

NTT INDYCAR SERIES

News Conference

Thursday, May 22, 2025

Callum Ilott

Louis Foster

Kyle Larson

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: Continuing on with Row 7 for the 109th running of the Indianapolis 500. Starting 21st, making his fourth start in the 500 from England, driver of the No. 90 PREMA Racing Chevrolet, it's Callum Ilott.

Starting 20th last year's INDY NXT by Firestone champion, a rookie from England, driver of the No. 45 Desnuda Tequila Honda for Rahal Letterman Lanigan Racing, Louis Foster.

And starting 19th, ready for his first leg of the Hendrick 1100, once he arrives here, Kyle Larson, driver of the No. 17 HendrickCars.com Arrow McLaren Chevrolet. Callum, let's start with you. Looking forward to getting back in the car, I'm assuming, tomorrow?

CALLUM ILOTT: Yeah, we agreed that we would start before Kyle gets here. You can ask us some questions before the star arrives.

No, really happy to get back going with the race car. Monday was the first time I got to do some laps in the pack because we've been focusing on qualifying. Yeah, felt really good, actually. Really strong. I was happy.

I think I was able to overtake a few people, but still a couple of cars are quite a bit faster. Yeah, I think we can move forward quite a bit.

THE MODERATOR: Louis, the same for you. A lot of guys were talking about how different qualifying car feels from race car, from race setup and stuff. Same for you?

LOUIS FOSTER: Yeah, pretty different. I think we've spent quite a lot of time, especially my car, in the qualifying setup just because we've showed here in past, we wanted to make sure we made it into the race in the first instance.

No, we had pretty good pace I think on Monday. We were

able to follow quite closely, and I think hopefully we still have a good race car. We'll see what we have on Carb Day and where we end up.

All in all, we're all confident going in. We have Taku up front and going to learn from him, and hopefully he has a great race. Our target, me, Dev, and Graham, is to push up to the front.

THE MODERATOR: Kyle, busy weekend ahead. You set, ready to go?

KYLE LARSON: Yeah, I'm excited about it. It's obviously a really cool opportunity. I think the weather looks good so far. It changes every day at this point.

THE MODERATOR: We don't need the pessimism. It's looking good on Sunday.

KYLE LARSON: Yeah.

THE MODERATOR: Knock on wood.

KYLE LARSON: Yeah, we're ready to go.

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

Q. Kyle, I wanted to ask you, coming back this year, what is the biggest difference for you? Is it just kind of ease of getting around? Do you know how the flow is going to go, or is it something specifically on track you feel that much more comfortable? What is it like year two compared to year one?

KYLE LARSON: I don't know. It's been different a little bit. I feel like it's obviously been a little more challenging with a couple of smaller crashes that we've had and then just having to work on the balance of the car more than we did last year.

I feel like last year we didn't really have to mess with a whole lot. I thought the balance was pretty comfortable, but it's just taken a little bit more time to get to that comfortable spot this year.

Happy with where we're at now. Yeah, you know, just kind

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of focused on both of the races at this point.

Q. Callum, given that this is PREMA's first oval race, obviously we saw what happened with Robert, but what have you seen in the team that's helped them get up to speed -- pardon the pun -- over the last several days in practice leading up to qualifying?

CALLUM ILOTT: I mean, they've just progressed and progressed and progressed. Each day the cars got better and better, and we focused a lot on qualifying. We got my car into the field pretty easily, and Robert exceeded expectations by a mile, and then the race car, look, we had our first proper go at it on Monday.

I think it's a big, big challenge for Robert and his car to learn that quickly in two days, how the timing of everything works. They're going to give it a go, and he's starting in the sharp end of things.

Yeah, it's like any other race. Once you are out there, you just have to execute with strategy and pit stops. We've got enough people with experience on the team to get those right.

Q. Kyle, for the oval track stuff, you didn't have to deal with milking the cow. You didn't have to do a lot of the rookie stuff. You're at the Indy Fever game. What's been the difference off track with all that, doing things differently this year you may not had to do last year? How has that been for you?

KYLE LARSON: Outside the car, it's been crazier this year logistics-wise. Going to New York and having a full day of media there and then flying back here. Going to the Fever game was fun. Then yesterday had a lot more kind of media stuff to do, and then you have media day today. It's like three days of -- don't take this the wrong way -- but answering the same questions. It kind of drains you a little bit.

I will be happy when today is done.

THE MODERATOR: What's the most asked question you've received?

KYLE LARSON: What are the differences between the two cars probably. That, and it must be crazy flying back and forth every day, but you don't, so...

THE MODERATOR: It must be crazy flying back and forth every day.

