

NTT INDYCAR SERIES

News Conference

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Linus Lundqvist

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: A busy stretch, let's call it, continues this weekend with the NTT INDYCAR SERIES for the 30th time the series races at Portland International Raceway. Linus Lundqvist heads there with let's call it a lot of momentum after a big Saturday at World Wide Technology Raceway, scored his first podium on an oval, second podium during his rookie season. Linus leads the Rookie of the Year standings with a 71 point lead.

With that, the driver of the No. 8 American Legion Chip Ganassi Honda joins us.

Linus, thanks for doing this.

LINUS LUNDQVIST: Good to see you guys.

THE MODERATOR: After a couple days to digest Saturday night's race, what did you make of your night?

LINUS LUNDQVIST: Yeah, thank you, it was a fun night. Any day you get to end on the podium is usually a pretty good day. It was nice.

I was also very happy to see that we got some good racing. Obviously I think everybody were a little bit concerned going into it that it might not end up being the race that we saw.

Even in the first stint, I think the second lane kind of opened us for most of us. Especially with the high downforce, you can actually get some slip streaming and actually follow. It turned out to be a long night, but a fun one for us, for sure.

THE MODERATOR: How do you characterize your rookie season?

LINUS LUNDQVIST: Yeah, I mean, that's going to be our focus, to kind of finish off strong. I mentioned this earlier as well, but I think the summer break was actually very good for me personally, but I think for the team as well. It's been so hectic.

Coming to the summer break, that first weekend was my first free weekend since, like, middle of April maybe. It felt nice to kind of take it a little bit easy and actually have some time to go through the lessons that we learned throughout the year.

I think we showed a little bit of that on Saturday, as well, the things that we picked up throughout the year. We were able to have a very, very solid race. Hopefully more of that come the last four races.

THE MODERATOR: We'll open it up for questions.

Q. Post Barber you said you didn't do too much of the work, it was down to strategy. In comparison, how do you reflect on this one?

LINUS LUNDQVIST: I would say it was a bit of a combination. Strategy was definitely on point, especially in the last call during the last yellow to kind of get us back there on the lead lap. That kind of made our night to have the chance to fight for a podium.

Even without that, I think we were looking to fight for a top six, top seven finish, which again would have been a very solid night for us.

The strategy definitely helped us on the last call, getting us to that position as well. I think it was a bit of a combination.

Personally I think I drove a pretty good race. Was fast when I needed to, were able to pass cars, which was nice. The longer the race went on, the more comfortable I felt. Towards the end we had a fun little last restart.

Q. Your racing career started in Europe. You haven't had much oval experience. Do you feel you're there with less than 10 races under your belt?

LINUS LUNDQVIST: I think the oval experience and the oval learning is not going to stop. I would say I'm far from a complete driver on ovals. I still got plenty to learn. Every single race I do in ovals, the better I get. The race we had this weekend was another kind of step in the right direction, a think a boost in confidence as well in ovals.

I could feel my confidence going up throughout the race because we started off, balance wasn't ideal, but we made some tweaks over the first and second pit stops. As the race went on and towards the end I felt very comfortable.

Hopefully we can build on this. We have three more oval races in the last four coming up. Hopefully that's something positive for us.

Q. Looking at the whole season, you had some highs, some difficult times. Compared to how you expected the season to go, how would you reflect on that?

LINUS LUNDQVIST: Yeah, I think it's been a season of some pretty good highs, but also some pretty low lows. I also think that this is kind of how a rookie season can go. I think I made some rookie mistakes. I expected more of myself in the beginning. I was thinking, I've done three races, I know what this is about, and then realized quite quickly I was in for a bit of a shock. There's been a lot of learning to do.

Some of these tracks as well you've never been to. One of the biggest things that I think I've learned across the year is energy management. Like I said, it's been a hectic season. Just the ability to manage your energy, what to do, what to focus, when to relax, that's been a big learning curve for me.

Q. You mentioned Saturday you needed the break. What did you learn about yourself or this team or the NTT INDYCAR SERIES in the three weeks to turn that into a third-place performance?

LINUS LUNDQVIST: I learned many, many things, both about the series, about myself, about the team. I think more so about myself.

