

NTT INDYCAR SERIES

News Conference

Sunday, July 7, 2024

Caio Collet

Louis Foster

Jacob Abel

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: Wrapping up today's INDY NXT by Firestone Grand Prix here at Mid-Ohio Sports Car course, joined now by Louis Foster, driver of the No. 26 Copart/Novara Technologies machine for Andretti Global. Sixth straight race now with either a first or runner-up finish in the INDY NXT by Firestone Series, seventh podium of the season, 13th of his career, picks up six points in the overall championship. Jacob Abel also joins us, back on the podium, driver of the No. 51 Abel Construction car for Abel Motorsports. Seventh podium of the season, 11th of his career.

Louis, I know tire deg was something you guys were fighting, and it is what it is sometimes, right?

LOUIS FOSTER: Yeah, I think with the resurface, candidly, we didn't figure it out, I don't think, as a team. We struggled a lot this weekend. We turned up in FP1 with a car that I was definitely not happy with at all, but worked really hard with the guys, and we got it into a spot where we could challenge for a podium.

But for me, to be honest with you, a second place today feels like a win. We worked really, really hard to be up here. Caio and HMD did an amazing job this weekend. I think it was going to be really tough to beat them. But yeah, pretty much just too much tire deg. We were good at the start, and at some point I kind of knew it was going to go downhill from there so I backed off of him and conserved tires as best I can. I didn't really want any tire failures or anything like that.

Q. Jacob, I know race 2 at Laguna Seca didn't go the way you wanted to, so to be back on the podium gets momentum back in your way?

JACOB ABEL: Yeah, for sure. We're looking forward to the ovals coming up. Everybody keeps saying that. I'm pretty excited for them.

Yeah, to get back on the podium heading into that was good. Obviously we've now gone almost a couple months without a win. We really want to get back up on the top step.

Yeah, feel similar to what Louis said. We struggled a little bit coming off the trailer, and we made a ton of progress throughout the week. Qualifying it was super close; only a tenth to overall pole. Once you get pole here, this is one of the easier tracks to win from that, similar to like Barber.

But yeah, huge congrats to Caio and HMD. I know they were fast from session one, and it was going to be hard to beat them, especially when we were kind of fighting from behind a little bit.

Similar to what Louis said, had a little bit of tire deg issue, was a bit of a vibration and everything, so I didn't want to overextract. It was a bit unfortunate because the balance had just kind of come to me a little bit and we started reeling in these two a little bit, but yeah, kind of had to take the high road a little bit and just bring the car home.

Q. Caio, congratulations to you, 22 year old from Saõ Paulo, Brazil, driving the No. 18 HMD Motorsports machine, first career win in his ninth career start, third straight podium, fifth of the season, getting win No. 1. What's this feel like?

CAIO COLLET: It feels pretty amazing. I think since Friday, we've been really quick. Honestly, since my first lap, the car felt really, really good, and I knew we had a chance to do a good weekend.

I think previous weekends we started a little bit behind, especially compared to him, and we were just playing catch-up, and I think it was the first weekend of the season that we started on top from Friday, and we just built it up, and I think we did a really good job together.

Q. Caio, you finished runner-up four or five times before this moment. Was it a feeling of I know that my time will come as long as I keep running like this, or was there a little bit of pressure as you kept getting that close but not being able to break through?

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CAIO COLLET: I think for sure there was pressure because I know the next five events, four of them are ovals, and I don't know how it will be. I think there was quite a bit of pressure coming up on this weekend, but I knew that we were quick, we were strong, and we were always there, so it was a matter of time of having like a good balance from the start, good buildup from Friday, and I think this weekend everything came together.

Q. Could you kind of summarize your last, I guess, couple weeks, because you go from finishing runner-up and doing the Laguna thing, going to Formula E and making your debut there and coming back here and winning this race?

CAIO COLLET: It was pretty crazy to be honest. I was really exhausted when I arrived here on Thursday. No, I think for me, I'm just really, really happy that I could manage to put everything together. My first Formula E weekend was really nice, to have that opportunity and drive against a competitive series as Formula Es, and then coming back here, for sure it's a different series, different everything, and we adapted straight away quite well.

I'm just really happy that the opportunities are coming together in my career, and we need to take all of them.

Q. Jacob and Louis, since y'all raced here last year, what do you assess with the repave of Mid-Ohio right now?

JACOB ABEL: I think it's good. I think it's good that they're investing in this facility. It's obviously one of the flagship facilities in the country. Yeah, it's added a ton of grip for sure, and with that is a lot of extra load on the tires.

That's kind of what Louis and I dealt with a little bit today. Maybe there's a different compound we bring here in the future, similar to what we do at Road America and Laguna, just to deal with that.

But I think overall it's great. It's taken a little bit of the character out of it, which as a Mid-Ohio kind of local, I'm not super fond of, but yeah, it's still pretty awesome.

LOUIS FOSTER: Yeah, I mean, it's just increased the grip really, pretty much. Got rid of a few bumps but also added a few. The biggest one is obviously the last corner, Turn 12 exit, no longer a bump, but then they've somehow managed to add a bump at Turn 1, which makes it really annoying for us. But yeah, it's just faster.

Q. Jacob, when you're out there and you're pounding around third, you guys kind of finish the way you start,

so to speak, what is it like? Is it like you're on a freeway and you're trying to catch that car way up there, but as fast as you go, they're going -- explain the frustration but also you've got to just keep going?

JACOB ABEL: Yeah, especially toward the mid part of the race, we all picked up a ton of time. I was starting to feel really good about things. 10, 15 laps in, I'm running a second and a half faster than I was running previously, but they were, as well.