Q. Kyle, Josef Newgarden has a very fast car. He's starting in the back. What do you expect to see?

You've seen guys in NASCAR with fast cars come from the back through the field. You as a driver at mid-pack, what do you expect to see him be able to do? What does a driver like you also do to race your way up to the front?

KYLE LARSON: Yeah, I think it's going to be really exciting for fans to watch Josef carve his way to the front. I think he's definitely got a fast car, one of the most experienced drivers out there, bravest -- one of the bravest guys out there too.

It will be tough to pick his way forward, but I think he'll be able to execute his way to the front along with a good car. He'll be great on restarts. He will execute good pit stops. It's the unknown of if there's an accident in front of him and stuff that he can't avoid, things like that. He'll have no problem getting his way to the front.

Q. As far as you, there's a lot of times the way NASCAR races play out you might get mid-pack and you race your way back to the front. How easy or difficult will that be to do that on this track?

KYLE LARSON: Yeah, it's not easy at any track and NASCAR either to drive your way to the front, but that's where you have to rely on the people around you, your team, and the car that they've built and provided, your pit crew, your strategist.

You can't just do it all on your own at this level. So, yeah, I think for any of us in the field, you have to rely on your team. That's what we'll be doing. That's what everybody will be doing.

THE MODERATOR: Louis, for you, you have a variety of experience on your team. Graham has been around for a long, long time. So has Takuma. A two-time champion. How much have you tapped into that this week?

LOUIS FOSTER: A lot. I think obviously I've won a lot of ovals, but nothing compares to this track and also in INDYCAR. Yeah, there's a lot of nuances here that have been tricky to get a handle on. Weight jacking, fast jacking, stuff like that, that's been quite key for me.

Also, going through things they do in the race, going through their onboards has been helpful for me just to get a better understanding of what to expect come race day. Like, the 45 car, we've been strong in race pace. I think Q-trim, we lacked a bit of speed. We did what we could in qualifying, but we seemed to be fast in race pace, and I think the Rahals should drive up front.

Q. Question first for Louis and then for Callum. Louis,

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you're coming into the Indy 500 following your best career finish in INDYCAR. Where are you at in terms of your comfortability with the car as your rookie season progresses, and how can you use that momentum to have success this weekend?

LOUIS FOSTER: Yeah, I think I'm still not on a level yet where I'm driving the car, quote/unquote, without thinking. It still takes quite a lot of effort on my side to focus on what I'm doing. Am I comfortable in the car yet? No, I'm still learning every weekend. Especially in the races.

I think our qualifying base has been very strong. Our average is 10th, I think. Our race average is 20th. So that's what we have to work on is the races, which it's hard. Every weekend we get better. We get stronger.

I think the second half of the year, once I figure out the race better on my side of things, we should have some pretty strong results. We're in for top 10s. We have the car to do it, but we just have to execute.

As for this coming weekend, it's the biggest race in the world. It's the biggest race of my career. I have my whole family out here to support me. But, yeah, I think taking the momentum from the Sorsio Grand Prix is going to be key. We know we've got a good race car. I've watched kind of the game play of how the race is going to go. Obviously we're going to have to take what we have on race day and make the best of it and try to get the best result possible.

Yeah, I think for me it's about finishing the race and getting through my first 500 with experience so we can build on that for the future.

Q. Then for Callum, two years ago you finished 12th here. Last year you finished 11th. How do you feel about your chances of picking up your first Indy 500 top 10 or better this year?

CALLUM ILOTT: I think pretty good. We've exceeded expectations as a team so far this week and last week. I think the team is only improving and improving. Yeah, we just have to execute. I feel like I've got a good enough understanding of ovals to move forward from the starting position. Yeah, just have to build on it.

Last year I was in the pit lane when the race started. I was also last again, like, I think, lap 110 and managed to come back through to 11th. Speed is good, and we'll have to see. Pretty high chances hopefully.

Q. Kyle, I know the restarts were a little bit problematic last year for you. Is there anything you have been able to do with the team to working on that

and prepare, or is that something you literally have to do in a race because you can't really necessarily practice here to do stuff like that?

KYLE LARSON: Yeah. I mean, you don't get the chance to practice restarts in practice, but yeah, I just had that one kind of mishap last year where I think I kind of hit the rev limiter right when I went to shift to second, and then it got me confused if it did shift, and I think I hit it again maybe or something and ended up in the wrong gear.

You know, I was able to kind of overcome that and had -- I would say every restart after that was pretty good. We would gain a spot or three. It was honestly probably good for this year I think to go and have that bad restart and then you have to get aggressive on some others to learn for this year having to start from, I don't know, row seven or wherever we're at.

