

# NTT INDYCAR SERIES

## News Conference

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## Kyle Larson

### Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: Kyle Larson joins us, who finished 11th quick on the speed chart at 223.430 miles an hour, returning for his second 500, driver of the No. 17 Hendrickcars.com Arrow McLaren Chevrolet. Last year, as you may recall, he started fifth, finished 18th. 11th on the speed chart so far. How would you describe your return to IMS thus far?

KYLE LARSON: It was good. Good to get back behind the wheel. It doesn't seem like that long ago, and figured it would feel normal when I got back in, but it definitely took some getting accustomed to, so it's honestly good to go through the ROP. I feel like it would be hard to commit to wide open anyway the first couple laps.

Yeah, still just trying to get the hang of it. Definitely I feel like -- I haven't talked to any of the teammates yet, but I feel like it feels a little different handling-wise this year. I don't know if that's the hybrid stuff and the weight of that or what I'm feeling, but it feels a little different, so not quite the same balance that I had last year, so just got to kind of think through that and how you want to adjust to it, if you want to get it to a point like we were last year or not.

Yeah, but overall I felt comfortable, but still a little rusty on things, small detail things, hitting buttons and trying to really get the dash setup to where it processes quick to my eyes and brain and little details like that.

Good to get all that out of the way today, and hopefully tomorrow will go smoother.

**Q. Last year we got rained out the second day. You've got time to refresh for another day tomorrow, right?**

KYLE LARSON: Yeah, absolutely. I think anytime you've got a night to sleep on anything, you usually come back a little more comfortable the next day. I'm sure that'll be the same for the team, as well. We had a lot of radio communication issues on the box and a couple different engine things happening, so all stuff you probably expect the first day.

**Q. I know coming into your debut 500 last year, you were doing lots of simulation work. You had some on-track tests that you went through even before we got to the month of May. Can you tell us a little bit of since last May what kind of work or what things have you done between May -- the end of May last year and late April over the last 11 months to prepare yourself for 2025?**

KYLE LARSON: Yeah, nothing really. Yeah, nothing at all. I didn't do any sim stuff. They have a new steering wheel, so I got molded for that. That's about all that I've done Indy related.

Yeah, I mean, you have so much track time here that you kind of can build into it anyway. Maybe if I got in the sim, buttons and all that would have been a little bit easier to kind of set up the way I wanted, but like I said, you have enough time here that I don't really feel like it's that necessary, and then the overall -- like sim, car balance I think for oval stuff, it doesn't relate to real life.

I think a lot of times you can just trick yourself in there. Even on the NASCAR side of things, I don't really use the sim.

Yeah, I didn't do anything. But there's going to be plenty of track time to figure it out.

**Q. I know you made some comments earlier in the year about feeling like this was maybe a two-year chapter for you in terms of trying to compete in the double and do the Indy 500. Is that something that you feel like is set in your mind or set in your team's mind in terms of this being the last time you might do the 500 for a while, or is that still up in the air?**

KYLE LARSON: I don't know. I haven't really had a sit-down discussion with anybody about that. So I don't know. I can't really fully answer that.

In my head, yeah, I'm going into this thinking it's at least for the time being, in the near future, the final Indy 500. But I am still young, and I mentioned on Dale Jr.'s Download thing that maybe someday when I'm not full-time Cup and I



can really devote all my mind to Indy, I'd like to do it again.

But we'll see. If I happen to win the Indy 500, I'd probably just ride off into the sunset, too.

I don't know, it's such a cool event. I think once you run it enough, I think, and you don't, you probably have a lot of FOMO and want to come back. It's hard to fully answer that right now.

**Q. The hybrid is new for you; what do you think of it? Did you notice it? Did you feel it? What were the things that surprised you about it?**

KYLE LARSON: Yeah, we messed around with it a little bit there. Hearing them describe it to me was a little bit confusing, but once I got out there and all that, it was okay. I didn't really feel like it does much of anything to help you. It definitely helps; it doesn't hurt.

