

NTT INDYCAR SERIES

News Conference

Saturday, August 31, 2024

Jacob Abel

Salvador de Alba Jr.

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: Joined by second- and third-place drivers, Jacob Abel, and finishing third from Guadalajara, Mexico, Salvador de Alba.

Obviously, Jacob, kind of a crazy start. How did you fight your way back up for a podium?

JACOB ABEL: Yeah, obviously lost a lot of ground there. Louis went a lot later than I was expecting, was kind of slowing down a little bit before that. I had to keep checking up so I didn't get ahead of him before we went green.

Obviously not ideal. I honestly don't even know what happened. I just got hit or something. I guess I saved it. I was really frustrated because we lost, like, six spots.

Yeah, we had a really, really strong race car. Moved forward really well, especially in the beginning. It was kind of balancing the saving tires trying to get more track position. I think we did a good job with that.

Just ran out a little bit at the end, but I think we made the most ground up more than everyone. We're really proud of that.

THE MODERATOR: Salvador, you took advantage early on, then a great battle for second.

SALVADOR DE ALBA JR.: Definitely the car was in a pretty good window. The start was crazy for me, as well. Hit the wall before turn one. That bend the car a little bit. Yeah, it was still pretty fast. I didn't know how much it would last. It last almost all laps, then Jacob was catching me. Yeah, he took second.

Pretty happy with the podium, second podium of the year. Having Michel here and my dad was awesome. Looking forward for the last race of the season.

THE MODERATOR: Questions.

Q. When you're chasing down your teammate, what was your mindset as you were gaining on him after the restart?

SALVADOR DE ALBA JR.: Of course, he had the clean air. It was no way I was going to do something crazy to get the lead.

But yeah, at the end of the day he had a pretty strong car. He kept the lead. He won the race and the championship, of course. Congrats to Louis and the whole team.

But yeah, we're here on the podium celebrating third. That's a good one for me, as well.

Q. You mentioned Michel is here. How much did you lean on him this week to get around this place?

SALVADOR DE ALBA JR.: A lot. I think it was a super cool race when he won. We have Michel, we have Oriol, which was the first and second at that point.

Yeah, obviously as well as Matt, my spotter, he was super keen on going hard on the start. It helped a lot. Obviously it didn't help bending the car in the wall, but even though it was a couple places gained.

Q. Jacob, how did you get from sixth back to second on a track where everybody said you couldn't pass?

JACOB ABEL: Yeah, I mean, I've been optimistic about this race kind of all weekend long. Maybe it was just me, which is fine. If I'm the only car that can pass, that's okay (smiling).

Yeah, I was just working the bottom really well. I knew what kind of I needed with the car, with the team. We worked a little bit on that kind of sacrificing our qualifying setup a little bit to have more security to run the bottom in the middle of the race, save our rear tires as much as we can.

Firestone brought a great product here that we could race with, but we also had to manage throughout the race, which was super rewarding. I think that's one of my strong suits as a driver, saving tires. I was able to do that. Just



worked the bottom really well. Kind of brought me back to my Lucas Oil days in the littler cars. Yeah, big shout-out to those series.

Yeah, it was just being as confident as we can, trying to go places that other cars weren't.

Q. Salvador, I saw you shaking your head about the comment about Firestone. Was it a racy tire?

SALVADOR DE ALBA JR.: Yeah. Jacob, they had a pretty good car at the end, and I was going backwards. Managing the tires was a big point in here.

Yeah, all the Andretti cars were pretty fast. They gave me a pretty good car to race, a racy car at the start, the restart. Yeah, celebrating my second podium.

Q. Jacob, what do you do in two weeks in Nashville? What is your goal for Nashville?

JACOB ABEL: To go and have some fun, man. Hopefully next year I'll be in the NTT INDYCAR SERIES. That's the goal. That's the dream. It has been for the past few years. To get there, we still need to perform as well as we can at this level and show to those teams that I belong there.

Yeah, just kind of do what we've been doing the past three weeks, going out and having fun and trying to win some races while we're at it.

Q. Jacob, presumably Nashville will be your last race in INDY NXT.

JACOB ABEL: Hopefully (smiling).

Q. You've been a staple in this series. Reflect on your time. Are you going to appreciate Nashville a little bit more moving on from the series?

JACOB ABEL: Yeah, for sure. It's bittersweet, absolutely. Our team has kind of gone on a pretty big journey here the past three years, and even before that. We started Indy Pro 2000 together. We've been racing together forever.

But yeah, this team, this engineer, mechanics, all of that, have remained pretty unchanged for the last three years. It's been something that we've really been able to build through together.

If you would have told me three years ago that a couple years down the road we'd be contending for the championship and winning races week in and week out, I'd be pretty happy with that.

Yeah, we've been able to really take it to the big dogs, Homestead, Andretti, Juncos. I hope we continue to do that even if I'm not here.

Q. Salvador, you may have seen or heard Mexico is in the news this week. One of the things that's come up, Pato does not think Mexico City can support three international races. As someone who races all over Mexico, NASCAR Mexico, do you think the country can support three international races?

SALVADOR DE ALBA JR.: Well, sure. I think the answer is straightforward. I think it can. We have a pretty awesome racetrack in Mexico City. It does have Formula 1, (indiscernible), now Cup Series. I think INDYCAR, it would be awesome if we have a race in Mexico again because it used to be racing in Monterrey and also the Champ Car in Mexico City.

Q. What are the other venues in Mexico INDYCAR could possibly go to?

SALVADOR DE ALBA JR.: Well, at the moment I think none of them. It has to be rebuilt, a racetrack. But we have a pretty good racetrack in Monterrey, which is Pato's hometown. Guadalajara is also a big city, which is my hometown, but we don't have a big racetrack.

It would be great. I'll do whatever it takes to have an INDYCAR in Mexico. Yeah, it will be a dream to have it back and possibly be one of the drivers there.

Q. (No microphone.)

SALVADOR DE ALBA JR.: Well, I'm trying. I'm trying. Yeah, I'm the reigning champion of NASCAR Mexico, but I'm not doing it 2024. But yeah, of course, I want to do it.

THE MODERATOR: Guys, congratulations on another podium.

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