

NTT INDYCAR SERIES

News Conference

Saturday, July 13, 2024

Louis Foster

James Roe

Salvador de Alba Jr.

Press Conference



(Press conferences started in progress.)

LOUIS FOSTER: -- it was a big concern of ours. Near the end the car was super in the window. They were as fresh as anything, my tires. I knew I could go. I knew I had the pace on the outside, gave it a go. James gave me respectful room. It was a good overtake. We had a great car. A big thank you to Andretti.

THE MODERATOR: James, congratulations to you. If somebody would have told you going into the weekend you would have pole position, track record and a podium finish, I am assuming you would take that.

JAMES ROE: Yeah, a positive weekend. To follow up on what Louis said, as a team incredibly strong. In practice we didn't look that quick. We were surprisingly very confident going into qualifying. For us, it's just about executing.

Yeah, today great start, and we got through things. As the run went down, front bar was stuck and didn't have much range of adjustment on it. Got to a point, I said that this is the balance. Hung on from there. Fairness to Louis, he had a mega run. We race each other as teammates, that's first and foremost.

Yeah, super happy, pole, P2 and a lap record, we'll take that.

THE MODERATOR: Don't damage anything on your way.

JAMES ROE: Yeah, exactly. We had a team meeting this morning. There were some team orders early on, and that was ended with, You also know how to race each other. Yeah, that's that.

THE MODERATOR: Salvador, a lot of success on ovals. Do you feel comfortable racing on ovals?

SALVADOR de ALBA JR.: Yeah, definitely the ovals are suited to me. It showed today. Yesterday qualifying wasn't great. We knew the car was probably going to be better in the race.

Yeah, we tried and stuck going around the outside probably half of the race. That helped with the tires and going around with cars. We also had the biggest move. It was a very good race. Very proud of the team, of Cape guys and Andretti. Congratulations to the big team.

THE MODERATOR: Open it up for questions.

Q. James, obviously it's been a tough go of races since May. Heck of a rebound for you.

JAMES ROE: Yeah, for sure. It's been a hell of a run. Obviously we had a good Barber and a good Indy GP. Then went to Detroit and was on a pole lap, hit the wall, banged wheels. Found out four weeks later I broke my hand in that incident. So did Road America and Laguna with that just managing things.

Kind of felt once your down, you're always being kicked. In fairness to these guys at Andretti, just never ever give up. From Michael to JF and the guys, who just say, Keep digging, keep digging.

We knew the pace we had. Pace wasn't necessarily an issue at most of the tracks we went to. It was just a matter of executing. This weekend we almost had a perfect end.

Q. How much did you feel the balance change on the car over the course of the race? Obviously tires were the subject going into today.

SALVADOR de ALBA JR.: For me the car was always in the window, just trying to manage front tires, especially with the shortened race and what we knew probably was going to happen.

Yeah, just managing with the tools. But for sure at least my car was in the window of the whole race. That's due to the good job on the Cape and Andretti team.



LOUIS FOSTER: Yeah, I think we knew how long the race was going to be. We knew what the tires were going to be like. I mean, as of the front, the first 15 laps, how many it was, we could have easily been flat, but we weren't. We were specifically saving our tires.

I think if there was anyone on the field who really (indiscernible) with their tires, I would blame it up to them not managing them well enough. We knew what it was going to be like. It wasn't a surprise.

From our side at Andretti, we had a good run plan for the race, we knew what we needed to do. Andretti gave us a great car to allow us to keep it to the end. I think that's what separated us from the rest of the field today.

Q. You don't get a chance to run ovals very often. When you get to run them, how cool is it, the sense of speed, whipping around here as fast as you do?

JAMES ROE: Yeah, for me, I love oval qualifying clearly. But, yeah, I guess it's when you really get to feel these cars, and especially this weekend. We took over 250 pounds of downforce off the car in the middle of practice one. Had to go out and hold it flat, wide open.

