

NTT INDYCAR SERIES

News Conference

Sunday, April 13, 2025

Kyle Kirkwood

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: Congratulations to two-time winner of the Acura Grand Prix of Long Beach, Kyle Kirkwood, who led the race high 45 laps today. First win of the season. Second here at Long Beach. Third career win, as well. Now climbing into second place in the championship, 34 points behind Alex Palou.

KYLE KIRKWOOD: 34?

THE MODERATOR: Yes. You're chipping away at it.

KYLE KIRKWOOD: Yeah (smiling).

THE MODERATOR: Better than not being 34.

KYLE KIRKWOOD: You're right (laughter).

THE MODERATOR: Your thoughts on another win here at Long Beach? Pretty huge.

KYLE KIRKWOOD: Yeah, it's really good, right? To win here, the 50th, with this team, with this group, with Honda, an Acura-sponsored event is absolutely massive. This was a flawless weekend for myself, for the team, for the crew, for everyone involved.

When you have flawless weekends like this, you tend to win. This is a big step in the right direction. I know coming into this event, this was our time to turn things around. Fortunately we were able to get it done.

This is probably one of our top three circuits I think on schedule. It's important that we win those to have any chance of winning a championship. This is a start. Hopefully this is a continuation of great things.

THE MODERATOR: So easy to put pressure. We talked to you before heading into this weekend about, hey, this is an opportunity to make up some points. Doing it and thinking through it are two different things. A lot of pressure on yourself.

KYLE KIRKWOOD: No doubt. Yeah, thinking and doing is

very different. It's easy to say you might as well go out there, get pole, lead the whole race, and make it nice and simple. It's not just that simple, right? A lot of things need to align, especially when you have 26 of the best racers in the world racing against you that all want to beat you.

This is the days that we live for as drivers, as teams. It's a special one to go out here and dominate like this. It might have made it a little bit boring to most of the media, the announcers, et cetera, but these are important for us. This is exactly what, as drivers, we want to see happen.

THE MODERATOR: A lot of questions for you.

Q. Before the season it seemed like the Andretti drivers were telling us not a lot has changed with Dan taking over as the majority owner. In the first three weeks, was there much difference?

KYLE KIRKWOOD: Yeah, I think the question always to us was, Have you guys seen any differences? The answer is usually, no, because we don't see exactly what goes on on the development side.

But clearly three races in now, we seem better than we have been in the past couple years. That's due to his leadership and the investment that's going into the team.

We have an influx of people, an influx of development. There's a big will to win. We got to win here, but we also had really good performances at the past two circuits. Thermal was not a good track for us, and we turned it into a great track, having two cars that were running in the top five for most of the race.

Yeah, hats off to Dan. This is a big weekend for them. This was coast-to-coast, big weekend for Andretti, big weekend for us where they're racing at Bristol, Formula E down in Homestead. Then the premier sports car team here with Wayne Taylor, us, and INDYCAR. To cap it off with a win is absolutely massive for them. It's all due to their efforts.

Q. P2 in the championship, good day for you. We're three races in, but it's been a little while since we've been able to talk about Andretti early in the season.

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Tell me about that side.

KYLE KIRKWOOD: That might have been the highest I've ever been in the championship, if I'm not mistaken. Andretti was a title contender last year with Colton coming on strong at the end of the season. We want to make that evident throughout the season. We don't want it to be just right at the understand where we're clawing back at people. We want to be there in the fight the entire time, if not leading.

Thinks a big one for us. This is a step in the right direction. Like I said before, we need more of these. This is one step of many more races to come.

Q. Talk about Honda. You mention they're based locally. 50th anniversary of their home race. Huge victory to deliver for them. Three in a row for them. Tell us about that achievement, what it means to deliver that. Are they doing anything different through two street races and a road course this year that stands out?

KYLE KIRKWOOD: Yeah, I just want to give a hats off to them. Honda has done a phenomenal job over the off-season to adjust for the changes that needed to be done. We came out swinging this entire season thus far.

