

# NTT INDYCAR SERIES

## News Conference

Thursday, May 22, 2025

Indianapolis, Indiana, USA

**Sting Ray Robb**

**Christian Rasmussen**

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: Continuing with row six, the 109th running of the Indianapolis 500. Starting 18th, making his second appearance in the Indy 500, the 2023 Champion of INDY NXT by Firestone, driver of the No. 21 ECR Splenda Chevrolet for ECR, it's Christian Rasmussen, and starting 17th, he led 23 laps in last year's race, driver of the No. 77 Juncos Hollinger Racing Chevrolet, great to have Sting Ray Robb with us. Devlin DiFrancesco is also in row six. He starts 16th. He will join us later this afternoon.

Christian, for you, tell us about looking ahead to tomorrow, which is obviously hugely important to get you ready for Sunday as well?

CHRISTIAN RASMUSSEN: Yeah, looking forward to it. I think we've had a good month so far. We've had really fast race cars. We missed out a little bit in qualifying, but we're better than what we showed there.

Yeah, I'm excited. Excited to get started. We had a good race here last year. I was able to move forward, so hopefully we can do that again.

THE MODERATOR: Sting Ray, for you, how important will those two hours tomorrow be?

STING RAY ROBB: I think for us it's critical. We found an issue in the car on Monday with something that was affecting the handling, and so I had been struggling with it, and we couldn't figure out what it was because it was one of those things that wasn't bad enough yet. Finally it got bad enough on Monday and took it back to the garage and went, Oh, there it is.

I don't really know what kind of race car I have, but I do know that it's fast. Even though the balance hasn't been good, the car has been very, very quick, which is kind of out of the ordinary. Usually it's the other way around. You get really good balance but the car is not quick. This year it seems like these cars are just rapid.

I'm excited to see what we can do for the race. Conor has been happy with his car. We both like a similar thing, which is nice. We can kind of use his foundation to build from.

Tomorrow is important for us. I think that we need to have that experience to find out what we need for the race.

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

**Q. Sting Ray, about the speed on the car, do you feel like you can compare what you feel last year with this year, like the little things that change with the hybrid and the things that are changed just for the setup of the car? How do you explain us a little about this difference?**

STING RAY ROBB: Compared to last year it's a new team for me on the 500 setup, and the car is quite a bit different with the hybrid as well. It's hard to compare, right? The hybrid unit itself, I don't think it has changed too much of what the cars are. It's added weight, but it's also added a little bit of the tools in the deployment region in how you maximize those.

I think that the balance change has been pretty minimal in that sense. Then going from last year's team to JHR this year, I think that the speed that's naturally in the car this year is better than what I had last year, which is kind of nice. I think that that comes down to the preparation.

So I don't know what goes on behind the scenes. That's not necessarily my job to know every little detail, but I do know that these guys have worked super hard to get these cars ready.

To be honest, I think it's the same throughout the paddock, right? We see guys where they have their primary car and then an accident happens and they go to their backup car, and it's just not the same. Thankfully for us we haven't had that as far as an issue so far. We've been running our primary car, and it's been very, very quick all week.

THE MODERATOR: Talk a little bit about -- we'll start with Christian -- having Rossi on board now, a guy that's won

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this race, that's been around here a lot. Ed has been around here a lot. You've worked with Ed now for the second year. How much has experience helped you at a place like Indianapolis?

CHRISTIAN RASMUSSEN: Yeah, he's been a massive asset not only here but the whole year. Alex comes in with a ton of experience. Obviously won around here, but he's in his ninth year of INDYCAR, 10th year of INDYCAR.

THE MODERATOR: It's his 10th Indy 500.

CHRISTIAN RASMUSSEN: No, it's been amazing having him on board. I think Alex's feedback to the car, knowing what's going on is exceptional and more than anyone that I've ever worked with closely, so it's been really good. He's been helping on moving this whole project forward.

THE MODERATOR: It just seems, too, the team has a lot of momentum commercially speaking, and then obviously you're seeing performance on track too, which I think has improved this year over last year. What is the momentum like for the team?

CHRISTIAN RASMUSSEN: Yeah, for sure it's there. It's like Rome was built in a day and it's not you get a new guy in and things are going to change overnight. It's a process. I think Alex has really helped move that process in the right direction, and I think, like you are saying, I think results are getting better and better. I think this is just the start of it.

THE MODERATOR: Splenda and Java House and all of that stuff too, there's a lot of good stuff happening with the team. Speak of experience for you, Sting Ray, Conor has led a lot of laps around this place. How has he helped you as a race car driver?

STING RAY ROBB: Yeah, Conor has been a great teammate for me this year. For him it's nice to have some familiarity coming back to a team that he's run at least a part of a season with.

I think that the things that he needs from the car is similar to what I need from the car, which is nice. Usually you have a certain driver going one way and a certain driver going another way, but this year it seems like we are kind of pushing the team in the same direction, which it's nice when you can get two cars going in the same direction. Things happen a lot quicker that way because you don't have to compromise.

So it's been nice to kind of have a teammate that has similar feedback and is driving a similar car that I find to be good. We've seen it in other places other than here, right?

I think Long Beach was a place that based off our street course setup we kind of pushed the team in the same direction. They had already been developing that way anyways.

Now coming to a track that Conor has done so well at, has so much experience at with different teams, he has a lot of knowledge, and also his approach to the car has been really good.

That's the thing with the month of May. You can't just outdrive anything. You kind of have to work up to it. You have to go through the process. You have to check all the boxes. That's where the experience comes in is which boxes do I need to check today? Conor has done a good job to kind of help check those boxes for me throughout the week and the week prior to get ready for qualifying and all that, so it's been very good.

