

# NTT INDYCAR SERIES

## News Conference

Friday, April 11, 2025

**Marcus Ericsson**

**Josef Newgarden**

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: We'll wrap up day one here of this 50th edition of the Acura Grand Prix of Long Beach. Josef Newgarden is on his way after wrapping up practice. Marcus Ericsson, driver of the No. 28 Bryant Honda for Andretti Global, was second quick overall, quickest in that group 2 alternate session.

Marcus and the team obviously are doing quite well here when it comes to the Streets of Long Beach. Marcus, back-to-back top 5s, looking ahead to the weekend. Nice start to the weekend, perhaps could bode well, right?

MARCUS ERICSSON: Very good start. I've been looking forward to this race a lot. I always do. It's one of the highlights of the season for sure. With Andretti, as well, with the history they have in this race, we expect to be up there fighting for the win, and to start it like this is the best way to do that.

**Q. What is it about Andretti Global and street circuits in general but certainly Long Beach?**

MARCUS ERICSSON: We just have a really good setup in general to work with, and the team does a really good job preparing the cars and giving us drivers cars that we feel confidence in to drive because that's all -- street course racing is so much about that confidence. It's being close to those walls and having the confidence to push to the limit.

Andretti does a really good job with that, so that makes it a pleasure to drive.

**Q. Does the practice plan change at all with five extra laps with the hybrid? Seems to be more deg on the tires. Or is it pretty similar to what you did a year ago?**

MARCUS ERICSSON: I think the biggest thing is the change from six and four on the compounds, six hard compounds and four soft to this year five and five. It makes it maybe -- you have to wait a little bit more in practice instead of save your hard tires for Sunday a bit

more. That's the biggest difference.

But apart from that, it's a lot of focus on qualifying. Obviously a street course you want to start up front, so for us, it's important to prep for that, and then when we accomplish that, we then start looking at Sunday and what we need to do with tires there because it's going to be an interesting race. I think Firestone is doing a very good job this year giving us very different compounds that's not easy to drive, but I think that's great for the dynamic in the races. I don't think races with compounds that just stay consistent throughout stints is fun racing. I think it should be difficult so you can differentiate from your competition.

I love the challenge that Firestone and INDYCAR is creating right now.

**Q. Marcus, what's the most unique part of Long Beach to you?**

MARCUS ERICSSON: Most unique is probably the fountain. But I would say the whole event as a whole. Obviously the 50th anniversary, it's part of that, the history of the race makes it very special for us drivers, and I think the circuit itself is a very challenging street course that has a really good mix of slower corners, medium-speed to higher speed corners that not many street courses have. Usually street courses have more slow-speed corners, so this one, I love the challenge of having a bit more higher speeds, trying to be close to the walls and higher speeds the margin of error gets smaller and smaller.

It really is a kind of driver's track, as we call it, here in Long Beach. Yeah, I always enjoy come back here and obviously try and win.

**Q. Is Long Beach your favorite street course on the schedule?**

MARCUS ERICSSON: Yeah, I would say so. I obviously have won on a few others. Those memories are obviously hard to beat. But I feel like I've been close here a few times, and I always feel like I'm really fast here. I still have that box to tick to win here, but that's why we're here this weekend, and like I said, I love driving here.



**Q. Can you talk about the difference this year compared to last year using the hybrid? Secondly, how much curbing do you want to use and what kind of a compromise is that to extract the lap time here with shocks and everything? Do you use more or do you want to have the tires on the ground for traction? What's the compromise?**

MARCUS ERICSSON: What was the first one?

**Q. The hybrid system.**

MARCUS ERICSSON: Sorry, hybrid. So the hybrid, I think obviously the weight is a bit different, so change of direction is a little bit worse than last year, but that extra power you get in the exits, it's quite significant from the hybrid.

I think it creates a challenge. It makes it a little bit more tricky to drive the car on the limit and how you want to use the hybrid to your advantage.

Yeah, that's the biggest difference, to be honest.

Regarding the track, I think you always want to try and get the shortest way around there. There are some curves that you want to use around this track. Some you want to stay off of, depending on the way your car feels, as well. But there again, I think the Andretti team is doing a good job so we can try and extract everything out of the racetrack.

**Q. You guys' thoughts on the additional laps and whether or not that's going to affect the excitement of the race, if that's going to maybe keep it less of being a fuel save race?**

MARCUS ERICSSON: Yeah, hopefully it should be a three-stop with pretty big windows. It should make it quite difficult to do a two stopper. Hopefully it will make racing better because always if you have two or three or however many stops, but the windows are quite big, it creates opportunities to do things differently to your competition. I'm hopeful that will be the case on Sunday.

