

NTT INDYCAR SERIES

News Conference

Tuesday, January 14, 2025

Christian Lundgaard

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: Joined now by Christian Lundgaard, who will be in the No. 7 Arrow McLaren Chevrolet this coming season, beginning his fourth full year in the NTT INDYCAR Series, a podium at the Indy GP for Rahal Letterman Lanigan Racing last season before making the jump to the new team this year. Papaya is looking okay on you. Are you getting used to it?

CHRISTIAN LUNDGAARD: Yeah, I feel seen now, visually. It's a very bright color, papaya. It's exciting.

I think the moment that I knew, it was pretty difficult to not really say anything because you want it to get out because you're excited. But obviously it's happening now, so I'm very, very excited for the season.

Q. How would you describe this transition to the new team?

CHRISTIAN LUNDGAARD: It's been very smooth, to be honest. Obviously we did the test in October. It was exciting for me to try to feel the car on an oval, obviously, going into the Sebring test, as well, I'm just excited to feel it in different circumstances. But the transition with everybody has been very, very smooth. A lot of familiar faces, a lot of new faces, as well, and I think really that's the challenge.

It's the first time in my career that I drive for a different team in the same series. That's the only thing that really takes some getting used to.

Q. What's it been like switching from Honda to Chevy?

CHRISTIAN LUNDGAARD: It's been very smooth, as well. Obviously I received a lot of questions from Chevy at the test at Indy, and I was kind of surprised in some of the differences. There's obviously a few differences, but there was also some that was not really because of any manufacturer, just because of the car, and a lot of it turns out to kind of translate to just being the philosophy of the cars that were actually different.

But no, I think looking at where Chevy was in May, it's something that I'm very excited for, and it's a challenge that I'm prepared for at other tracks.

But I think it's going to be a positive for me there. They've given me a lot of information and just resources for me to get up to speed from the get-go, which I appreciated a lot.

Q. I think you've had probably two of the most underrated runs in the 500 coming from the back. You've been very consistent in that race. Now being with a team that has consistently been at the front at the Indianapolis 500, I know you don't want to look ahead of the first couple of races, but obviously the big elephant in the room is always the Indianapolis 500. How important was that test, getting some experience, and do you feel like you're going to have to get a lot of data information during the April test to set yourself up for a run in May?

CHRISTIAN LUNDGAARD: Yeah, I mean, yes. I mean, at the end of the day, having done this for three years, having been in the race, fortunately/unfortunately I've had the pleasure of coming from the back.

In a way, I take that as a positive now because I've learned to race from the back with the most turbulent air. Obviously I don't necessarily have the benefit of the more clean air, but I think from a race craft standpoint, I feel very confident in that.

The one thing I do believe is at the end of the day, the cars feel very similar but yet very different, but I think for me, it's more the car has a lot more pure pace than what I've had previously.

I think it's going to come easier in that sense, but I think the drivers that you race against are going to be battling harder for each position, which is going to be the challenge.

Q. Is there a track in particular that you say, I need to work a little bit more at or I need to get better at? Obviously there was a couple tracks last year we went to for the first time. We think of you, think of the Indy GP, you think of Toronto, you think of those places. Is it maybe the short ovals? Where do you feel you need



to improve in 2025?

CHRISTIAN LUNDGAARD: Honestly, all of them. I think being in a new car with new people, not having the information from the prior year, any data, it's going to be tough in that sense. Obviously I know my way around, but there's a lot of tricks and small little fine tunings that I think we all need to nail at the time, and we achieved that prior in some races and some we didn't.

But I think from my own perspective, yes, the ovals are something that I need to improve. Having been in a position where it's fighting for dear life just to a certain regard just getting the car home, and it's tough enough to fight other cars out there, I'm excited for that challenge.

I'm excited to kind of feel more competitive. I did that at the 500 in 2024 when we came from the back. We were leading at some point -- yes, we were on a different strategy, but at least you didn't really feel hopeless or helpless for that matter, and it's a lot more fun that way.

But I think all types of circuits, there's going to be some fine tuning, because at the end of the day I was strong in one street circuit but not so much the other for whatever reason that might have been. I think our main goal for 2025 specifically is to make sure that we're as competitive as we can be on every single racetrack.