But it's not like you get this massive boost down the straightaway or anything like that. I feel like whenever I would hit it, I'd get like an initial kind of handful of horsepower and then it just flattens out to normal. You get kind of close and then you just kind of stall out.

Then yeah, like I mentioned about the balance stuff, I don't know if what I'm feeling there is due to the hybrid stuff. I think it's a fair bit heavier than last year and rearward, as well. I feel like that's what I might be feeling. But I just would like to talk to my teammates, see what they felt to see if it's similar.

**Q. During your refresher laps, was the radio issue or the engine issue the one that may have kept you from cruising through it quicker?**

KYLE LARSON: All of it probably. I would say more so the engine stuff. I don't know what exactly was going on, but we made kind of a shorter first run, and yeah, we were having our radio problems, which we still kind of have currently.

Then we were getting ready to go out for what I thought was going to be we were just going to bang some laps out and get it done, and I left pit road and the engine wasn't running crisp, so came in and that took 30 minutes or so.

Yeah, so whatever. We got it in.

**Q. When you get done with Indy, you have a real white knuckler type of race at Talladega. That's always a handful in itself. How do you look at that, going from here to Talladega?**

KYLE LARSON: Yeah, I don't know. Just hope and pray you miss a wreck and can get to the front and stay up front. I'll not sure. Talladega is a -- I haven't had a whole bunch of luck, but out of the superspeedways we have, it's probably the one that I finish okay at the most.

We'll see. Our car is really fast at those places, and I feel like we have a good understanding of it, we've just got to execute.

**Q. Coming in here today, how much more do you feel like you knew about the car versus coming to this test a year ago?**

KYLE LARSON: Yeah, I think just a little less anxiety probably of the unknown of what to expect. I still think there was definitely things I didn't fully know what to expect on. It is a little different car with the hybrid system, so there was things that I didn't know.

But just getting laps last year, I think INDYCAR feels like an INDYCAR, and you can get somewhat the speed.

But yeah, I think the open test, it's like -- I feel like for the month of May when you come here, everybody builds into bigger pack running and stuff, where like today, it was like everybody was out there in a pack, so you kind of got to get your mindset up to speed a little quicker than I guess I was expecting.

But it's still all good to get there.

But yeah, I don't know. Still a bit rusty, I felt, out there. But it's good to sleep on it tonight.

**Q. During the long wait to get in the car, did you see NASCAR announced the All-Star rules today, the format? Did you see where it's a 250-lap race and a break at lap 100, and then between lap 101 and 220, they're going to let Marcus Smith throw a caution whenever he wants without telling you when it's going to be. I'm curious what your thoughts are on it.**

KYLE LARSON: I don't know, I did read it just quickly once. I don't know, it sounded about normal. Gimmicky All-Star Race. It is what it is. You kind of come to expect that with the All-Star format. I don't mind it. It's such an oddball rule that I hope that the core fans aren't -- which I'm sure they're probably mad but aren't thinking this is something we're going to adopt every week because I'm sure we won't.

**Q. With all the different competitors you've raced against, midgets and sprint cars, NASCAR, here, is it difficult to keep in your mind the different tendencies**



**certain drivers have when you're racing around them at 200 miles an hour or however fast you're going at whatever track you're running on?**

KYLE LARSON: I don't know, I think if you're at a track other than Indy maybe it would show up a little bit more, but Indy is a pretty straightforward kind of track.

I think the thing that -- like I'm still trying to get used to when I'm out there, I don't know what the common courtesy is as far as little things like blending on to the racetrack if you're trying to get into a pack and all that sort of thing. So I hope I'm not making people upset when I'm out there trying to blend in and going slow -- I just don't really know what to do. There's that side of things.

It's all stuff that you get used to when you do it often like these drivers have. Where I'm coming from, NASCAR, it seems a little different on how you blend into a pack. Just trying to figure that out, and I need to just go talk to some people. Other than that, it's racing, and I'm very fortunate that I get to race with, in my opinion, a lot of the best race car drivers in the world spread across a lot of different varieties of race cars.

It's just a really cool thing. I don't think there's many drivers that can get the opportunity to race with the crop of drivers I get to.