Yeah, I think 171-miles-an-hour lap around seven-eighths of a mile lap, you get a feeling what these cars are all about.

LOUIS FOSTER: Obviously I came from Europe where we had no ovals at all. Yeah, this is like my only fifth-ever oval. Yeah, for me obviously I'm still learning a lot, trying to learn off the big guys.

Yeah, it's super cool. Especially this place with how fast we were, especially in qualifying. I remember last night I watched back the quallie laps from the TV broadcast on our qualifying. I was like, Really go that fast? That's quick.

No, I love it here. It's a really good circuit. I love the ovals.

SALVADOR de ALBA JR.: For me, I do have experience in oval, but with stockcars. It's quite a different speed and aerodynamics on this. I've never been to a flat-out oval. First time yesterday. In the fifth lap the car felt great to go flat.

As James said, they took out a lot of downforce, and it was even flat. Yeah, it's super cool to have a lot of speed and race side-by-side.

Yeah, just thrilled about the result. First podium in here. Yeah, just a little break for the next oval.

Q. When you're running that fast, is it fun or borderline frightening?

SALVADOR de ALBA JR.: For me, it's just fun. It was side-by-side, super close with a couple other drivers. But really you got to leave some room and fight for the position, know how your car is. Know if you're going to fence it, you're going to fence it. Just lift.

LOUIS FOSTER: I think if you're ever scared as a driver, you're in the wrong spot. I don't think you can be allowed to be scared. I think if you're scared, you're not ever going to win a race.

You just got to disconnect that part of your brain and get on with it.

Q. (No microphone.)

LOUIS FOSTER: I love it. It's great fun. Obviously there's risk involved. No one is out there thinking, What if I hit the wall? You're thinking, How do I pass the car in front or get a better lap time? That's how I see it personally. Obviously it's a risk, but it's what we sign up for.

JAMES ROE: Like Louis said, the faster you go, the more grip we have. That's where the thrill comes from. Yeah, no, it's pretty fun.

Q. Louis, what has the process been like adapting to ovals given it is so different to what you have been used to?

LOUIS FOSTER: I think the procedure as a driver is the same. You're still driving the same car, but it's a different kind of way to drive it, I guess.

I think the best thing to do is just go into ovals with a very, like, open book. Be a sponge in essence. Learn as much as possible, and try the hardest you can to learn all the tactics on ovals, the way to drive it properly, the way the car should feel, and work with your engineer.

That's the most important thing with the car on the oval is getting it right with the engineer. You can look like an absolute hero on oval or look like an idiot, depending on how you're setup is. That's super important.

JAMES ROE: Yeah, no, Louis is dead right. I think the biggest thing is albeit we sound like heroes saying, You've got to go flat and respect them as well, and they bite. We see that in INDYCAR, INDY NXT. Even today in a shortened race, I think there was three wrecks.

Yeah, know where the limit is, drive to it. Really it's trying

to pull your feet back a bit so you can really specific and finesse things, massage the car instead of throwing big changes at it is. That's probably the biggest thing we can adapt coming over here.

Q. Louis, you mentioned how important winning that scholarship is for your future. Could you touch on where that leaves your mentality, whether that adds any extra weight into this championship fight for you?

LOUIS FOSTER: I mean, yeah. Obviously for my situation, for me to move up to INDYCAR next year, will be very, very, very beneficial to win the championship. Obviously never say never. I don't know how many points we are now. I think Caio and Abel had a pretty difficult day.

Not really, no. I'm going to do the same thing I've always done. When we get to Nashville, maybe the last two rounds, seeing where it is, different decisions will be made.

But we're still going to try to put it on pole every weekend and win every race. The mentality is going to stay the same. Obviously it's a big sum of money. It would be lovely to have, but we're just going to keep doing what we're doing.