I think that's going to continue to be the case. We had a very honest conversation. It was the first time I ever sat down with a manufacturer and spoke with them in detail about everything that happens with the power unit.

They really listened to us. They're a huge part of our organization, right? They come in. They bring their engineers in. They know everything about us, and we know everything about them. It's very transparent. Really cool to see.

To your point, this is a huge weekend for them to win at the 50th Grand Prix of Long Beach presented by Acura, right? To win it in a Honda-powered car is so special.

We came out here at the beginning of the week. We actually went to their main facility in Torrance and toured it, got to meet all the employees, the associates, et cetera, et cetera, and spent a lot of time with them. They're all wonderful people.

To do it at home, I know there's a ton of Honda people here. To do it in front of them where they can see where their efforts go is absolutely massive for the morale of Honda and the longevity of them, as well.

Very thankful for the product that they've given us. It's

because of them that we're able to come out here and get these wins.

Q. Can you elaborate on the significance of winning this iconic race on its 50th anniversary?

KYLE KIRKWOOD: It's massive, right? This is a historic race. I don't think it's set in yet for me. I know how special it is coming into this. To win the 50th anniversary of this is huge. To be a multi-time winner here is absolutely massive, right? It's turning into a shorter and shorter list that I'm putting my name on.

I'm proud to do so. I'm proud to do it in Andretti car, too. Andretti has huge history here. To add to that history is big for me, big for the team, it's big for everyone involved.

Q. You mentioned Colton. You actually have more wins since you joined Andretti Global than the whole other team combined.

KYLE KIRKWOOD: I don't understand. Explain that stat again.

Q. Your wins since you came in '23.

KYLE KIRKWOOD: The three wins.

Q. Is more than everybody else combined in that time frame.

KYLE KIRKWOOD: It's only been Colton that's one two, right? We were matched up before this weekend.

Q. Do you feel almost under-appreciated a little bit? You have two Long Beach wins.

KYLE KIRKWOOD: I don't mind being the underdog to you guys mostly. I think I'm not under-appreciated. I'm considered as still one of the up-and-comers. I'm 26 now. Alex Palou is winning championships at 26, so...

But the team really appreciates my efforts. That's what matters to me.

Q. Earlier you mentioned how important this is for the TWG Motorsports family, all the travel and everything, capping it off with this win here in Long Beach. What do you feel this means for Dan knowing how much work they have put in to continue to morph and build this team over the last couple months?

KYLE KIRKWOOD: I think, like I mentioned, their efforts are paying off now, right? It's things we can't see because we still have the same exact people around us, same exact

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group, but we can feel it. Things are starting to click in multiple ways.

We're producing fast race cars. We're getting better at the places we weren't so great at. Our pit stops are exponentially better. There's a ton of investment going into it. It's big for them to see investments paying off. That's all people want to see.

I'm glad that we were able to do it on a big weekend for them. To see their efforts pay off... Like I said earlier, hopefully this is a continuation of something and a step in the right direction.

This is just momentum rolling into the next few races, the month of May. Like I said earlier, hopefully we just keep bettering ourselves. I'd say the trajectory that we're on is maybe sharper than anybody else's right now in the series.

Q. You mentioned you sit second in the championship, as high as you ever have been in your young INDYCAR career. We haven't had you any sort of title fight position the last couple years. Do you feel like you're ready to win a championship in 2025?

KYLE KIRKWOOD: Of course. When I was younger, that's all I did was win championships. It's a different sensation when you're fighting kind of for those even top fives in the championship, right? It's a completely different mindset.

Races like today are races, to be honest, that I was more used to when I was in the lower series, when you're not fighting people front and back. You kind of dictate the pace of the race, and you understand the strategy. You just have to think about it, and you're kind of in control. Those were what I love.

Where I tended to struggle in previous years were the ones with where you kind of start in the 10th, 11th place spot and work your way through, and you overcome adversity in those ways. That was something that was kind of senile or I guess -- I don't know the right word. It was something that was very new to me.

So for me to get another one of these and also better myself at a lot of these races where I'm starting a little bit further back and still coming back forward proves that I think now people can start considering me a title contender.