Every now and again you kind of need to decompress and not think about racing for a little bit. I think the biggest thing was, the feeling that I had almost across the season was, like, you left one race weekend and it was straight into the new one. You could never take a bit of time to reflect and digest everything that you learned, try to apply it in the next race weekend.

Now I actually had time to go through all my notes, all the notes that the team made. This was good, this was bad, this is a setup change in the car, things like that. You had a little bit more time to sit down, relaxed environment to focus.

I think that was one of the kind of things that helped us going into this weekend as well. We went in with an idea of what I needed to do, what I needed from the car to be

able to have a good race day.

Q. You mentioned about the momentum, hoping it carries through. What's the feeling like today on a Tuesday compared to last week? You're back in a car in a few days. What is the feeling like today compared to last Tuesday?

LINUS LUNDQVIST: It feels good. I feel energized. I think every time you come off a good result, it makes the days go by a little bit easier, faster.

I think as well with the break, I was actually able to work a little bit ahead as well. Preparation for Portland already started during the summer break. Now it doesn't feel like I dive straight into an unknown weekend. I kind of already know what to expect.

It's a place I have been to before, which is nice, obviously never in an INDYCAR. I look forward to it. Like I said, especially now when we've got a good feeling on the ovals, I look forward to Milwaukee and Nashville, too.

THE MODERATOR: What is it about Portland that you really enjoy?

LINUS LUNDQVIST: I mean, I enjoy going back to the west coast. That's going to be nice. The track itself usually ends up being some pretty good racing. The overtaking opportunity especially into turn one can be very tempting. Starts and restarts tend to be quite chaotic, which usually can be fun.

It has a mixture of high speed, low speed corners. We know how these cars perform in the high speed stuff. I look forward to try that out. Even in the INDY NXT car it was fun, so hopefully in the INDYCAR it's even more.

Q. There was this anticipation of what we had in Iowa was similar to what we were going to see at Gateway. That wasn't the case. I imagine that brings a level of optimism looking at Milwaukee. Why was that so different, and do you anticipate that for Milwaukee?

LINUS LUNDQVIST: Yeah, it's a great question, I think a question both me and the team has been asking ourselves as well. Is this the racing we're going to anticipate now in Milwaukee and Nashville?

The answer is that we don't know because, both myself and a lot of other drivers in the team were hesitant going into this one, that it might be the same race we saw in Iowa, but it didn't. I think props to INDYCAR and for Firestone for delivering a good product, allowing us to have a good race.

I think there were a couple of things that definitely helped the racing. For once the second lane was open for quite some time. I think people committed to that outside lane. There were some reasons for that. I think they did a great job on the sweeping. Secondly, I think the tire had a fair amount of deg which means you needed to pass people. That's kind of what kept the second lane open.

I think in combination with the higher downforce levels that were mandated meant you could follow a little better. Also the slipstream effect was better. You could slipstream up and pass somebody inside of the drive being so little. I think all those combinations made for an exciting race day. It was at least from inside the car.

Hopefully we can see that in Milwaukee and Nashville. Very different tracks. But I think if we can keep the same concepts, I think we're in for some good weekends.

Q. What is left for you, what do you want to accomplish before this year is over? What is the goal?

LINUS LUNDQVIST: Yeah, great question that.

I think the goal is going to be, like, there's an original answer, but it's going to be to maximize every weekend.

I still like to think obviously Rookie of the Year championship would be nice, to be able to win that, because you can only win it once. Overall looking at the championship, I think if we can string some good results together, maybe a top 10 is a little bit much, but we can definitely start to pick up a couple places here, and that would be nice.

I think that's kind of the plan and the target going forward, maximize what we got, but hopefully climb a few spots in the championship here.

THE MODERATOR: What would Rookie of the Year mean to you?

LINUS LUNDQVIST: It would mean a lot in the sense that you can only win it once. It's great if you can do it. At the same time I think I alluded to it at the beginning of the year, it's not really what I'm here to do. I'm here to win championships, not rookie championships.

Obviously this year we have been far from having the ability to fight for a championship. I'll take what I can get. If this is the championship I can fight for right now, then I'll take it.