Q. Will you be catching the finals of the Euros tomorrow?

LOUIS FOSTER: Of course, yes. Of course, yes. I don't know. I hope we win, but our track record is not great. Yeah, I'll be cheering them on.

Q. INDYCAR had an extra practice session this weekend to try a new tire compound. There was more running on the high line, which needed to be gripped up for you guys to do side-by-side action. When you started this race, were you feeling confident it was going to be grippy enough to go straight into some battles, or you were learning more about how much grip there was outside of the usual racing line?

SALVADOR de ALBA JR.: For me, it was just the way to get up front. I didn't know exactly how much grip it was going to be. I just go for it. It worked very well.

Yeah, it was definitely a lot of grip out there. Especially the first couple laps when we were not up to speed, that's when it worked a lot.

LOUIS FOSTER: Yeah, I mean, like I said, I was following James. I wasn't planning on using it. When I did the overtake, I didn't know it was going to be grippy. I trusted the car to allow me to send it in from that high up.

Yeah, it was more hope and pray than a know. Sometimes in our practice it was quite slippery, but we knew they had ran that practice on the high line to give us some grip. It's super helpful when they do that actually.

JAMES ROE: Yeah, no, the guys covered everything. Actually, I didn't run the high line. You have it at turn one and two, repaved, two lines. You can be on the new pavement on both sides. It's the difference between old pavement and new pavement that we found is a difference.

It's more so three and four. When you're coming into three, you switch over pavement. It's easy to get a little high there. I think that's even in INDYCAR where you saw the incidents happening. That's where I'd watch in the race if we're going to do anything.

Q. When Caio retired early on, he spoke about understeer being a problem from early in the stints, and how it got worse the longer the race went on. Was that an issue for you as well?

LOUIS FOSTER: I mean, no, because we managed it quite well, I think. Probably if anyone had the most understeer, it's probably Salvador. I backed off enough from James, doing slow enough laps where I was saving tires pretty much the entire race until the last six, seven laps.

SALVADOR de ALBA JR.: Yeah, for me I did had understeer at the middle of the race, especially lap four or five on the restart. Yeah, it was everything about managing a little bit. At the end it paid off and we had the pace.

JAMES ROE: Yeah, for me understeer was definitely a thing as the run went on. So, yeah, we tuned the rear bar as much as we could. Would have loved to have some front bar to play with. That's the circumstance and the direction we went.

Q. How much of the knowledge from today is transferrable to Gateway and Milwaukee?

LOUIS FOSTER: We did a Milwaukee test. I don't think any circuits are repaved, from memory. None of them are repaved. We did a Milwaukee test. We have a Nashville test coming up. We're not testing at St. Louis prior to the event. That's the same as last year. Similar compound of tires. I don't think we should have any tire issues there.

Knowledge-wise this is quite different to the other three ovals. All three ovals on our calendar are very different from each other, which is very cool for us drivers. Yeah,

probably, if anything, confidence. Us three go into the next oval weekend and we podium-ed the previous one. We have better confidence on our backs to go and push the limits.

Q. Louis, you talk about the scholarship being very important for you. Have conversations already taken place for next year with teams? What is the time frame?

LOUIS FOSTER: Yeah, I mean, we've been in contact with quite a few teams about next year. Again, I need to win the championship. I need that money, so...

Yeah, I'm not going to know anything until I would expect no earlier than September, October. I think, again, our full focus is just winning this championship. If I can (indiscernible), hopefully that will be enough.

Q. Salvador, can you speak to this being the first podium in a brand-new race engineer for Trevor Green-Smith.

SALVADOR de ALBA JR.: Well, yeah, as I said before, this podium is for everyone, right? We as a team work together for probably more than half a season right now. Yeah, we're in the second part of the season.

We've been working together very well. He's a great guy. For sure we will be learning together more and more every day. Yeah, this result is a great relief and we know that we know we're going in the right direction.

THE MODERATOR: Congratulations and enjoy a couple of weeks off.

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