.

MARCUS ARMSTRONG: Yeah, that's pretty spot on. We haven't made any plans yet. I think we were very close to the top 12 in quallie, and ultimately we missed out in that last run. I think credit needs to be given to the team because the day before on Fast Friday, it was looking worse than what it ended up being. We made big progress overnight. Kudos to the engineering staff and the mechanics because we found quite a lot of pace for that Saturday.

We were almost there. In fact, Alex and I were even saying how epic it would be to both be inside the top 12, which was a possibility at some point. If we continue this rate of improvement, we'll be very good.

Q. Two rookies, neither have done a three-wide start. A lane-and-a-half for turn one. How do you look at navigating the start? Do you lean on Ed?

ED CARPENTER: For sure they should just follow in behind me, let me show them the way (laughter).

KYFFIN SIMPSON: I was thinking the same thing, you guys just fall in behind me. We'll figure it out.

ED CARPENTER: I'm sure we'll have some sort of chat. It's a hard start. Definitely going to be different for these guys. It's still challenging. Having done this 20 years, there's a lot more movement than what you see out of a normal start.

Where we're starting, there's going to be a big draft with usually a pretty big checkup by the time you get to one. It's

definitely challenging.

It's important, but really the only important part about it is surviving that first lap and making sure you don't end your day too early.

Q. What would be, in your opinion, the key to managing that start for rookies?

ED CARPENTER: We all have the responsibility to take care of our own car and to take care of people around us by making good decisions. It's obvious you're not going to win the race on the first lap. Whichever one of us wins the start from our row doesn't mean we're going to win the day.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports