

# NTT INDYCAR SERIES

## News Conference

Sunday, August 25, 2024

**Jacob Abel**

**Louis Foster**

**Bryce Aron**

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: Good morning. Joined now by the podium finishers from today's race.

Obviously winning for the third time this season, Jacob Abel, Abel Motorsports. First win obviously here in Portland, third win of the season, first since IMS road course in May. He picks up the three bonus points, so mathematically alive in the INDY NXT by Firestone championship.

Louis Foster comes home second for Andretti Global. First runner-up finish since Mid-Ohio. 10th podium of the season. 16th of his career.

Also joining us, finishing third, rookie Bryce Aron for Andretti Global. First podium since Laguna Seca race two earlier this year. Second podium of the season.

Jacob, everything about this race begins and ends with the pass in turn one. How did you do it?

JACOB ABEL: It's a really unique kind of start here. We start accelerating basically on the exit of the last corner, so it almost performs a little bit like a restart.

Yeah, it was kind of like an over-under type of move. He got a good run out of the last corner. Tucked into the draft. Faked left a little bit, then dove it down on the inside.

We were just talking.

How much room was really there?

I said I didn't really know, I was just going to go for it either way.

Really wanted to get a win for us. I knew that we really needed to be out front if that was the case. Yeah, it ended up working really well.

THE MODERATOR: Extending this championship, that's what this weekend was all about for you.

JACOB ABEL: For sure. I think we're trying to enjoy it. Me personally, kind of trying to enjoy the last few races here, trying to go out and get race wins, as good of results as possible.

I think championship is a little far out there. Yeah, the only way to really keep that alive in any sense is to win races I guess. Yeah, we're just trying to go out and perform, and hopefully opening eyes to some INDYCAR teams because that's where I'm trying to get to next year.

THE MODERATOR: Louis, what did you see in your rearview mirrors on the start?

LOUIS FOSTER: Yeah, Jacob got a really good start. Yeah, I felt like I defended enough, but obviously a little bit extra there on the inside that Jacob was willing to take the risk and go there. It paid off for him. Like he said, that's what he's got to do at this stage of the championship.

Once he was there, it was like yours. I don't want any involvement in this. Like I said this weekend, once I got through turn one cleanly, I was happy.

We put a ton of pressure on him. Definitely had a very fast car at the start of the race, really throughout the race, but faded at the end with tires falling off following so closely for so long. If we would have been out front, we would have had the car to pull away today. Sometimes you have to come second.

Like he said, it's the championship.

THE MODERATOR: Bryce Aron, the rookie, a lot of action there in the festival turn. What did you see there and how were you able to capitalize on that?

BRYCE ARON: Yeah, T1 for sure, managed to hustle down inside, had a good start. I didn't actually see much of the action. I think it happened to the left of me. Got inside braked late, be a bit assertive to make sure I got the position. That's where we were the rest of the race.



Luckily a good start. Good starts usually lead to good races, and that's what happened today.

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

**Q. Louis, lap two, lap three, you came close to taking the lead. Talk about that incident back there on the backstretch.**

LOUIS FOSTER: When we touched?

**Q. Yes.**

LOUIS FOSTER: Yeah, I mean, Jacob, I've been following Jacob a few times throughout my INDY NXT career and he is very good at using push to pass at the start of the race. Like, yeah, I think I wanted to go for a spot where he wouldn't expect it. So I went into turn 7 to turn 10.

Yeah, I had a nose up the inside. I was never really going to commit to that move. I wasn't alongside enough. Then he fully committed to turning in.

How either of us finished the race after that is beyond me really. Did you have any damage?

JACOB ABEL: No.

LOUIS FOSTER: Yeah, but anyway, it was good, clean, fair racing.

**Q. After that, did that put in your mind we're not going to try that any more, settle for second?**

LOUIS FOSTER: Yeah, a bit of that. Yeah, I mean, I was worried about cars behind. We were using so much push to pass in the first half of the race, we were going to be sitting ducks if we went at that. I backed a little bit, tried to save tires.

It's so hard to follow around that middle section of the track. You lose time. We had a strong car all weekend. It's so hard to overtake here.

**Q. Louis, you have to finish 16th twice to win the championship. When you first moved over to the U.S., did you have a plan in mind of where you wanted to be at this stage? Did you expect to be here on the verge of a second championship?**

LOUIS FOSTER: Was that to me? I couldn't understand.

