

NTT INDYCAR SERIES

News Conference

Thursday, May 22, 2025

Marcus Armstrong

Marco Andretti

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: Getting started with Row 10 this morning, Marcus Armstrong and Marco Andretti. Graham Rahal also makes up Row 10. He will join us at the end of the day. Starting 30th, back for his second Indianapolis 500, driver of the No. 66 SiriusXM Root Insurance Honda for Meyer Shank Racing with Curb Agajanian, Marcus Armstrong.

Also, starting 29th, making his 20th Indy 500 start, it's now 53 years with an Andretti on the grid for the Indy 500, driver of the No. 98 MAPEI/CURB Honda for Andretti Herta with Marco and Curb Agajanian, it's Marco Andretti. Welcome back.

Marcus, what did you do the last couple of days?

MARCUS ARMSTRONG: The last couple of days? I couldn't tell you, mate. We had the practice session on Monday, and we flew to New York. We did a media tour in New York. That was a bit of fun. Then we flew back yesterday morning. We went to a school, and then we came back here for a photo shoot, and then I did about two hours of interviews whilst walking on a treadmill. It was brilliant. Been a fun couple of days.

THE MODERATOR: Saw the big photo in Times Square too, which was fun.

MARCUS ARMSTRONG: It was really cool with SiriusXM and Jim Meyer. It was cool to see him up there as well because he's officially off the board of SiriusXM now. They put on a tribute to him, and it was pretty cool.

THE MODERATOR: Marco, for you, changing diapers? What have we been doing?

MARCO ANDRETTI: Did nothing pretty much. He was busy. I didn't have a lot going on. Obviously, community day. Did our stops by the schools. That's always fun. Just working out and hanging out. It was kind of the calm before the storm, but I'm bored. I'm ready to go.

THE MODERATOR: Ready to go hop back in a car tomorrow?

MARCO ANDRETTI: For sure.

THE MODERATOR: We'll open it up to questions.

Q. First of all, Marco, I can't believe this is 20 years.

MARCO ANDRETTI: Me either.

Q. Makes me old. I wanted to ask you what specifically are the challenges that you kind of feel coming in and doing a one-off like this? How does that change the approach for you? Kind of what is your approach?

MARCO ANDRETTI: Honestly, I think it's just the stuff you can't practice over the couple of weeks, right? This is the race that I think you see a lot of rookies fast because you have a lot of time. I don't feel at a disadvantage at all.

I mean, even day one, I'm like, if we had to race that night, I'm good to go. It's the stuff I can't really practice, like restarts and stuff like that. Just the cadence and timing of that.

But they haven't been here in a year too, so a lot of the stuff is track-specific. I don't know. I don't feel at a disadvantage. I know my results haven't been where we need to be being a one-off, but last year I think if the strategy played out, we wouldn't be asked that question for sure.

Q. Marcus, after your accident during the practice session, has it been difficult to put that behind you? And then looking forward to Carb Day, just going back out there again, or is it all fine, well, and good?

MARCUS ARMSTRONG: What's the question?

Q. You had the accident. Is it difficult to put -- to make sure that that's all behind you, that you're not thinking about that as you're going out there to practice for Carb Day and everything like that?



MARCUS ARMSTRONG: No, I'm definitely not thinking about it apart from every time I'm doing an interview and they show me the video and then ask me to walk them through the experience. But, no, it's kind of like riding a bike. You've got to get straight back on it.

It's not the first time in my life I've ever had a crash. It's probably the -- it's certainly the biggest, but yeah, you just have to get straight back out there and push the limits and trust the car.

I feel like tomorrow is going to be a really important day for us because it's obviously our road course car and we're still dialing that in. Tomorrow we're going to be trying to -- well, personally I would feel really great if we managed to come out of that session with the same performance as our oval car.

Q. With it being your road course car, how close has it gotten to your superspeedway car? I know they spend weeks and weeks and weeks trying to dial the body fit in and everything else like that on those superspeedway cars.

MARCUS ARMSTRONG: I think it will be difficult to do that. It's not weeks and weeks. It's honestly since like last July that we're getting that oval car ready. A huge amount of time is dedicated towards making that car as good as possible.

I don't think that it's impossible that we can do it because ultimately the balance of the car is going to be similar. We're going to put the same setup on. We have put the same setup on.

Also, on Carb Day hopefully we'll have a stronger engine mode because on Monday we were very conservative on engine modes, and I think that makes everything just feel a little bit average. Even from a ride height standpoint.

When we actually turn the engine up, it's going to feel very different.

THE MODERATOR: How much running will you guys do tomorrow, both of you? Marco?