**Q. Through your career you've had massive events, Chili Bowl, Knoxville, competed here, Daytona 24 hours. What's next on the Kyle Larson racing bucket list tour?**

KYLE LARSON: Yeah, I don't know. I think obviously get through this. But it's tough, it's really tough to run big races because I'm racing 54 weekends of the year pretty much.

I don't know, one that kind of stands out to me and hopefully we can kind of put it together down the road would be -- I'd like to run a Supercar, in particular in Adelaide. It's their finale. They have a sprint car track in the city, as well, so I could do both.

I would like to do that. There's been some conversations. We'll see where it kind of goes.

For right now, it's hard to look that far ahead because I've got Indy, which is a big deal right now, and we're pretty engrained in the Cup season, as well.

**Q. Obviously FOX is blowing up INDYCAR right now. The first three races there's been a lot of momentum, a lot of promotion from FOX. Have you felt that on the NASCAR side, and have a lot of your NASCAR**

**colleagues shown a little bit more interest in you running the 500 this year? Have you had those conversations with other drivers inside of the Cup paddock?**

KYLE LARSON: Not yet. I think probably after this open test. When you're fully into NASCAR it's hard to see outside of it, so I doubt many of them even knew that the open test was coming up. When you think of Indy you think of May, and we're not in May yet.

I haven't really had anybody talk to me yet. But I'm sure after this open test and cars on track, getting to Talladega this weekend people will have lots of questions and start getting excited about it.

**Q. You told me last year you didn't know who you were around. When you're in a Cup car you can see the sponsor and the number. Did you feel like you knew who you were around today and did you remember back to last year, okay, I've driven behind this guy before, I can kind of trust his tendencies? Did you feel that more today?**

KYLE LARSON: It wasn't like that intense out there, so there wasn't really any non-trust in people. But I felt like I recognized names a little quicker and easier than I probably would have day one of the open test last year.

But it was so hard to hear all my radio anyway, so it was kind of hard to know where people were, how far back they were, who was coming, all that sort of stuff.

**Q. Kyle, this is your first time coming back here since getting to experience the 500 for the first time but also getting to win the Brickyard 400. Does that change your appreciation or the way you look at this track getting to come back here as a veteran but also as a winner at this track?**

KYLE LARSON: Yeah, I don't know. Because I'm here in INDYCAR, I feel like it's a totally different environment, so I haven't really thought about the Brickyard and winning that.

But no, I mean, it is great to know that I've won here on the oval, and it would be even neater to win in INDYCAR now. But yeah, that Brickyard 400 was one of my most special wins for sure, just getting to win at an iconic venue like this with all the history between everybody who's raced here and won here.

Yeah, it was an awesome experience, and looking to add to it hopefully next month.

**Q. You mentioned the process of knocking the rust off**

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**throughout the day. It looked like you were getting more confident in traffic as the day went on. Describe that process of reacclimatizing yourself to the speed of an INDYCAR.**

KYLE LARSON: Yeah, yeah. Like I mentioned earlier, the ROP is -- it's funny for guys who have done it, raced in this race 10 plus years, but for me, I actually -- I'm curious what they think, too. I'm sure they probably enjoy not having to go wide open right away.

Yeah, it was nice to build into it. But once you kind of break through that barrier of running wide open for a full lap, everything kind of slows down quickly and you can trust everything a little bit better. But once you get in traffic, just kind of like feeling the runs and the air and all that is a challenge.

My balance wasn't where I would have liked it to be, so that made traffic really tough for me. I couldn't really be close to anybody. I felt like we got a little bit better there at the end, but I think that was more the track temp probably coming down.

So yeah, that's an area where I think we need to work quite a bit on is the traffic balance, which I'm sure everybody would love to be perfect in traffic, but that's hard to do here.

But we'll see. Like I said, we'll go back and have a debrief with the teammates, see what they felt, see if anything what I'm feeling is similar to what they are. I would imagine it probably is. Yeah, talk through it and just try and get better as a team and just communicate well.

THE MODERATOR: We'll see you back here tomorrow morning. Thanks, Kyle.

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