**Q. Marcus, I know last season not the way you wanted to open your tenure with Andretti. Your thoughts on the season so far two races in?**

MARCUS ERICSSON: Yeah, last year was a big disappointment. I worked really, really hard this off-season to be better in all aspects, really. I feel like I've come out really strong this season. St. Pete I was fast all weekend. Thermal was really fast all weekend.

Then I had a bad race, fell on my own mistake, and haven't been so angry with myself in a long time because I feel like we made so much progress as a group on the 28.

Again, been digging deep since then and working really hard to come back here and have a strong weekend. So yeah, it's a big year for us. I feel like Andretti as a team, we're moving in the right direction, and yeah, I feel like the start of the season has been strong for us.

**Q. Josef, going back to Thermal, obviously not the pace that all three of you guys from Team Penske wanted. Did that ring some alarm bells coming into this weekend or does it feel like back to business as usual and that was sort of an anomaly?**

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: I think anomaly is a good way to put it. Yeah, feels like business as usual here.

THE MODERATOR: Obviously we're joined by Josef Newgarden, sixth quick overall, third in that very first session, the 45-minute session, driver of the No. 2 Astemo Team Penske Chevrolet, finished fourth here last year. Former champion here, as well. Your thoughts on a nice start to the weekend for you.

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: Very good. I think our car was pretty solid rolling off just like St. Pete. Kind of speaks to our global positioning from a street course standpoint. Obviously we track this stuff. We're trying to create good race cars across the board, which you have to have in this series. You sort of have a base position on a street course style, road course style and then ovals alike. I think our street course car has been in a really good window, felt really solid today, and happy about where we're at and coming into the weekend. I think we can really put something good together if we stay on it.

**Q. What was the differences of the feel between last year and this year with the hybrid system?**

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: Good question. Not a lot, to be quite honest, as far as from a general standpoint. It still feels like Long Beach. I think a lot of the driving technique that you're doing is quite similar.

You're just adding in the hybrid utilization that we've kind of used for half the season last year. So you're using it a lot. You're regenning under braking, but this hybrid system is extremely friendly within regen, so it's comfortable under braking. There's nothing evil about it. It's pretty easy to drive.

You're just trying to make sure that you're optimizing how much charge you're allowed to use per lap. We have an



allocated amount of energy, and you just want to optimize that for lap time and make sure that you're using all of it.

So that's the big difference. But as far as driving here, it feels like Long Beach of the last 10 years in a good way. Flows a lot the same that it did last year, too.

**Q. With it being the 50th race here at Long Beach, how much does it mean to you to be a part of this field and just to be part of the celebration of this race?**

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: Yeah, it's incredible. I love being an INDYCAR driver, and one of the great things about being an INDYCAR driver is you get to race at Long Beach. It's certainly good for our community, and I think it's great for this community. You see great excitement when you're here and people ask you how does this event feel different to others, and you certainly notice the energy difference at this race than you get at other places. It's quite a joy to be a part of it.

I think the entire team has kept it alive and made it flourish for so many years, certainly with Jim and their entire group, they've done such a great job. Very, very proud to be a part of it as an INDYCAR driver, and hopefully we have another 50 years up the road. That would be really great.

THE MODERATOR: I thought there was a buzz today.

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: Man, we say that every year, and I think in a lot of ways the last three years they've just increased the capacity and size. It was no different this time around. It just felt bigger than last year. I don't know how we can keep saying that year after year.

It looked like race day today. It was super cool. I think that's the great thing about motorsports, though, right now. There's an excitement. There's a cool factor to it. If you just want to talk about trends, I think motorsports is a trend right now, especially with young people, and it's really fun to see that. You're just seeing this resurgence.

I've been talking about this in a couple different interviews. I don't want to say it's bizarre, but it has been unique to see over the last two years the amount of kids that I see at the racetrack that are bringing their parents. It's not the other way around. I meet parents that are my age and they're going, I know nothing about this, but my six-year-old loves it and loves you and loves INDYCAR. It used to be the other way around. It was, hey, whatever, I used to love INDYCAR back in the '80s and now I'm here and I'm trying to bring my kids. But it's the other way; the kids are bringing the parents.