I think the three of us pulled away a lot from the rest of the field then, and then sort of towards the midpoint I felt good about it.

At the end of the day, it's never like driving on a freeway, unfortunately. It's a lot of work around here, both physically and mentally, just constantly adapting to what the tire is doing, how the track is changing, and then reacting to their pace, their usage of Push-to-Pass, tires, all of that.

Yeah, it definitely keeps you on your toes a little bit. You don't get bored by any means.

Q. What is your lesson learned? You learn something every time you run a race car. What's the lesson you learned today?

JACOB ABEL: You guys got one?

Q. When it came to the tire deg, like that --

LOUIS FOSTER: Start looser.

JACOB ABEL: Yeah, start looser, there you go. Yeah, maybe that. Just kind of keeping in mind what the balance is on the long run. We'd never done a long run before the race. Unfortunately you don't usually get to. Maybe going into the future trying to do that beforehand.

Q. Louis and Jacob, seems like you guys have been battling all year. Nolan exits stage left to go to INDYCAR, Caio has kind of submitted himself into this championship fight, as well. You guys all have the goal to get to INDYCAR, obviously Formula 1, as well, but INDYCAR right now. What is the friendship level for everybody? You guys all know each other. You're traveling every week with the same goal. You guys also seem to show a lot of respect and maturity on the track. Does that come from a lot of sharing time off the track, as well?

LOUIS FOSTER: I don't know, I mean, obviously Caio lives in Brazil mainly, Jacob lives -- do you still live in



Louisville?

JACOB ABEL: Indy.

LOUIS FOSTER: He lives in Indy, as well, so do I. But we're mature men. It's mainly I would say the more junior categories.

I think for me personally, I think for sure in more junior categories, everyone is so, almost, in a way, egotistical about how good they are, whereas nowadays you respect how good everyone else. Again, I spend so much time with them so I'd rather not hate them because it makes my life more boring.

JACOB ABEL: Yeah, on my side of things, I respect both of these guys for sure. I want to beat them more than anything. But I think I recognize -- I hope they recognize it, as well. I recognize how good of a driver them two are. Like you said, us three have kind of separated ourselves from the field. Yeah, so it's just a respect thing.

Q. Caio, I go back to Indy, beginning of May, had a really good car there but towards the end maybe the tires dropped off. Did you take a lot of that into this week? To save tires on a new repave, how much of what you learned at Indy did you apply this weekend at Mid-Ohio?

CAIO COLLET: Yeah, for sure, I think was a little bit the opposite at Indy. I started really, really strong, and then mid, end of the race I was struggling quite a lot, and here I think I started not very strong comparing to what I had in practice and qualifying. I was really struggling the first five, six laps and also the first couple of laps on the restart I was trying to use the button and get away.

Certainly I think when my tires heated up a little bit more and the track evolved a bit, it just clicked and I just started having a lot of grip and momentum and it just kept building, and the car was getting better lap after lap, which was a little bit strange in the race, but I mean, I'm just really, really happy that we managed to put the weekend together.

Q. Going to Iowa I think the entire test got rained out. You were obviously super close there last year. For the veterans of Iowa, what's that race going to be like next week? Caio, what's your prep going into your first oval? Are you going to watch some tape, sit down with Mike I would imagine? Talk about going in as a rookie for the first time and you guys going in for the second time?

CAIO COLLET: It's always a little bit tough. We did the test, but I think it depends on when you put the car there

and start driving how confident you feel, and also I think the support you have from the team means quite a lot. But I think together with HMD I've been really, really happy where I'm, and hopefully we can put a good show, but I will never know until this time next week.

JACOB ABEL: Yeah, obviously we had a really strong car there last year, but everywhere basically we run now is repaved. So that's definitely going to change things. It's going to be a really interesting weekend actually because INDYCARs saw some pretty drastic differences there, so yeah, it's going to be interesting.

It's pretty unknown, and all of our weekends are relatively compressed and relatively short, so it's just going to be whatever driver and team adapts the best. I don't think it's going to be very similar to last year, unfortunately. But yeah, I think I feel confident that we'll be able to adapt quickly.

LOUIS FOSTER: Yeah, obviously we didn't do any running at all, or at least I didn't do a single lap of the test. But we'll see what happens.

I think in a way for me, I find it a little bit weird they only repaved like half of the track. It makes it frustrating for us drivers because it makes it single lane, whereas if they paved the entire circuit, it would have been -- I understand why; it obviously costs less money to do that.

But yeah, it's the same as like Milwaukee. Unless we do something different, that race is going to be the most boring race to watch because we're just going to follow each other for 50 minutes.

As a driver, I love oval racing. It's the best part of ovals is the actual racing and the fact that some of these repaves are limiting that because of the grip levels on and off line, I find it disappointing as a driver, but we'll have to see what we get when we get there.

Q. So patience-wise, we saw it in the Milwaukee test, you could be a second or two faster than a car in front of you but it's hard to get around. How much is just patience going to be for these ovals if you're up front and you catch that back of the pack, to kind of just surviving that?

LOUIS FOSTER: Yeah, I mean, you've got to have the right car to do it, obviously. On the oval, the car is everything.

So yeah, I guess it's just waiting for a chance to go past and probably just setting your move a few laps in advance as fast as possible. But we'll have to wait and see.



JACOB ABEL: Yeah, I mean, sure, they're one-lane racetracks, right, but we have 20-some-odd cars now, so like it or not, you kind of have to learn how to run the second lane. That's where it gets pretty interesting. Some of the deltas between the cars up front and the cars in the back are decently big, so I think you're going to be in traffic starting about lap 10, 15, so I think that's going to be the crucial thing for all the ovals this year, especially Iowa.

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