In the future, that's not what I'm interested or intended to

do.

Q. Talking about the Scandinavians having hockey players and race car drivers. In hockey confidence is almost everything. How important is confidence to you in this season?

LINUS LUNDQVIST: I think confidence is one of the most important things, I think especially in racing, because it is very much a mental sport.

Confidence is great when you have it, and when you don't, you really wish that you do. I think that, again, is a little bit of a steppingstone for me. All right, we are doing something right. With the last three out of the four races being oval races, it kind of brings my confidence level up.

Again, I'm not super experienced on the ovals, so any bit of success we can get on it is going to help us going forward.

Q. What would it mean to Sweden for them to have a Rookie of the Year in the NTT INDYCAR SERIES?

LINUS LUNDQVIST: Yeah, I mean, hopefully we'll see in a couple weeks (smiling). That's going to be my answer to that.

I don't know. Obviously Felix won it back in 2019. I feel it's about that time. Add another Swede to that list would be nice.

At the end of the day it's not why I'm here. Also it's something you can only win once. If I have a chance to do it, I'm going to go for it.

Q. Hybrids, you've had it for a few races now, road course, oval. Talk about what has it brought to you behind the wheel, changed your approach to races, if at all?

LINUS LUNDQVIST: I mean, I wouldn't say that it changed the approach to races. The mindset is still very much the same. I think it's just added another element, both to us drivers, because we're a little bit more busy in terms of tools and pressing buttons and checking energy levels, et cetera, but I think from an engineer's point of view it's changed a little bit both in terms of energy management, where is the most efficient way to use it, where to re-gen, but obviously we add a fair amount of weight to the car, so it changed the car's balance. The engineers had to take that into account.

Every track we go to with the hybrid, it's not going to be identical as last year because fundamentally the weight of the car has changed by a fair amount. I think it's added



something they need to take into account.

I think they actually enjoy it. This car now is, what, 12 years old. Every time you go to a track, it's going to be close-ish to what it was the year before. Now with the hybrid, it threw a bit of a curve ball to it.

Q. Portland you have two long straights. This is where you really need to choose where you apply it.

LINUS LUNDQVIST: Yeah, absolutely. Again, this is kind of where I don't really do that much. The engineers kind of run their simulations and say, This is the most efficient way of using it.

The fun part for me is, I think a lot of us drivers did it, you get used to it where you want to use it in the race because you use it to an advantage where it's the most efficient lap time-wise. When you throw it into a race scenario, because obviously it helps you to set up a pass or complete a move, you kind of need to keep that in mind. The guy made a mistake, I need to save it for the next straight, whatever it might be.

It's just added another element that you try to use to your advantage.

Q. There's been a lot talk of about charters, some reports about Ganassi possibly downsizing. Is that any way a worry for you?

LINUS LUNDQVIST: Yeah, I mean, I've read it and seen all the comments. Honestly, I don't know. Right now that's all I can say. I know there are a lot of talks, a lot of writings, but there always tends to be around this time of year.

I know the best thing I can do is still perform at the track. What's outside of my control, that's what it is. But yeah, we'll see. Time will tell.

Q. Silly season.

LINUS LUNDQVIST: Silly season.

THE MODERATOR: Better to be on this side of the silly season than previously in your career?

LINUS LUNDQVIST: I was about to say, no matter what the talks say, it's a lot better than it was about a year ago (smiling).

THE MODERATOR: Linus, you'll be the sixth Chip Ganassi Racing Rookie of the Year if you're fortunate enough to win the award. Marcus Armstrong, Felix

Rosenqvist, Juan Pablo Montoya, Alex Zanardi, Eddie Cheever. That's a good group there.

LINUS LUNDQVIST: Yes.

Q. You try to maximize every weekend, but the results and the podiums is not the same thing as the standard.

LINUS LUNDQVIST: Yeah, absolutely. I think one of the things for me, as well, like I said, it's been a season with ups and downs for us. I think that I definitely need to focus on making sure that our lows are not that low.

This doesn't mean that every weekend is going to be a podium weekend, but it means that every weekend, every other weekend, could be a P20 and then a P3. It needs to be a P10, a P8, whatever it might be, then a podium.

