

NTT INDYCAR SERIES

News Conference

Monday, May 19, 2025

Rinus VeeKay

Kyle Larson

Helio Castroneves

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: We are currently joined by Rinus VeeKay, 27th quick, scheduled to start 31st in the race.

The big question out of the gate for you is, how did the car feel back in race trim, look ahead to Friday, Carb Day, race on Sunday?

RINUS VEEKAY: Definitely felt better than qualifying trim. We were not that far off this time. Yeah, I felt like we found a good balance to race with.

Because we did so many qualifying runs in the weekend, to save the engine we had to drive with lower power settings. We didn't always look as racy. Once we put the actual race power on, it was good. I feel like I can actually move forward in the race.

THE MODERATOR: Yesterday, obviously there's a moment you made the race, Jacob didn't, though. I'm sure the team was a bit torn about how yesterday went.

RINUS VEEKAY: Yeah, definitely. It's a lose-lose situation kind of when at the end we were basically racing, deciding what car is going to miss the show. Yeah, unfortunate definitely. Unfortunate position to be in.

Yeah, at the end of the day we're all trying to get in. With two cars being that far off the pace, we were both pushing hard, trying our best. Like Dale said, we were kind of playing chess with two Queens. It was hard, but in the end we just tried to make the show. I did, Jacob didn't.

I saw Jacob last night. He's doing well. Of course bummed. Yeah, he accepted the fact. I'm sure he's eager to get going again heading to Detroit.

THE MODERATOR: Questions.

Q. Jacob said it was weird, he had no explanation.

Did you and your engineers find a solution why you couldn't pick up speed yesterday in qualifying trim?

RINUS VEEKAY: Not really. We have some theories about some different parts we want to run, even though it's late. If we want to do body fits, it's late into the month. We only have a few days before Friday to make everything fit nice.

But yeah, there's some stuff that we think might help to make the car less draggy on the straightaways, which in race trim is still an issue. Since you have such a draft and there's so much moving around, actually didn't feel too bad.

But yeah, definitely no question we are too slow on the straightaways. We need to work on it. Yeah, we have some theories, but no real answers yet.

Q. Rinus, I imagine you've heard the news regarding the 2 and the 12 team penalties for Josef and Will, moving them back to 32nd and 33rd, moving you up a couple spots. As you have digested that and thought about it, would you have liked to have seen Jacob start this race knowing what we've heard and learned now about Josef and Will's cars?

RINUS VEEKAY: I mean, the cars have gone through tech several times last week. It was only discovered at that point. I would have thought it was fair if they had to go to the last-chance qualifier and deserved to fight their way into the field. It's even a more unfortunate situation for Jacob now.

Of course, what they did was wrong there. Yeah, I'm not totally sure how to justify the situation. It's kind of a weird situation, I would say. You don't see this every year.

For me, if you told me a week ago I'd be starting on the same row as two Penskes, I would have been very happy (smiling). Unfortunately we're at the tail end of the field.

Q. Rinus, Pato talked about the year that he did not qualify for the race. Somebody said, How much does that hurt? He said, No, you don't want to be out there in a car that's terrible for 500 miles all day. You were



... when all is said, we're done.®

not happy with your car yesterday. Are you in fear that Sunday is going to be a long, miserable day?

RINUS VEEKAY: I was last night. I was kind of worried. Yeah, it is going to be a hard race. We are not as quick as what I'm used to at the 500.

But actually going out there being in race trim, feeling how the car felt, we have a stable car, one that works pretty well in traffic. I think we can at least stay with the field and pass a car once there are stack-ups going on and stay out of trouble.

It's going to be tough moving through the field, but I think we are in like a driving (indiscernible) out there. I think we actually have decent pace to race.

THE MODERATOR: Thanks for coming up, Rinus. See you in a couple days.

RINUS VEEKAY: Thank you.

THE MODERATOR: Helio Castroneves and Kyle Larson joining us this afternoon.

Helio, your thoughts. Good afternoon for you? How would you describe it?

HELIO CASTRONEVES: Yeah, it was decent. We had some stuff that we thought is going to be different, gearbox... Not gearbox but the numbers we've chosen unfortunately was not the right one. We have to lose a little bit of time on this to fix it. Once we fixed it, no problem, the car seemed to be handling well.

Other than that we just continue to pile in laps, tweaking here and there, getting better.

THE MODERATOR: Kyle, how did the car feel?

KYLE LARSON: Yeah, I thought it was decent. I feel like when you're out there, everybody kind of looks pretty similar. Yeah, just try to get a little racy at times to learn a little bit for the race.

But it's so different in practice. I feel like there's more accordion and all that that opens up passing, where the race is a little bit more difficult to pass so...

Balance definitely feels a little different than last year. There's more of a balance shift throughout the run that I remember having.

Yeah, it's fun. It seems more challenging.

THE MODERATOR: Questions, please.

Q. Helio, there are two very experienced drivers in the field. Of course, you're one of 'em. Takuma Sato is the second fastest qualifier. Since he's a contemporary of yours, at least age-wise, how do you feel his chances are? What makes him so fast at this stage of his career?

HELIO CASTRONEVES: Yeah, right? Tako-San sometimes throws out the air and can go for it (smiling).

