

# NTT INDYCAR SERIES

## News Conference

Thursday, May 23, 2024

Indianapolis, Indiana, USA

**Santino Ferrucci**

**Kyle Larson**

**Alexander Rossi**

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: We're joined by Row 2, starting sixth, he finished third in last year's Indy 500, driving the No. 14, Homes For Our Troops Chevrolet for AJ Foyt Racing, Santino Ferrucci is here. Starting fifth, ready to take on the first half of the Hendrick 1,100, the fastest rookie of the 2024 Indianapolis 500 field, driving the No. 17 Hendrickcars.com Arrow McLaren Chevrolet is Kyle Larson. Starting fourth, winner of the famed 100th running of the Indianapolis 500, driver of the No. 7 Arrow McLaren Chevrolet, it's Alexander Rossi.

Santino, we'll start with you. You're bragging about how much golf you've played this week. You're ready to go tomorrow, is that what you're saying?

SANTINO FERRUCCI: Yeah, of course. We almost got to complete the third round today, but now we're here. It's okay, I was burning anyway. It's been good. It's one of those things to where you keep your mind off driving a race car and hanging out with the boys and having a good time and getting a full reset.

**Q. How has your week gone, Kyle?**

KYLE LARSON: Just a little bit of golf. Not a whole lot. I played with some friends yesterday.

It's been honestly like really busy until the last couple days, so it's been nice to get a couple days out of the car, kind of just relax, enjoy the downtime before it gets crazy again. Yeah, not much.

**Q. Fastest rookie luncheon, the community day --**

KYLE LARSON: Milked the cow.

ALEXANDER ROSSI: I don't think I was given a choice, but yeah.

**Q. Alex, you said the other day you liked your car a lot heading into Sunday?**

ALEXANDER ROSSI: Yes. I was going to talk about my week, but it's fine.

Well, I did a turtle race, which was pretty cool. Turtles are not very smart, it would seem.

But it wasn't mine. I think it was actually Santino. I picked him up because he was going the wrong direction and placed him in the lead. You're welcome.

SANTINO FERRUCCI: Thank you. I'll take it.

ALEXANDER ROSSI: He didn't win. What else did I do? I don't play golf, so I didn't golf. Yeah, the car is still good.

**Q. Kyle, Pato was just before you, and he said that your schedule is so busy that he's spent almost no time with you, and you're at about 30 percent of the engineering meetings and things like that. Are you feeling like you're being pulled in a lot of directions and not able to spend as much time with your teammates as you'd like to?**

KYLE LARSON: No, I mean, I have been busy. I feel like I've been in a lot of the engineering meetings -- I joked with our engineers. I was like I've gone to more meetings in one week than I have all season in NASCAR to this point. I feel like it's meeting after meeting.

No, I really haven't got to spend much time with anybody. The days start pretty early, and then they end late. You get dinner, and kind of just want to relax.

No, I haven't gotten to spend a ton of time with them, but I don't really know how their schedules vary differently to mine. I feel like I do a lot of interviews and stuff during the day, in between time in car and all that. Yeah, it's just a busy couple weeks of all on track, so I'm not sure when anybody gets time to hang out much.

**Q. You do big events. You do the Daytona 500, Kings Royal, Chili Bowl, all kinds of things. What are some**



**things about Indy and the Indy 500 prep that you have found special and enjoyed and you've felt they improved the event?**

KYLE LARSON: Well, I just think they have the funding to do it. I think there's a lot of races that -- I'm talking like dirt races, not the Nationals and Kings Royal. Like Knoxville does a really good job of getting it to the feel of a big NASCAR event or even similar to like what this is on a much smaller scale. But with the history and the traditions and all that, I think that's been -- I joked about milking the cow, but knowing that that's a fairly new tradition that's probably going to go on each year for a very long time is neat to be a part of.

Then, too, just this facility is -- this is like Disneyland or Disney World of racetracks. It is the nicest facility. I think all of that makes it feel even bigger, too.

Two weeks of stuff, buildup to the race, there's so many things that make this event feel different and bigger. But yeah, there's no other event I've been a part of to this point, and I haven't even gotten to race yet, that's felt quite as big as the Indy 500.

**Q. Was your scooter stolen?**

KYLE LARSON: I don't know. I've been leaving it at my motor home and then one day it was gone and I hear about all these pranks and stuff, but I don't think it was a prank because it was just in the garage stall. I'm not sure.

**Q. Maybe Alex did it.**

ALEXANDER ROSSI: I have had no time, unfortunately.

**Q. If you had time, you'd be pranking?**

ALEXANDER ROSSI: Yes.

**Q. Kyle, obviously the weather is looking iffy. How much have you thought about various scenarios? I know you don't get stressed about many things, but is this something that's stressing you out at all? What are your current thoughts on it?**

KYLE LARSON: I mean, sure, yeah, it's stressful because weather is always unpredictable, but you just don't really know until it's like happening. So it's hard to plan for weather. You can have all these plans and backup plans and backup plans for the backup plan. But you just can't really do anything or react until it's kind of the moment.