Yeah, I think it's tough. You get a lot of laps throughout these couple of weeks, but there's still more to learn during the race than practice. Just getting into the rhythm of all that is a challenge. But, I mean, there's a lot of us out there that really don't have that much experience racing on ovals for some of these guys. Specifically, the Indy 500.

Q. Kyle, if I'm not mistaken, you didn't really want to use your tools, like your weight jacker last year. This year you've got the hybrid in addition to that. How much have you been using that or messing with it? Do you think it will be a big thing for you during the race?

KYLE LARSON: Yeah, I have definitely gotten more -- I think last year I was just scared to do anything. I think my balance was, like, in a happy spot last year, and I was like, I don't want to go and -- I didn't know how sensitive everything was going to be.

This year, yeah, I've definitely played around with it a lot more. I feel like even last year I was afraid to do things in the short chute, moving bar. This year I've gotten way more comfortable with doing those things.

The hybrid is, I feel like, hyped up as being this crazy new thing, but it's really not a big deal either, I don't think. I don't know what these guys think. But you just pull the paddle and go. When you want more charges, hit a button. It's not really, like, a big deal.

Yeah, there is definitely more to the cockpits than what we're used to all year long in NASCAR or sprint car racing, but yeah, I feel like I've gotten the hang of it more this time around.

Q. How do you think the race is going to flow with the



hybrid this year and all the tools you're going to be using?

CALLUM ILOTT: I think the thing is you get so much use of the hybrid per lap everybody is going to be on it. It's the same basically. Everyone will be in the same rhythm. You recharge in the corner when you let off and let off the gas and then deploy on the exit. It just makes everything the same.

I'm sure that some people can do a slightly better job than others with it, but it's not exactly the most challenging thing right now. It's just another -- I think in qualifying it was more challenging if you were doing a complicated way with it. It can get very complicated. But there was more time in getting the car right than there was in getting the hybrid right, so...

LOUIS FOSTER: Even then in qualifying, getting the hybrid perfect was like nothing.

CALLUM ILOTT: Yeah, it doesn't -- yeah.

LOUIS FOSTER: It's another thing to do on the straights. I think it's a bit of a "get out of jail free" card. I think if you make a mistake, before you would lose your momentum. With the hybrid it helps to pick up the momentum. You have guys behind you that have that additional momentum. It's just another button to press.

Q. Kyle, do you have anything to add?

KYLE LARSON: No. To me it doesn't really -- like he just said, it doesn't change the style of racing to me. So, yeah, it's just kind of another button that you have that you have to do that probably doesn't really affect much of anything anyway. Yeah.

Q. Kyle, the thing about it is you're at an iconic speedway here. You've got a fellow New Zealander now in cut with you. Then you were a regular feature at Western Springs Speedway at New Zealand over the years. It's sadly closed now. What's a memory that you have of racing Down Under in New Zealand?

KYLE LARSON: I always love going to New Zealand. It's probably some of the best racing memories that I have to this point, just getting to spend time down there with our Kiwi friends that have kind of turned into family and other Americans going there to race. Racing 15 minutes outside of Auckland with 15,000 people there for a dirt race was pretty crazy. The racing was always good. You had off days to spend as vacation going to Waiheke Island and going on wine tastings on your scooter, and all that was fun.

Yeah, I haven't gotten to go since 2019 and '20, so I've missed going there. I wish I could have got there for the final season, but yeah, it's just unfortunate, but hopefully maybe someday it will reopen.

Q. Then also just as a follow-up, Louis, you obviously raced down in the CTFROC Series, Toyota Racing Series at circuits like Hampton Downs and stuff. How different are New Zealand circuits for people that live in New Zealand that are seeing this by comparison to the circuits here in the U.S.?

LOUIS FOSTER: Honestly, they're pretty comparable. I think circuits that tend to be similar, like Japan, England, New Zealand, tracks with not run-off grass after the curves, no room for error, as opposed to what we see now with the new Formula 1 circuit, where it's just painted tarmac, and it's just parking lots, and it's boring. Look at Paul Ricard. It's not fun.

I think the tracks in New Zealand are great. I didn't get to go to South Island unfortunately. Yeah, I did Hampton Downs and the other two. I forget the name. Taupo and Manfeild. That's it. They were awesome. I loved it.

One day I would love to go back. Probably not race in the series again, but definitely go back and see some of the guys that I met there. Similar to Kyle, same thing. We had -- I was there for three weeks, and between the races we went out, had vacation, chilled out, enjoyed the lovely Kiwi summer.

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