MARCO ANDRETTI: I mean, in my experience here I'm probably going to wait a bit because you normally go out and you're loose with a good car and then you undo a lot of good changes you made. You take front wing out. By the end of the session you put it all back in. I'm just going to probably hang for a bit and go out and confirm that we're okay.

THE MODERATOR: Marcus.

MARCUS ARMSTRONG: I want to hack around, honestly. I just want to get out there and just sit on Marco's tail and do a 228 in his tow.

Q. I just wanted to follow up with that, how confident do you feel when you come here? You've certainly run well here. He's not even joking about sticking around probably and seeing how you take it through the field, but just talk about what this place and your good experience is here.

MARCO ANDRETTI: Yeah, I feel confident here. I think when I don't feel that way, I probably stop coming back. I want to think that we're one to beat on Sunday. I just think we haven't been able to show much yet.

Speed is more than half the battle here, and that's just kind of what we've been battling. But I'm not one of those that tries to make my car more difficult to drive to find speed. I'm trying to make it as comfortable as possible because we don't have speed. I'm basically just trying to do everything I can in my power to maximize what we have going on, so hopefully I can carry more throttle than the others.

Q. Marco, you said that you were comfortable off the bat in the test. Tomorrow how important are in and out laps, getting to your pit box, and just kind of dialing that back in and knowing where you're at? Because that's a huge part of the race as well.

MARCO ANDRETTI: Yeah, I mean, I've done this for 20 years. The rookie should be doing that more than me. I felt good on Monday. We have a similar pit box to Monday after the new draw. Getting your reference points is important when you are nose-to-tail under yellow coming in to make sure you know where your pit box is and stuff. I'm not saying I don't have surprises coming my way on Sunday. I'll just try to adapt as best as possible.

Q. Do you know going into tomorrow kind of tendencies of other drivers? Marcus is a guy that didn't really get to run the 500 last year really, but the tendencies, are you learning that in practice, or do you just race who is around you and focus forward?

MARCO ANDRETTI: That's one thing that you don't have not being full-time is learning, I guess, nuances of certain drivers. Yeah, I mean, everybody is so good. That's why you see no yellows in this series anymore. No big worries for me. I just treat everybody similar.

Q. Marco, you seem too confident in your last-chance



try. I see that it's mostly about the confidence that you have in the car, but it's just from the outside maybe there's a little thing to go wrong that doesn't happen good -- a good lap in that lap? How do you process all this pressure, or is it just outside pressure?

MARCO ANDRETTI: I mean, I welcome pressure. I even -- it's weird. I go to a different gear. On Bump Day I was, like, just smiling, like, all right, this is what we're dealt. Let's see what we can do.

I welcome pressure. I think it's a good thing. I think it means we're honored to be competing in this race. Yeah, I don't know, I welcome it.

Q. Marco, question for you. With a hybrid, how much different is that going to make you run in the race this year?

MARCO ANDRETTI: I don't know. Obviously you want to use it to try to pounce on guys that when they make mistakes. I'm worried about guys using it after they make a mistake and to kind of defend, basically, if you slide wide or something, you hit the button, and it bails you out. We'll see what that does to the racing.

I think you can catch guys out if theirs is empty and yours isn't. That's an unknown I think for I guess a lot of us. Yeah, I mean, it's not like a huge shot. It's just something that if somebody does make a mistake and they don't have their button, it might help you complete a pass for sure.

Q. This is for Marcus. So you only got to run six laps last year in your Indy 500 debut. How excited and motivated are you to get out there and hopefully run a full Indy 500? What are your expectations for yourself?

MARCUS ARMSTRONG: Yeah, last year we had an engine failure early, so it's essentially my first 500. My expectations... I think in the wise words of Helio Castroneves, I'm just going to be there at the end, and we're going to try and peak at the right time. Yeah.

Q. In terms of temperature, what will be the ideal condition to climb the field starting from the back? Do you prefer a hotter day or a colder day?

MARCO ANDRETTI: It doesn't really matter. We prefer it's going to be what it's going to be. Where the car is right now, I would probably like it to be hotter just to kind of maybe have some separation because I'm fairly comfortable, but it's going to be even colder than we ran on Monday.

We'll see tomorrow.

MARCUS ARMSTRONG: I don't have a preference right now. I think it would be cooler if it was windy, just tough conditions really. I think at this stage a bit of chaos would be quite good for us.

So if it's kind of gusty like it was on Saturday and Sunday -- or was it Friday and Saturday -- that would make quite an interesting race certainly at the beginning when the track is a bit dirty.

I think that the hotter the conditions are, the bigger the spread will be between the good and the bad cars. I think at the back there's quite a few strong cars, so I think all of us will be hoping for the trickiest conditions possible.