That's what's a little bit stressful. Yeah, it doesn't look too promising for Indy on Sunday, but I think for me where I sit,

if it's going to rain, I hope it rains all day. That way it can just get pushed to Monday or something, and then Charlotte is not going to rain, I just hope it doesn't rain, and we can get it in on Sunday night and then come here Monday.

Again, it's weather. The forecast changes kind of every day. But yeah, we'll see.

**Q. Kyle, following up on Jenna's question, you said Sunday that things have gone so smooth, but I think you're talking about more in the car. Outside the car, have they gone just as smooth, just as efficiently as your support team? Have the Hendrick people made it so it's plug and play and you're just going where they tell you?**

KYLE LARSON: Yeah, I've been pretty relaxed from my side. I've done a ton of interviews and all that and signed bunches of autographs and everything, but it's all been -- nothing has been like surprising or I've not felt like overwhelmed really at any point.

It's all been smooth, and I think there's just been a lot of planning going on behind the scenes, between Arrow McLaren and Hendrick Motorsports for months. That's helped it be really smooth.

**Q. Have you had any moments yet where you've woken up and wondered what city you're in, Charlotte or Indy?**

KYLE LARSON: No, because I've been in Indy the whole time, so it's pretty simple.

SANTINO FERRUCCI: This is one of the most talented race car drivers here. He does it with no sleep.

KYLE KIRKWOOD: If not I think they can get done.

ALEXANDER ROSSI: We can leave.

SANTINO FERRUCCI: Can we do that, please?

KYLE LARSON: I'm not trying to leave, I'm trying for these guys.

ALEXANDER ROSSI: If there's no questions, why not?

THE MODERATOR: We've lost control. What's your question for Alex?

**Q. It seems like all week you've kind of had your swagger back a little bit in terms of your performance. What is it about -- you look like you're a lot more**



**confident here this year than in the recent past. How do you feel about the performance of your car?**

ALEXANDER ROSSI: I don't know that I agree with that. I think this is the first time in quite a few years that we made -- whether it's the Fast Six or the Fast Nine, so you're obviously going to be excited about that. But I think it's just been a really smooth month for the whole organization.

I think we have four cars that have contributed really well throughout the month and pushed each other forward, and we all have really good tools to go to work on Sunday. I just think it's a culmination of the hard work that was done in the off-season and just continuing to build the best race cars we can to go fast when it counts.

**Q. Kyle, I hate to ask another weather question, but is there a scenario where the 500 would start at 3:00 or 4:00 in the afternoon and you would race the 500 and not go to Charlotte?**

KYLE LARSON: I don't know. I think that's all kind of game time decisions and maybe decisions out of my control. Yeah, I think the plan right now is hopefully everything just gets going as scheduled and we don't have to worry about that.

Like I said earlier, I think it's just all kind of spur of the moment decisions, and we'll see.

SANTINO FERRUCCI: Call Tony Stewart.

KYLE LARSON: What did he do?

SANTINO FERRUCCI: It rained and he was leading and he said he would deal with the consequences. It's the Indy 500. Do you have a Coke 600?

KYLE LARSON: Yeah.

SANTINO FERRUCCI: Yeah. You're good. Stay here. I like having you here.

They didn't have the playoffs back when he raced, so it's a completely -- yeah, dude, you're good. I'd say he's staying here.

**Q. Can you guys put yourselves in position for the double-header and think what kind of preparation that might take? Does it seem like that type of double is a lot to do in one day and the prep for all that?**

SANTINO FERRUCCI: Man, it's impressive, but there's very few drivers that drive everything today. He's one of them, and if anyone can do it, I think he can. I've driven

some of the stock car stuff. It's very different. It's a lot of fun. You don't see INDYCAR drivers doing the double. That's what's kind of different for us because you have so many one-off entries coming to the 500. It's a little bit more feasible. I'd love to do an attempt at it. It's a completely different ballgame. For me to go jump in a stock car like I did during the COVID years it was so difficult. First time I was behind the wheel was green flag at Homestead, which is a little ridiculous, but it was a lot of fun.

No, just the physical side of it, but Kyle is a super fit dude. The cars are so heavy to drive. The stock cars are really hot inside. You get a 90-degree day here and you're in the car for four-and-a-half, five hours. I mean, I get out and I'm completely depleted. So how you recover on a flight with IVs and everything and then get in another hotbox that's like 130 inside there all over again, amen to you, brother. It's cool as hell.

I'm rooting for him because like why not? Make some history.

ALEXANDER ROSSI: I think he covered it.

SANTINO FERRUCCI: Man of many words.

