

NTT INDYCAR SERIES

News Conference

Sunday, June 2, 2024

Caio Collet

Callum Hedge

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: Good morning, everyone. Wrapping up INDY NXT by Firestone Grand Prix. Joined now by second-place finisher Caio Collet. The second straight podium of the season. Now bumps up to fourth in points. Callum Hedge, first career podium.

Congratulations to both of you guys. Caio, what did you think of the race today?

CAIO COLLET: I think was great a good race. We had a really good pace. I was able to get by Jacob in the beginning. I was just trying to push Louis into a mistake. Then I never got an opportunity. Clean race, no mistakes.

No, I think overall quite happy with the weekend. He was just quite quick since the first practice. I think today we were able to match him on pace, but then it's a street course so it's hard to get by. He did no mistakes, so he deserve the win.

THE MODERATOR: Did you think about what you could do to get around Louis on the restarts?

CAIO COLLET: I spend a lot of laps behind him. I think there was a few places I was quite strong, a few places he was stronger than me. Especially out of two, he was quite quick. I could never make a move in turn two.

Turn three is the only place you can overtake without taking any risks obviously. I think the opportunity never came to me.

Overall quite happy with the race.

THE MODERATOR: Callum, first career podium in INDY NXT by Firestone. Tell us about that pass in turn three.

CALLUM HEDGE: Yeah, no, it was an interesting race. I had a really good start. Picked up a bit of damage on the first lap. Hit the fence going through the chicane. Sort of bided my time for about 10 laps, waited till I got

comfortable with the slightly bent car. Realized I had good pace. Made a few moves forward.

On the restart into turn three behind Jacob, I was like bugger it, I'm fighting for a podium, this will be my first, he's fighting for the championship. I'm going to put a move in, and it paid out.

THE MODERATOR: Consciously you're thinking I got a shot at the podium here, let's take advantage of this?

CALLUM HEDGE: That's exactly I what thought. I knew he's in the hunt for the championship. He is fighting for a bigger prize. I made a move.

THE MODERATOR: We'll take questions.

Q. Callum, I see you're coming also from New Zealand. From time to time do you have conversation with your INDYCAR colleagues asking for advice? You and Caio are driving for HMD. You have 10 cars. Is there a difficulty to have a briefing with all the personnel and staff, sit all together?

CAIO COLLET: Yeah, sorry, I might forget the first question as I answer the second one.

Yeah, I thought the same when I initially came over to the U.S. and start having conversations with HMD. They said they would have 10 cars. The way they do it is fantastic. The organization and management of the team is super awesome. They never missed a single question or anything that's happened for me. They get it always done straightaway.

When I first came over, I had appendix surgery earlier in the year. Nine cars tested on the track. I was lying in the hotel room. I called my manager, Yeah, I would like to go to the doctors. The team managers, Mike and Luke, were in my hotel room within 20 minutes.

They make everything happen. The guys are super organized. It's like five two-car teams. Everyone communicates really well. I really enjoy being a part of HMD.

Q. (No microphone.)

CALLUM HEDGE: I'm not quite close enough with him yet. I've known Marcus for a wee while now. I met Scott McLaughlin on the Wednesday before the Indianapolis 500 at a dinner. I now have his phone number. We've been exchanging a few text messages over the course of the weekend. I'd like to go play golf with you at some stage, Scottie, if you're keen. I'm learning, so I am not quite as good as you. Yeah, looking forward to catching up.

I also met Scott Dixon in my underwear at Fit Pit while I was in the ice bath. That was a funny story meeting one of my racing heroes and a Kiwi legend.

Q. Caio, I believe this is the second straight runner-up finish. What have you learned to adapt so quickly, learning the tires, learning also how to race guys like Louis? Something within his race craft that you can take advantage of to turn this into a win?

CAIO COLLET: I think not really. He's a really good driver. I came across good drivers I think all over my career. Is not different here in the U.S.

But I think behind the scenes, the team is doing a really great job to help me to get all the information, all the preparation I need to come into a track. Obviously I think 90% of the tracks are new for me. Every time we have quite a lot of discussions, information to prep.

I think obviously having 10 cars, having a team that is really good like them, it helps a lot. You have all the data, all the information you need to be ready when you first arrive at the track.