**Q. They said in the broadcast you just needed to finish 16th twice to win the championship. When you**

**first came over, did you have a plan of where you wanted to be at this stage?**

LOUIS FOSTER: Right, okay.

No, I mean, I wasn't sure what to expect when I came to the U.S. Obviously I came over here in 2022. We managed to win Indy pro my first year, which really helped me move up to INDY NXT with financial support from Anderson Promotions. I would have loved to have done one year of INDY NXT. We had a strong pace last year, just as strong as this year, but just not the consistency that a second driver has.

There was no real, like, plan in motion. There was no prior deals with an INDYCAR team for three, four years down the line. There was nothing like that. It was come over here and see what we can do in America. The opportunity has presented me, I can't thank everyone out here enough.

**Q. After Detroit, I asked you about momentum. You haven't finished lower than second in the last nine races. Obviously we hear a lot about momentum. How much of a factor is it when you get that sort of rhythm going in a championship?**

LOUIS FOSTER: Yeah, I think it's very important. I think once the team is hitting their strides, everyone feels good about themselves, they keep pushing.

I think if you're a driver that tends to finish second, per se, you can tend to feel a lot more motivated to get back to the top step. Luckily I'm with a team that works so hard, even though we have been winning all these races, we work just as hard as we were at the start of the year when we had a bit of a bad few rounds. Although we've got good momentum, we're also continuing our work at pace. I think it's just a combination of those things.

Like I said, I want to finish the year out. You said I need two 16ths. I don't want to do that. I want to win two races.

Yeah, we're going to go to Milwaukee. We led the test there. We'll see what happens.

**Q. Jacob, you came into the season with four podiums, best finish of second. You now have three wins. How do you assess the progress you've made through this year? How successful a season has it been?**

JACOB ABEL: Yeah, it's been very successful. As a driver, I've just taken another step in my progression, as well as the team at the same time.



It's been a super rewarding process for that to be kind of happening in sync a little bit. We've had a super, super strong year. Just to even compete with teams and drivers like Andretti and Louis, Caio, HMD, it's a really tough feat. I think we've done it and we beat them weekends, have been right there in the fight all year long.

Yeah, super proud of the whole entire team. Really proud of our effort. Unfortunately the championship kind of slipped away in the middle of the season with a little bit of bad luck, a little bit of mistakes here and there.

But yeah, I think at the end of the day we're still a relatively small team and a relatively young team compared to these other organizations. For us to accomplish what we've accomplished I think is really impressive. Hopefully really indicative of what the future may hold for the program and hopefully for me as a driver.

**Q. You mentioned INDYCAR is the goal. How are things shaping up on your side? Is there a chance for INDYCAR next year?**

JACOB ABEL: Yeah, I mean, I'll probably give you the same answer as every other driver looking to go in INDYCAR next year. We've been in talks with teams. It's a tough time to be going into INDYCAR right now with multiple different factors. It's one of the most competitive series in the world with some of the best drivers in the world. Just trying to get a seat at the table is pretty difficult.

But yeah, we're working our hardest at it.

**Q. We've had a lot of reports recently about potential charter systems being introduced in INDYCAR, how that can affect how many cars each team can run. With the knowledge that you have of that potential system, do you think it's going to make it easier or harder for drivers in INDY NXT to make it onto the INDYCAR grid in the future?**

LOUIS FOSTER: I don't know. It's less cars for some teams, more cars for others. I don't know. It's difficult. I think the biggest thing with INDYCAR is with the teams themselves, their business. It's financially making sure that the books don't look too red.

You're always going to need drivers to bring money in certain teams. So I think I don't know if that makes it easier or harder. At the moment it feels pretty hard, I'll tell you that now (smiling).

Yeah, we'll see what the future holds. I think it's a good system in the sense that it gives continuity with the series and the teams rather than having some teams with five

cars, some with two, some with one, et cetera. It gives continuity to the series.

I think it's a good thing as a whole for INDYCAR in my mind. But I don't know if that makes it easier or harder for drivers like us to go into the top series. I don't think it really affects it.

**Q. Other two have any comments on that?**

JACOB ABEL: Echo what Louis has to say. I think, if anything, the only reason it would really affect us is the unknown that's still there for all the teams. Obviously nothing has been signed yet, announced yet. I think the teams are holding their cards closer to their chest. That might be the only reason.