It's very, very cool to be a part of. I think we can continue

that and grow it and we're in a really good position to do it, so it's just a fun time to be a part of motorsports.

**Q. Team Penske has had a lot of success here at this track. What would you say they do differently than other teams to give you the edge?**

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: I think it's our execution. When you look at Team Penske, it's really about not beating yourself in a lot of ways. This is a complex sport, and all the details matter. We always talk about details.

I describe racing in INDYCAR like solving a puzzle each weekend. The puzzle is different every track and every weekend we go to, and it's just a matter of who figures it out first. So you've got to get a lot of details right to win the race and do that.

But you can also forget the simple things and you can beat yourself on race weekends, and I think at Team Penske we do try and do -- we try and keep it at the forefront of our minds that we need to get the basics right. It sounds silly, but it's like, is the car fully fueled; are our pit stops kind of just where they need to be; do we know what we're doing strategy-wise; is everything tight.

It's just the little things that people take for granted. I think we try and not beat ourselves, and so that execution quality is where Team Penske over the years, 50 plus years, has set themselves apart. We try and excel in other areas, too, but I think keeping the basics as a priority has served our company very well.

**Q. You've had a couple of weeks since the Thermal Club and you weren't able to advance out of the first round, and Team Penske struggled out there in qualifying. What has been done to prevent that from really happening again? Obviously the goal is to make it into the Fast Six, but how much has that been a motivator the last couple of weeks?**

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: There's no doubt, Thermal was a disaster as far as Team Penske. We had a tough weekend. The good thing is we're just getting going, though. A lot of people have been asking about how is the year, and we're two races in. We had an excellent St. Pete. Our cars were in a good window. Team did a great job.

Then Thermal was the complete opposite. We were just sort of nowhere.

I think we sort of found our way towards the end, back half of the way. We diverged between the race cars and I think we found a direction. So that would be the answer to --

 . . . when all is said, we're done.®

going back in the future, I think we have a direction to come back with. So yeah, we can't erase what happened. We can't go back. It was a tough weekend. Just did not go very well. But I don't think it's an indicator of the rest of the year in a lot of ways.

**Q. Can you tell us a little bit about what you learned this session with your beautiful primary tires and your alternates?**

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: It may be a four-stop race. Marcus was answering the question, I'm like, three-stop? Three-stop would be good, if you could do it. Yeah, we're going to see. I think in a lot of ways the complexion will be similar to St. Pete, and the consensus coming out of St. Pete I think will carry over to here and you'll see the same sort of commitment or execution at this race.

The primary tire is very robust and certainly feels like a really solid tire. I was super happy with the car right out of the box and very comfortable and pretty easygoing across multiple stints and then I think the alternate has some good speed that you can extract but it's got a very tight window and doesn't have a lot of durability.

So I think anyone that can figure out how to add durability to that is going to be doing something magical. I don't know that anyone is going to find a combination that makes it work necessarily, but that's what adds the excitement. You're going to pick and choose now, and you're going to see what people do in the race.

It's early in the weekend. If the track just continues to grip up, which is historical Long Beach, every single session this place just gets faster. It's just a little easier on the tires. It's hard for me to predict the future today. Maybe we get to the race and someone can make the alternate work and run a strategy where you run the alternate late in the race. I don't think that's going to be preferred at this moment, but you just never know.

**Q. Are you liking how much of a factor that race strategy, specifically tire strategy, has been playing this season? Would you rather it just be left up to the animals on track to go maximum attack the whole time?**

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: I like the variedness. We kind of get that in a lot of different ways in INDYCAR. The tires is just another component of that. It goes up and down. Sometimes we have a very consistent tire. Sometimes we have an alternate like we have this weekend where they're quite fast for a lap but they degrade heavily. It never bugs me. It comes back to my analogy that racing in INDYCAR is like solving a puzzle, and that puzzle is never the same.

Year over year even, same track, the puzzle changes.

I don't mind it. I think there's certainly a uniqueness to this current puzzle with the tires, and it's added some excitement. Certainly when you look at Thermal, there was a lot of ways you could approach it. You're learning on the fly.

At Thermal we kind of went into Saturday feeling one way about the tires and then even Sunday morning we felt the same way about them as we did Saturday, and then we got out of the warmup in Thermal and we thought, oh, no, we might have just made a mistake just from what we learned with the tires and then we put ourselves in a bad position going into the race.

It just keeps you on your toes. I think it's certainly exciting for us. It makes us do our jobs really well, and I think it can add excitement to the track, so I love it.

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