THE MODERATOR: Setup similar between you?

STING RAY ROBB: Identical. You could copy one setup sheet to another. Part of that is I don't know what kind of car I have, so we've just been following his leads.

THE MODERATOR: It's a good leader certainly.

**Q. Just got one for Sting Ray. Obviously your two previous race setups have been different. The first time was quite difficult, and you had that incident after running. Last year you were running at the front for quite a large period of it. I guess from your perspective, how unusual is it to have such two vastly different experiences that you carry over into the race this year?**

STING RAY ROBB: Yeah, those are very, very two different experiences, but I think that the last two years here have been very unique experiences for me just because it's overwhelming the month of Indy 500. I think this year I'm in a much better place mentally, physically. I understand and have expectations that are much more appropriate for what this is.

I'll take my leading experience from last year, and hopefully that will come in handy for this season. Starting a restart from first is a little bit different than starting it from 20th. Now I know what that's like. Hopefully I'll have another chance to do it again this year.

**Q. Especially in your rookie year you sort of said the off track stuff, all the commitments you have to do and all the other stuff got quite tiring. Now you're in your third year. Has anything really changed? Have you got the schedule off track where you can manage all**

this?

STING RAY ROBB: The schedule has been way better this year compared to the first year I was in INDYCAR. I remember it was my mom -- my momager as I affectionately call her -- that was scheduling everything for me at that time. She just said yes to everything that she could.

Whether it was talking to someone about doughnut at their doughnut shop or someone that was with FOX Sports. You name it, we did every interview that we could that rookie season. I remember I didn't interview in the car driving from one speaking event to another while eating my lunch. I was, like, Okay, that's it, I'm not doing that again.

Now I have scheduled naps into my routine, which is way better. I like it a lot more.

**Q. I'm wondering here, going into your second Indianapolis 500, finished 12th last year, great result. What are your thoughts going into your second Indianapolis 500? Do you think there's going to be less nerves maybe, or just because it's Indy, are those butterflies still going to be in your stomach coming back here for a second year?**

CHRISTIAN RASMUSSEN: Yeah, I think there will always be butterflies when you are just about to start the Indianapolis 500, but no, just as the month as a whole, I've been a lot more calm in a way this year just kind of knowing what to expect a little bit more, having been through it all one time before.

You just know what to expect a little bit more, which makes it -- yeah, at least for me I've just been able to have a little calmer approach, which has been nice.

**Q. Christian, it seems that turn two might be your favorite corner. I was just curious if you know what's happened there in terms of why that seems to have been a place where the car kind of got away from you?**

CHRISTIAN RASMUSSEN: Yeah, the first time we thought we had a certain setup with the car. We were feeling very competitive up to that point. We had slight differences to the other car, but at that point when I did my first spin, we were I think 33 laps on tires. So it was a very easy one to brush off.

I was a little bit low, super old tires, and we just kind of thought that that was just one of them. So when we came back for practice the other day, we put on that same setup of the car because that's where we felt the most competitive. Obviously went out on new tires, and the

same thing happened.

So it was just kind of out of the ordinary. The rear just kind of stepped out on the car on both instances out of nowhere with not really any sign of it wanting to do so. So, yeah, obviously we've kind of had to re-evaluate the package that we are bringing and adapting a little bit from the other cars and kind of going towards that direction.

**Q. Do you have a similar setup to your two teammates?**

CHRISTIAN RASMUSSEN: It's very similar. It's been slight differences throughout the month. We've done things on the 21 car that the 20 and the 33 has adopted, and the other way around as well. That's kind of how the team dynamic works around here. If you find a little bit of something that you find an advantage in, then we can adopt that on the different cars.

That was just kind of the instance here where we had a thing that wasn't really working for us, and we adopted some from the other cars.

STING RAY ROBB: I will say that you did it fairly well considering the other guys that had done it.

CHRISTIAN RASMUSSEN: About as good as you can.

STING RAY ROBB: That was impressive. I was puckered up watching like, Oh, all right, he's okay, we're all good.

CHRISTIAN RASMUSSEN: The first time the only damage we had was a slight crack on the rear wing.

STING RAY ROBB: That's pretty good. Very impressive.

THE MODERATOR: Very impressive. Just after having experienced the Indy 500, both of you, once, twice, what's your favorite part of race day? Christian, start with you.

CHRISTIAN RASMUSSEN: The racing (laughing). I love racing around here. I think it's so cool. I think you can do stuff around here that you can't really do anywhere else. The racing on ovals in general are different from racing on a street circuit.

Obviously it's super special being here. Walking through Gasoline Alley with 350,000-plus people, that's a whole other story, but on the racetrack I think, yeah, it's the coolest event that we do.

STING RAY ROBB: I think for me outside of the racing there's a lot of tradition here, and I'm still learning what it means to be an INDYCAR driver at the Indianapolis 500.



Every year it seems like there's another layer added to it.

I actually got to sit in on Jake Query giving a little bit of a speech earlier this month and just kind of the history of how the speedway came to be. It makes you appreciate the grounds a little bit more, the fans a little bit more, the city a little bit more, and it makes you realize the impact that we're having is more than just driving race cars around a racetrack.

I think one of my favorite moments that I've experienced so far, and it's been the same answer the last two years, but when they do the playing of the "Taps," and it's dead silent after, and you look around, and you can just see the sort of solemnness that's in the air. It's one of those things where it's, like, Yeah, racing is cool, but it's not everything.

It's kind of a neat perspective to have on Memorial Day weekend being from America and appreciating that these are the freedoms that we've been doing to steward well. That's part of the reason why we have the livery on the car that we have this year. It's been a pleasure.

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