That's one of the things moving forward as well, it's not that we target to win the last four races of the year, that's obviously what you want to do, but we're realistic, if you can't win the race, aim for a top 10. I think that's kind of where the mindset is right now going into these last four races, make sure we have four solid weekends, whatever that may be. If it's a win, if it's a podium, a top five, whatever it might be.

Q. This weekend will be the last attempt on a permanent course. You know the track, but the first time in an INDYCAR.

LINUS LUNDQVIST: I know the track. First time in an INDYCAR. It's the last road course race of the year. Obviously you want to do well.

I mean, everybody has the same mindset. Everybody wants to win. But we'll see what kind of package we show up with, how comfortable I feel. These INDYCAR weekends, they are tough because everybody is extremely talented. We know that qualifying is usually quite important around that place as well.

We'll see what we can do. I'm confident that we can build on the momentum we had in Gateway. After the summer break, we feel good on the No. 8 American Legion Honda side here.

Q. Last year your last race in INDYCAR was in Gateway. How was that evolution, how different is the Linus that we have right here in this press conference, he will face this Sunday racing in Portland, compared to that Linus we have seen last year make his debut in the oval in Gateway in terms of everything, manage the tires, the battery, and this change we have now in the hybrid?

LINUS LUNDQVIST: Yeah, I mean, very, very different. I look back at that kid, dare I say, and little did he know what he was getting himself into.

But I think it's been a year of lots of learning. Naïvely I did the three races last year and got somewhat of an understanding of what INDYCAR is about. Doing a full year really opened my eyes to what it is, how tough this championship really is.

It definitely brought into perspective how good everybody else is, but also the kind of work that goes into it, not only from a driver point of view but working with a team like Chip Ganassi Racing, working with some of the most talented and impressive people in the business.

It's very motivating to work with these guys, but it also adds pressure because you see the amount of time and effort that they dedicate to win races. You don't want to let 'em down. You want to put in just as much work if not more than they do.

Q. How can this transformation affect in the aspect that you have five cars?

LINUS LUNDQVIST: There's obviously pros and cons of going to five cars. I think we've almost had a little bit of a split in two where obviously you have Scott and Alex very much leading the team, gunning for a championship, then you kind of have us younger drivers still very much learning and looking up to those guys, trying to pick up things.

At the same time obviously we want to be fighting with them, but also kind of realizing that we're not really at the caliber to fight for the championship yet. That's obviously the goal to do one day.

Q. In a recent interview Alex said about INDYCAR and Formula 1 that he prefers to have two INDYCAR championship rather than not having a victory in Formula 1. Do you agree with him? How proud are you in the fact that you are competing in a competitive championship rather than Formula 1?

LINUS LUNDQVIST: Yeah, I 100% agree with Alex. As racing drivers, what we want to do is win. I think you'd much rather have a couple of INDYCAR titles than racing at the back in Formula 1. I think almost every racing driver would agree to that statement.

What's fun about INDYCAR as well is that on any given day I think any driver has an opportunity to win or at least podium a race. That's very few racing series, no matter what category we're talking about, that can offer that. In

my opinion, INDYCAR racing has some of the best racing in the entire world.

THE MODERATOR: Linus, you talked about the few races you did last year, now full-time this year. What is the most overwhelming learning from last year to this year?

LINUS LUNDQVIST: I alluded to it earlier, but because I did the races, I had an understanding of what the racing was going to be like, but I had no idea the intensity of how the season is, how intense it really is when everything gets going, especially the month of May.

It was overwhelming, it was draining, it was probably one of the best experiences that I've ever had, everything at once. I think I didn't really realize how much energy it kind of drains from you. You kind of need to take time to recover that, like I said, have time to go through what you learned, try to apply, and not head into the straight into the next weekend.

I learned time management, energy management. Yeah, it's more difficult than it sounds like. It's not something that I've had to deal with at this scale ever before.

THE MODERATOR: Portland Sunday, then doubleheader at Milwaukee Mile after that. Maybe a weekend off, then Nashville. Congratulations on your success so far this year. Here is to many more.

LINUS LUNDQVIST: Here's to many more. Thank you.

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