I think they've been doing a really good job with me to help me to understand the car and also the tracks. A little bit different, especially this one, it's a proper street course, I would say.

No, is really fun to drive. I think I'm enjoying myself quite a lot here in the U.S. Glad to be here.

Q. What do you have to do to get one step higher?

CAIO COLLET: It's hard to say. I think just keep doing what we are doing and I think our time will come. I think today we were really quick. Obviously the street course, it's hard to pass when you obviously have the same pace as the guy in front.

I think Louis did no mistakes today. I never had a clean opportunity to go for it. But just keep doing what we are doing. I think we are doing a good job. It will come

naturally hopefully.

Q. It was pretty slick and bumpy. What do you take away going into the next race?

CAIO COLLET: Obviously I think helps with confidence to get a good result. Is as nice. That's why we are here, to fight for a wins. When you get podium and stuff like that, helps your confident, helps to build momentum with the team.

But no, I think every track is a little bit different. Just trying to adapt the quickly as possible, the best as possible for when we arrive next week in Road America.

Yeah, that's it I think. Just try to enjoy it.

CALLUM HEDGE: Yeah, for me a lot of this is very new. My background over home, back in Australia, New Zealand, is very different to these guys. I haven't driven on tracks like this before.

I did a little bit of racing over here last year in the Formula Regional championship. Trying to adapt to the car, adapt to the circuits. Mostly the environment of living in the U.S., staying in the U.S. permanently, being really far away from friends, family and all that. It's been almost equally as big a part.

The Detroit circuit specifically was a new one to me. It was very bumpy, getting my head around it in the first few laps. You sort of try a few different things with the driving to learn how to play with the car against the walls.

What I'm used to with my stuff back in Australia, nudge the mirror up along the side of the car along the barriers there. Now when you rub up against the barriers, you're rubbing the wheels up against it. A bit of a learning experience.

Then you can go from a circuit like Detroit where every corner is 50 miles an hour, to Road America, possibly one of the fastest tracks on our calendar this year, then to an oval directly after that is going to be a learning experience for me. I'm really excited.

Q. Callum, there's obviously been quite a big contingent of drivers from Australia, New Zealand over the years. What appeals to you and others about it?

CALLUM HEDGE: For us it's just a land of opportunities. Getting to go and chase your dreams from a small country, it's really hard to put together a deal to come over and race here. When you get an opportunity coming from New Zealand, coming from Australia, my population is five million people compared to the 300 or 400 million it is over

here, you get one small opportunity, you have to grab it with both hands and go with it till you run out of money basically (smiling).

THE MODERATOR: Guys, thanks for coming up. We'll see you in a couple days in Road America.

Q. Caio, you've done Detroit and St. Pete. How do you compare the street circuits to Europe?

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CAIO COLLET: I would say here is a proper street course. I think the did Pau and Monaco in Europe. Pau is quite similar to what you have here. They don't resurface the track. Really, really nice, you have a lot of fun.

Monaco is a bit different. It's really flat. Obviously you have the walls quite close. I think here you obviously have to push quite a lot and work the car a little bit.

Is just fun, I would say. I'm really enjoying. Yeah, that's it.

Q. Callum, when you look in the history books of motor racing, is there any special good training ground in open-wheel racing in New Zealand which prepares you to come to America for INDYCAR or European open-wheel racing?

CALLUM HEDGE: I think there's a few different ways I could answer this question.

I think one of our biggest strengths is we have the championship at home which is called TRS, Toyota Racing Series, which Caio and a bunch of other people over this side of the planet, back in Europe, have all raced in. It's kind of like a Formula 3 regional championship. Now called Formula Regional Oceania. A lot of Americans come over and compete in that championship.

That was a big learning curve. I raced that the start of 2023. Raced the likes of Louis Foster, Jacob Abel a few other people that have come over from across the pond and way over in Europe.

They test their skills. We get to race against them. That's sort of been a really big (indiscernible) for a lot of young guys, Liam Lawson, Marcus Armstrong. Without that championship, I wouldn't be sitting right in this chair right now.

Also I think another one of our advantages is we get to drive and get access to driving cars very young. I first started racing cars back in Little Utes in 2016 when I was 12 years old.

You get a variety of different conditions, cars from a young age when you're really impressionable. Overseas, a lot of them are still racing go-karts. You get a different sort of level of experience. I think it really pays out.