No wonder he's a two-five Indy 500 champ. He likes the style of this race, I guess. He does have the experience. He does take risks. It pays off sometimes the risks that he takes.

With the experience he has also, it shows they're doing a great job. Yeah, it's always good to see him up there. Hopefully we'll get together soon during the race.

Q. We have a lot of younger drivers in the race. Between yourself and Takuma, you have to feel like experience shows on this road course.

HELIO CASTRONEVES: Yeah, definitely helps. I've seen some people do some very interesting lines and movements that if you combine that in the race... It's a practice, right, if they do that in practice, do the same thing in the race, I don't think they're going to come out in a good way.

Sometimes when they're young, you need to learn the hardest way. There's nothing you can do when you tell them that.

But as far as right now, I agree with Kyle saying about the shifting of the balance of the car. It makes it a little bit harder, as well. Sometimes people go and be a little impatient, so take advantage when the tires are good. That could be chaotic in the start of the race and restarts.

Q. Kyle, it's going to be a little bit different race for you because you're starting mid pack. How big a challenge will that be? Do you look forward to, Hey, let's see how this works driving up through the middle of the field?

KYLE LARSON: Yeah, it definitely presents challenges. I had that horrendous restart last year. I think I fell back to close to where I'm starting. We were able to get closer to the front by the three-quarter point of the race.

I think if you just normal kind of race stuff, execute good restarts and pit stops and things, you can work your way



forward without having to work too hard.

Hopefully myself and our team can do a good job on Sunday and just chip away at it.

Q. Kyle, I know you'd probably rather start closer to the front. Was it nice to have yesterday morning as a little bit of a breather with this hectic schedule you've had?

KYLE LARSON: Yeah, I would have loved to have been going longer yesterday or getting to get back in the car yesterday to qualify. At the same point it was nice to have most of the day off before racing.

Yeah, it was good. Just relaxing last year on Sunday was crazy. Tight times like it would have been, the double weekend. But yeah, yesterday was very, very relaxed.

Q. Helio, are you doing anything to keep you sharp, hungry, or you do nothing anymore in racing?

HELIO CASTRONEVES: I'm glad you asked, yes. I am doing the Brazilian stockcar this year, the season. I did the first race down there. It's because of you guys. I like so much talking (smiling). I got invited to race down there. A lot of fun. A lot of old friends. Rubens Barrichello, Felipe Massa, Ricardo Zonta, all the crazy Brazilians.

Q. (No microphone.)

HELIO CASTRONEVES: Exactly, I know. I tell you what, it's super competitive. Very, very competitive. Different than a stockcar from here. However, wow, they just built a new car. Yeah, first race I finished 15th out of 31. Score one point, yay!

Q. (No microphone.)

HELIO CASTRONEVES: It's a lot different. The manufacturers down there - Chevy, Mitsubishi and Toyota - they want to mimic what the car is in Brazil. They look like an SUV, but super cool SUV. Really low ride, super nice. The cars are completely different. You guys got to take a look.

KYLE LARSON: Is that what PK runs?

HELIO CASTRONEVES: PK Jr. also runs there.

Q. Helio, we asked you last year with Team Penske's push to pass incident that you were very passionate about, supporting them, believing they didn't knowingly do anything wrong. How have you digested what took place yesterday?

HELIO CASTRONEVES: Same. I believe they did something to look good. I don't think that little lip is going to make them three miles an hour faster, to be honest.

I know how Roger operates. He wants to make everything beautiful, perfect, shiny. I believe it was, again, a mistake, touching an area they're not supposed to.

In the rule book, they're not supposed to touch. I believe what the series is doing is right. But they don't need anything like that to go fast. Yeah, no, I don't see this as a situation that people are creating and making a big deal.

But yes, in terms of performance, I don't think it would have changed anything.

Q. Kyle, you see a lot of weird stuff in NASCAR like this. New to this series, not as familiar, does any of this seem strange to you with the Penskes, how it's being handled?

KYLE LARSON: No. I really don't have, like, an opinion on it. I don't. Even in the NASCAR side of it, Buescher got hit with his penalty, but I don't even know what it was and don't really care. It doesn't affect me in our team, so...

I don't really get too involved when it's other teams.

Q. Do you think the Penske cars will be okay?

KYLE LARSON: Oh, yeah. Did you guys see Josef out there today? He'll be just fine (smiling).

Q. You have any good North Wilkesboro stories, what you may have heard from fellow Cup drivers about your Indy 500 effort?

KYLE LARSON: No, I only talked to a couple of guys there that were curious about what's going on here.

It was a really fun race. I really enjoyed it. That's by far the best short track we have in NASCAR. It's really racy. We have grip, can run multiple lines. Yeah, it was fun.

We were running third after taking two tires. Was just starting to rip the top really fast and got loose in and smashed the wall, ended our race.

Q. You drive anything anywhere anytime. Would you like to join Helio in the Brazilian stockcar series?

KYLE LARSON: I'm down. Brazil sounds fun.

HELIO CASTRONEVES: I'll work on it.



KYLE LARSON: They're older. I'm a little busy now.
When I get older, I want to do a lot of cool things.
Inspiration right here.

THE MODERATOR: Winter here is summer down there.

KYLE LARSON: Perfect. My wife will be all for that. Let's
go.

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