Q. Did you at any point feel like you might get a caution that might ruin the race flow and you have to defend, or was it just keep going, keep going?

KYLE KIRKWOOD: I don't know if there was a point in the race that a caution would have hurt us. I would have to look back at it. It was not in the back of my mind at all. You can never really focus on things that you can't control, right? That's not really ever in my mindset.

For me, it was really just keeping Alex at bay. I understood that they pit a lap earlier than us. I knew I needed to save kind of as much as him to be able to keep going a lap longer than him. That was the name of the game today. Overcut was more powerful than undercut. He made that undercut look powerful, even though it really wasn't. To keep him at bay was the most important thing.

Of course, there was Lundgaard on a different strategy kind of hunting us, too. We had pace on him to be able to keep him at bay, as well. He was kind of out of sight, out of mind. It was Palou that I was more focused on.

Q. Speaking of Palou, that last pit stop where you encountered the lap traffic, was there really any worry as you were coming down pit road that it was going to be side-by-side or close there with Palou?

KYLE KIRKWOOD: You're talking about the lap that I came in, that I pit on?

Q. Yeah.

KYLE KIRKWOOD: Yeah, I just caught the traffic in the very last corner. It was actually ideal timing. It didn't hold me up whatsoever. If anything, I think I was probably on my fastest lap at that moment and came into the pit lane. We had a little bit of a hiccup in pit lane, which brought us back to him. He had a really quick pit stop, I would imagine. It got things really close.

One thing that was a little bit scary about that was, which both ECR cars I think threw a huge block on me at some point in the race. I don't know if it was the same driver or if it was both drivers at different points, but there was a point right before we stopped they threw a big defend on me, allowed Alex to close a two-second gap on me and then pit immediately, which means he's right on our gearbox essentially in the pit strategy. The only thing we had to better him was the one-lap overcut, which made things a lot closer. It would have been a lot more straight forward if we didn't have that traffic, to your point.

Q. The broadcast on FOX said that you looked very Palou-esque all day today. Talk about the execution from your crew and yourself this week.

KYLE KIRKWOOD: Yeah, it's important. It's important to have a clean weekend. That starts with practice, right?



You can't have hiccups in practice. You can't have times where you're fixing the car or you're throwing things at the car and you're losing track time.

These are the good weekends where you roll off the trailer fast, you make minor, minor changes, and you kind of roll through qualifying and into the race with a car that you're very confident with, and you have adapted to very, very well.

So these are the good ones, right? Not all of 'em are like that. A lot of 'em you have to adapt quickly with setup and changes. These are the ones that allow wins, the ones that go smoothly like this.

Q. Where does this rank in your career in terms of wins remembers what does this rank?

KYLE KIRKWOOD: What does this rank?

Q. Yes.

KYLE KIRKWOOD: I would say second, second to winning here the first time. Getting first win for me in 2023 was crucial for my career, crucial for my longevity. I don't know if I'd still be sitting in an INDYCAR if it wasn't for that win and the win at Nashville.

Massive, massive. But this one's a close second, winning at a historic event, the 50th Acura Grand Prix. Doing it with a team that has a lot of history behind it makes it more special than probably the Nashville race.

Q. You start at pole and won the race a few years ago. You did the same thing today. Is there anything that you personally took from that win that you brought into today's event? What about from a team strategy point? Was it confidence over setup or just understanding the flow of the race or how to make that happen?

KYLE KIRKWOOD: The only thing that I really took away from the race last year -- from two years ago, sorry, was how to manage traffic. Two years ago I got caught out by traffic and lost the lead for a big chunk of the race to Josef Newgarden. Only because of strategy and I think a hiccup on their team allowed us to win the race.

Managing that was probably the number one thing that I took away. Outside of that, it's like any race. You're just running to the maximum pace that your car allows, that the fuel allows, and then also just controlling the pace in a way that is advantageous for you.

THE MODERATOR: Kyle, congratulations.

KYLE KIRKWOOD: Thank you.

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