Q. Obviously with changing teams comes a lot of change. Change of culture; change of learning Honda to Chevy. Do you embrace change? Is it difficult? How do you handle change? Is that something that you tackle or is it just kind of uncomfortable to?

CHRISTIAN LUNDGAARD: It's how life goes, man. There's always changes. I mean, it's been a smooth transition so far. I enjoy it. I think change is good at times.

When things are working, never change them, obviously, but it was time for a change, and we were all up for the challenge. Race engineer, the entire team, me, everybody behind me. I think we'll make the most of it for sure.

Q. Obviously you want to improve from year to year. Do you try to improve from the 45 car or do you look at what the 7 car, what Alexander did in that ride last year? How do you balance that as far as looking at a short-term goal for next season?

CHRISTIAN LUNDGAARD: Well, ultimately I can always use Alex as a reference in that sense, and I can use myself in a different car. Obviously I can use the experience that I have from one car, but bringing it into another, it's a different philosophy depending on the track, even all tracks

might be a different driving style than what I'm used to, and obviously that's the adaptation that I need to be able to handle.

I guess we'll see, but I've taken all the information that I've been provided to me, and obviously what I don't necessarily need, I can always throw away. But it's about learning as much and having the information and then taking use of it.

Q. It's not just a driving thing or a difference in the race car at McLaren; this is a team that is internationally famous. You see it with all of the drivers who drive for McLaren. You kind of gain international fame. You look around the racetracks, you see the jerseys and the merch that's sold, that seems to out-sell every other team. What is it like to have that additional side to this deal, not just you have to learn a new team, a new car, but you also have a lot more maybe social pressure to perform?

CHRISTIAN LUNDGAARD: Everybody loves papaya. You know, all my friends, they are like, wow, what is all this papaya running around? Who are these guys?

Yes, it's in a way a lot of pressure, but I think it's fantastic. I think what I saw the McLaren F1 team do from where they were a couple of years ago to where they are now, from a performance side, and just seeing the impact from a spectator and a fan side, it's what we're seeing here now, as well.

It was a no-brainer for me to make this transition when the offer occurred because seeing where they're headed is something that I wanted to be a part of.

I've been a part of another Formula 1 team in the past, so I understand the importance of all the media that we have to do. And that was the big question that I was asked at first, and I'm like, well, I'm used to it, I don't mind. It's a part of the world.

Q. Some of the other drivers who have been a part of this program have gotten an opportunity. Is there any desire or a clause in a contract about a Formula 1 test incentive at some point?

CHRISTIAN LUNDGAARD: No. I've been a part of that, and in my opinion it's passed. INDYCAR is where I want to be. Obviously I'll never say no in the sense that it's not a possibility, but it's certainly not where my intentions are. It's here in INDYCAR.

Q. You spent the better part of a decade trying to get to F1. You're going into your fourth INDYCAR season.



Does INDYCAR feel like home now?

CHRISTIAN LUNDGAARD: Absolutely. It did from day one. I don't really think this has really come out, even though I know I've said it multiple times before. INDYCAR reminds me of go-karts, which is what I fell in love with in the sport.

It's the atmosphere, the way everything works around. It's more -- it's about the racing rather than everything else. Yes, everything else comes with it, but it's ultimately whoever finishes -- crosses the start-finish line first is who wins. It's just pure racing.

Q. Is that maybe why we've seen Callum, Marcus, now Robert Shwartzman all finding a home here, guys that were really successful on the road to Formula 1 but just not quite there? Is it nice to have a place that you can come and find and make a career?

CHRISTIAN LUNDGAARD: Absolutely. I mean, I think Callum and I, in my opinion, I think Felix was a little ahead of time before people really realized from the European side what INDYCAR really was. I don't think there was enough attention back then.

It's obviously growing a lot more now, but I think me and Callum sort of opened the doors for Europeans to okay, this is an actual option, and because we were followed from Europe, I think it opened a lot of eyes of how amazing INDYCAR actually is.

I think all the Europeans are kind of stuck in the Formula 1 world and don't really realize what we are doing, and I hope we're here to help change that. Obviously even Will coming on board is a big factor for us, as well.