**Q. Alex and Santino, when you guys were rookies and you had race morning in that first experience, talk a bit about what that race morning rookie atmosphere field like and what Kyle might have to look forward to?**

ALEXANDER ROSSI: Man, it's as memorable for me as the end. I fell in love with this event at 9:00 a.m. that morning just because I had no idea kind of -- you go through all of the processes to get to that point and you hear about it, but you don't really realize until you open your bus door that morning, and you're like -- it is a life-changing kind of event and experience to be a part of.

I'm excited for him. I'm excited for every rookie that gets to experience it this year because it is one of those things that will change your appreciation for this race and kind of motorsports in general.

It's a really cool kind of three, four hours, the buildup that happens. Really hope for a lot of reasons, kind of along the same line, that there is no weather so that he and the others can experience the full kind of buildup to the event with all of the tradition and beauty that goes along with that. Fingers crossed that it all works out that way.

**Q. Alex, when Pato was in here, he said that he felt like the Penskes are still kind of class of the field, the favorites. I know in qualifying you said you were getting tired of hearing about the Penskes and their**

 . . . when all is said, we're done.®

**noise. Do you still feel like they're the team to beat here after Monday or do you need to see what happens Friday? How do you assess that?**

ALEXANDER ROSSI: No, not at all. I think qualifying and their improvements over the off-season were very much focused on qualifying. I think that the field gets a lot tighter kind of in race running. I think there's 10 cars that look good out there and that are very capable of winning the race on Sunday.

Yes, obviously they're going to be good, but it's not just them. There's quite a few guys out there that look pretty strong.

**Q. Santino, obviously you have a career best at this race last year, you got like five top 10s, top 10 every time. You've been in this race and now you're with the team that was so good in qualifying, with Penske. Can you put that in perspective? Everything is kind of going your way going into this race.**

SANTINO FERRUCCI: Yeah, obviously last year we were really quick in qualifying. I feel like we have had good cars here at Foyt, and part of our alliance for us is we struggled on road and street, we were good in the speedway. That's where Penske kind of wanted to make up some ground. It worked in a very -- it was a very helpful relationship for us, and then obviously, as you saw on Sunday for them, as much as certain drivers or a certain driver is not -- that's that guy. It's kind of how it is.

But I'm not going to lie, I'm on their shocks, but they're tuned to my setup and my car, and it's every driver's preference. Like Alex said, what makes speed in qualifying here isn't necessarily a setup, it's everything that goes into the car that we can't see. But your race car is very much driver preference, driver comfort, and there are a lot of really solid cars out there.

Their three are pretty good. I'd say one or two of them actually looked really, really sporty compared to the third. I didn't run much around Alex, but I did run around Kyle, and Kyle looks good, as well, and the 26 looks good. It's pretty much anybody's day come Sunday.

**Q. Kyle, you touched on this earlier, and I wanted to ask you to elaborate. In 2022 I covered Knoxville, and the way that town embraced the event, it was mindblowing to me. Could you elaborate a little more about how the town of Speedway, literally named Speedway, and the city of Indianapolis as a whole embraces the 500 and how you've come to experience that throughout your rookie year here at Indy?**

KYLE LARSON: Yeah, again, it's on a much smaller scale, but the feel from the town is very similar to the feel of Indianapolis. Like I'm renting a house for family in Whitestown, which is 20 minutes from here, and in a nice little neighborhood. Every other house has an Indianapolis Motor Speedway flag hanging off the side of their house, which I think is really cool because they're a little bit outside of Speedway and still supporting it on their houses. So that's cool.

Just the local community gets into it. Knoxville, even all year long, a lot of people that live in town are just huge sprint car fans. I would kind compare the Prairie Dirt Classic in Fairbury, the late model event similar, too. Again, much smaller scales, but very, very similar feel in how the community embraces the event.

**Q. What's been the best piece of advice you've been given about competing in the Indy 500 for the first time and who gave you that advice?**

KYLE LARSON: I mean, I don't know. I don't know like -- I've had so much advice throughout the last year I feel like. But I don't know, I've had lots of people just telling me to enjoy the experience, enjoy the event, and I've really tried -- I feel like I've done a good job of that. I've tried to take as much time as I can for the fans and media and all that, and I've really -- typically, like at, say, a NASCAR event you'd get kind of burned out on it but I haven't been burned out on it because this is just such a cool event. I don't know how often I'm going to run this race. I don't know if this is the only year I'm running it. Just trying to enjoy it, and I have. It's been the coolest experience for sure to this point, and we haven't even run the race yet.

**Q. Who would your daughter like to see win the race on Sunday?**

KYLE LARSON: You. Rossi. She said last night, I'm going to finish second and she wants Rossi to win.

ALEXANDER ROSSI: Shoot.

KYLE LARSON: Real fan right there. I heard Kaitlyn say because she thinks that -- I think she thinks that my wife and him grew up going to the same school, even though they were rival schools. Maybe that's why she has one of his old Andretti crew jerseys.

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