

NTT INDYCAR SERIES

News Conference

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Kyle Kirkwood

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: Good afternoon. Thanks for being here day two of the Indy 500 Open Test. Leading off, Kyle Kirkwood. Second quick in the last session. Second in the championship. Seventh in the high boost session earlier today.

How would you wrap-up your Indy 500 Open Test? How would you describe it?

KYLE KIRKWOOD: Yeah, it was the best initial test that I've ever had by a good margin. We were really quick on no-tow speeds, race trim and quallie trim. Our four-lap average I think was the best outside of 12 seconds.

Yeah, I mean, we were really racy with some cars there, too. If you're up front, I felt like we were one of the best that could be in that top three range. Once you get further back, it's kind of irrelevant.

Yeah, no, we were extremely happy with today.

THE MODERATOR: What would you chalk that improvement up to?

KYLE KIRKWOOD: You know, a lot of effort went into this 500, more testing than ever, more aerodynamic stuff than ever, more setup stuff than ever. Came here with a pretty different mindset on a lot of things.

I think it's paying off a little bit early days, although this is one of the best test days that you'll ever get at the Speedway, when the weather is like this, no wind, warm weather like it typically is in the end of the month of May. All good things at the moment but we still got a month to go.

THE MODERATOR: Questions.

Q. Kyle, obviously you had the running yesterday without the boost. How different were the setups this afternoon compared to what they were yesterday? The speeds were up a couple miles an hour. Yesterday you didn't have the boost in the afternoon. Was it just

a different run plan?

KYLE KIRKWOOD: Compared to yesterday, this afternoon?

Q. Yes.

KYLE KIRKWOOD: Obviously quallie sims this morning at high boost. This afternoon was a bit of the same as yesterday. Yeah, just picking away at it to be honest. The track is gripping up quite a bit as we were doing race runs there. Seemed like there was more and more rubber going down. Still early on it. This place does rubber up a lot as the month goes on. You have to adjust for it.

Yeah, it was getting into a pretty good spot today at the end of the day.

Q. How many objectives did you get through?

KYLE KIRKWOOD: We got through everything. Everything we wanted to do, which is really positive. Rarely can you say that in a test.

Q. How did the hybrid feel in the qualifying setup? Everybody wanted to see how fast or how slow it would be. Were you happy with the speed that you had?

KYLE KIRKWOOD: Yeah, we were actually extremely happy. We feel like we actually missed on gears because it was faster than we anticipated, which is a positive thing. We were anticipating it being quite a bit slower because you can only use it once, you're not going to regen anywhere in a quallie sim. If anything, it's hurting your speed with the added weight.

We expected it to be a bit slower. That actually wasn't the case. We were in pretty decent times, speeds, compared to last year. Not so bad, I would say.

It doesn't feel anything crazy. I just say with the added weight, people are going to be a lot more scared to trim to the level they have in the past. I think last year guys were minus seven, minus seven and a half I think Palou was at one point two years ago when he got the pole. I don't see

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that you'll have those kind of numbers that we had in the past trim-wise.

Q. You don't think anybody will be tempted? What's the balance between how much you trim with this hybrid and not?

KYLE KIRKWOOD: That's the question, right? We've always gotten to a point, everybody has, that you get to a trim level that is not very efficient, when the wing starts going negative. You saw guys put it in the wall today. That's just because it's hard to drive now.

Quallie sims at the level we did now compared to last year were much, much harder. It was not the same quallie performance we would have had in previous years.

The weight is definitely playing a factor in that. I imagine people will be tempted to, right, because it will be more of a gain efficiency-wise. Yeah, it's more sketchy, for sure.

Q. This is the first day we've seen where you got multiple boost levels to use. How did you feel about that? Did you like being able to run both boost levels in one day?

KYLE KIRKWOOD: I do. You always come into this place with maybe a little lack of confidence. As the month goes on, you build some confidence. Especially after you get that high boost, you trim the car, you go out there and run it 10 miles an hour quicker. Once you get back down to the low boost, everything feels better then. It builds up your confidence much quicker.

For me, that was the benefit this afternoon. I felt more confident. Essentially you're going slower with more downforce, so why would it be any worse? I actually enjoyed it. I thought we got through a lot today because of it.

Q. Was it difficult to get a non-tow lap?

KYLE KIRKWOOD: Yeah, I mean, sometimes we don't know what people are thinking out there, if I'm being honest. Cars go out. There's no cars on track. There goes one guy right in front of the next. Some people aren't thinking. I don't know if they do it on purpose or they generally don't know. It can get very annoying. We actually had clean runs.

Watching it out there, doesn't seem very sportsmanlike.

Q. You ran four Andretti cars in a pack there. How important is it to build that teammate chemistry on the track from day one?

KYLE KIRKWOOD: Anytime we do those runs, cars love to jump into them because people are just looking for big groups.

For us, we're just getting sensations on what our cars look like compared to others, how our three cars compare to each other 'cause not every single INDYCAR is the same. Even though you build it the same, they're not the same. That is much more drastic at a place like Indianapolis.

Yeah, that's kind of the purpose of it. You can trust your teammates a lot more than some others out there. You can have some more fun with them.

THE MODERATOR: Thanks for coming in.

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