Q. Obviously with RLL they've sort of made clear that their oval package wasn't as strong as it should be or where they wanted it to be, but McLaren on the know hand have a good oval package and the team have won races. From a personal standpoint we maybe haven't seen what you can do in ovals, so from your perspective do you believe you're at the standard where you can compete at the front on ovals?

CHRISTIAN LUNDGAARD: Of course it is a question, but I think it's now a time where I can prove that. I think ultimately it's we'll see whenever we get to May, but I'm very optimistic. I have high hopes myself.

Q. Joining McLaren, you've now obviously got the support of Tony Kanaan. Have you learned much from him yet, and is there anything you're looking to get out of him?

CHRISTIAN LUNDGAARD: Yeah, I've spoken a lot to Tony about a lot of different topics. Obviously ovals being one of them. He's been a mentor from an outside standpoint of view, as well, to other people, kind of covering, as well, because he's been in the position where he's won a 500, been in a not-so-good car and knows what it's like driving a car that doesn't necessarily handle the way we want or is purely fast enough.

It's just tough. He's been a big part of, one, giving me this opportunity, as well, but also understanding and kind of telling people, hey, wait and see until he's in this car.

Q. I was just wondering, your road course results in 2024 were strong compared to your new teammate Pato O'Ward's. How do you intend to carry that momentum while adapting to McLaren's different car philosophy?

CHRISTIAN LUNDGAARD: That's interesting. I didn't even know that. I'll have to tell him.

I mean, I'm going to try to improve those stats on the other two types of circuits but sort of keep my road course then, I guess.

At the end of the day, my previous position has always been -- well, for the past three years, have been we know what we had on certain types of tracks and we knew that we were struggling on ovals. Obviously we were trying to improve.

We didn't improve as much as we would have liked in the time frame, but we also didn't improve enough on road and street circuits where I think the potential that Arrow McLaren has is massive. I'm not even in doubt that we will have all of those nailed.

Q. You've mentioned before in this press conference that change is part of life. Considering the previous test that you had in October with the McLaren car, have you changed something from your preparation for this season?

CHRISTIAN LUNDGAARD: I think -- yes, the preparation has changed, but it's minor. I don't really believe that there's a big reason to turn things upside down because at the end of the day, I was chosen for what I was able to do, so I don't think there's any reason to change that.

I think there's just been things added on. Obviously a change of team takes time. It takes a lot of effort to get up to speed on certain things.

We've spent a lot of time preparing for that and getting up to speed as fast as we can, but I would say from my specific off-season standpoint, I think it's been nice to be home with family spending the holidays, and we're now back, and it's business time.

Q. Another thing you've mentioned before is that your goal this season is to be as competitive as possible. To be that competitive, for example, is Pato O'Ward, who is the veteran driver of the team, is he a reference to be equally as competitive as him during the season in terms of results, or will a victory or podium be good for you?

CHRISTIAN LUNDGAARD: Yeah, considering -- this is my own standpoint of view, considering I already have podiums, I have a win, funnily enough it's a P1, P2 and P3. I don't have multiple of any of them yet.

But I think what Arrow McLaren and Pato did through the 2024 season, especially in Mid-Ohio with the hybrid being introduced, being the first winner also showed me that they're up for the challenge and they're ahead of everybody else.

For me going into this season, it's not to take the first couple of races getting up to speed. We want to be ready to fight for podiums and wins from the get-go.

At the end of the day, I want to win all races. We all do. But I think by doing that, you have to be competitive in every single event and put yourself in the best position to have a good result. Again, by doing that, you need to be competitive from the get-go.

Q. How is your golf swing?

CHRISTIAN LUNDGAARD: Golf swing is getting there. I've got the best coach.

Q. Who is?

CHRISTIAN LUNDGAARD: My girlfriend. She's a golfer. Well, the problem was the first time I beat her dad. That wasn't too good. I had one goal at the end of 2024, which was to beat my dad, and then of course I flew home and my golf clubs didn't make it in time.

I played golf four times since the 28th of December, and I played golf with my own clubs once. But it's getting there for sure.

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