MARCO ANDRETTI: You can tell it's his first 500. I wouldn't want wind and chaos (laughing).

Q. Question for Marco: This may be your 20th 500, but it's your first one as a dad. What's it like coming into the 500 as a dad, and have you had a chance to kind of dream a little bit about what that would be like to potentially celebrate victory lane with your kiddo?

MARCO ANDRETTI: Yeah. Obviously, yeah, fairy tale, that would be. I have to focus on one lap at a time for sure. I don't know. I'm really good at compartmentalizing, so coming away from it and looking from 50,000 feet, it's pretty special getting all the key photos with her around the property and stuff. When it's time to go, it's time to go. I don't think when the visor is down it changes much.

THE MODERATOR: Your dad is probably having flashbacks now that the roles are reversed a little bit. Your dad is coming, right, Sunday?

MARCO ANDRETTI: Yes, he is coming Sunday.

Q. First of all for Marco, do you know where the struggles came from in your qualifying car? Anything specific that you felt? Do you think those issues will transfer to the race or not?

MARCO ANDRETTI: Speed is kind of speed, unfortunately, but I could drive up to the pack, which always tells me that we can play. Like the pack is not driving away from me. So we have enough speed to do that.

Feeling-wise, over the two days in the wind, I think I did like seven qualifying runs, all different types of downforce. I ran even what Colton crashed, and it's all within three-tenths of a mile an hour. We just tried everything,

 . . . when all is said, we're done.®

and we just can't find the speed.

I've seen that across the garage more often than not. There's that one car, for whatever reason, and I drew that straw this year.

Q. Then for Marcus, you obviously said it was the biggest impact of your career on Saturday. What does that impact actually feel like in the moment when it happens?

MARCUS ARMSTRONG: What does it feel like?

Q. What's it feel like, as a kind of mere mortal who can't understand that?

MARCUS ARMSTRONG: It goes quick. It doesn't feel good, to answer your question quickly. It was a strange one really.

I would say the first thing I noticed was just the weight of the car. Like typically when you have a slide, whether it's on an oval or a road course or a street course, you always try and catch it and drive through it, but on this occasion it felt like there was half a ton on the rear wing. Like it was just so heavy at the rear, there was just no way I was going to catch it. That was my first thought.

Then when you're backwards, you just kind of hope for the best and brace for impact. I mean, frankly, the initial thought was just, Am I all good? Then it was, Is this car going to be salvageable? No, it's not. Okay. Then I just wanted to get back out there.

Q. You mentioned the weight. I know you have limited experience to draw from, but do you feel like the hybrid has possibly made it tougher to kind of save those sorts of moments?

MARCUS ARMSTRONG: Yeah, definitely. I think the margin for error is very small at the moment. Also, to even get the balance dialed in, I feel like it's a lot more difficult than last year. It can bite you pretty hard if you are too aggressive, but then if you're not aggressive enough, it's too far in the opposite direction.

I think with this extra weight as well, like the corners just seem tighter. I don't know about you, but it just seems like when you put boost and you take off the downforce, it just seems like you're driving a GT car at 400k an hour. Just very heavy and rearward weight distribution. It doesn't feel good at that speed.

Q. Marco, anything to that on that sort of feeling?

MARCO ANDRETTI: Yeah, I think you can feel the weight for sure. I think when you're kind of buried in traffic, it's definitely tough on the right front tire, or whatever balance you have going on. It's harder for sure.

I also notice that I think it's even more sensitive to track temp, to high track temp. It really affects these cars and makes them extremely hard to drive when it's hot.

Q. Marco, when you began, you were like the kid on the team. The other day Kyle Kirkwood described you as the team dad. What is your reaction to becoming the team dad?

MARCO ANDRETTI: I've got to keep them in line somehow, yeah. No, I don't know. It's definitely a mesh between -- looking at being here 20 years, it's a mesh between balancing the speed of those guys and I want to say smarts of myself because a lot of maybe stuff that they wouldn't feel that I do -- I'm very sensitive on the track. I can feel a lot of things, but sometimes that works against me.

I think it's a balance between the speed, the raw speed, that they have and risk-versus-reward thinking that I have. I used to drive this race different than you have to drive it now. You used to be able to drive the first two-thirds as a marathon and then the last third as a sprint, but man, I think our job started in qualifying. It's so track-position dependent if you can't shake it up with strategy.

Q. Even though Michael was your real dad, was it Colton Herta's dad, the team dad, when you started?

MARCO ANDRETTI: Yeah. Actually, yeah. He still is. Now he's the granddad.

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