At the end of the day there will probably be the same amount of seats in INDYCAR available for next year, so it really shouldn't change too much on our end.

BRYCE ARON: Yeah, for sure, I think in my opinion I think more cars are better because it leaves more spots open for the young drivers coming through. I'm not super familiar with the charter system that could potentially be implemented. It's definitely a hard sport to move up in. I'm kind of in favor of anything that helps young drivers move forward.

**Q. Looking at the rungs below INDY NXT, drivers are doing multiple programs. They've been more competitive because they've done both. Do you think just doing INDY NXT on its own prepares you for INDYCAR better or do you think having a double program will prepare you for that INDYCAR paddock?**

JACOB ABEL: Me personally, I like to drive whatever I can. I think it's always a benefit.

At the end of the day all racing is really expensive. If some drivers can afford to do multiple series at once, that's awesome. But the further you move up the ladder, the more difficult that becomes.

Yeah, I'd love to drive anything that I can. It is difficult with the funding. The nice thing about INDY NXT, if you're only going to do one thing, we're on the same tires as INDYCAR, racing on the same tracks, we do ovals. That's the series, if you're going to pick one, that's going to best prepare you.

Obviously the more the merrier.

LOUIS FOSTER: Just copy what Jacob said and write that.

BRYCE ARON: From my aspect, for sure the more seat time, the more seat time you have, it helps you.

If you're doing two championships at the same time, even different cars have different characteristics. It could hurt you. A lot of guys in winter do Daytona, some type of endurance racing, Formula Regional Oceania. I did that this year to stay fresh. If you're able to do some stuff in the winter, it can help.

As Jacob said, it's difficult to do multiple things at the same time. It's hard on the budget. For sure I think focusing on one thing and really working at it hard almost ends up better.

**Q. Jacob, the mentality going into turn one, you said you were going to go for it regardless. Was that because you qualified second, knew clean air was such a big deal? Do you make that move if you're third in line?**

JACOB ABEL: Yeah, we qualified second. I think honestly clean air is very important. All weekend long we've had a little bit of a gap to Louis. He won the race here, kind of rolled off with that same car. They've been fine-tuning it. We rolled off with something that wasn't super great, but we were just kind of building it all weekend long, rethinking everything, going at it in a different way. We were a little bit behind. I know the best place to manage a race is from the front.

Yeah, I was going to try to do whatever I could to get there. It ended up working out. We were able to hold him off, hold him in the dirty air, make him lose his tires a little bit. That was probably going to be the only way we could win this race. We executed really well.

**Q. You start the season as strong as you do, there's aspirations for the championship, the middle of the season didn't quite go the way you were hoping. To kind of go through a mid-season drought, to be able to get back on the top step of the podium, how good does this feel?**

JACOB ABEL: Yeah, it's really amazing. This win is almost as special as the first two, for sure.

Getting our first wins of the season, INDY NXT, so early on, then not doing it for a few races in a row kind of got a little bit rough. I missed winning races. It was obviously a really good start to the year.

Yeah, we just really put our head down and kept working at it. We knew we had the pace and had the ability to get

back up here. We were able to pull it off.

We have two more chances to do that. That's what we're going to try to do the next two weekends.

**Q. Bryce, these guys have done multiple seasons in INDY NXT. Kept them up front all season. How hard is it to compete against these guys with that much experience?**

BRYCE ARON: Yeah, for sure, especially for me, I never raced at any of the U.S. tracks before. I never did the Road to Indy. Basically pretty much 95% of the tracks were new to me. Hadn't done any oval racing. Really jumping into the deepest here. Plus in the series you don't have a ton of off-season testing.

A lot to learn. Luckily with all the help from everyone at Andretti, was able to get up to speed. With the help of my teammates like Louis, looking at their data, just talking to them, has helped me a lot over the past few races and the season. Really grateful for that.

But definitely difficult job trying to compete against experience. It's not normal when you're in Europe, which is where I raced from, you go to new tracks, the car might be slightly different. You go to new tracks that are a similar flow. When you come here, I think the tracks are quite a bit different. Street courses, road courses and ovals, you have three different types of challenges. It's challenge but rewarding when you get it right.

THE MODERATOR: We'll see what happens next weekend.

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