

NTT INDYCAR SERIES

News Conference

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David Malukas

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: David Malukas, driver of the No. 4 Clariance Technologies Chevrolet for AJ Foyt Enterprises. Sunday will mark his third Detroit GP, P1 in that alt car session to lead things off here this weekend. Car acting well, are you happy so far?

DAVID MALUKAS: Yeah, I'm really happy. We managed to get some laps in the beginning. It's a bit tough to kind of judge where we are compared to everybody else because I think everybody is struggling to get laps. But we got a good lap in, and the lap time was there at the start.

Second time around, we were struggling, but I also kind of flew off the track a couple times and didn't myself.

But I think we're in a happy spot and very comfortable with the car.

Q. Can you elaborate on that a little bit more? Seemed like Turn 1 got you twice.

DAVID MALUKAS: Yeah, so actually it was kind of just driver error. I started losing the rears on the primaries, so ended up having a moment initially there, so I moved the bias more to the rear because I locked the fronts on the primaries, but then we put the alternates on and then I locked the rears because I never put it back.

Yeah, learned my lesson. I think I've done that too many times now, so that was kind of the issue we won.

Overall, yeah, we're kind of trying to judge the movement going from primaries to alternates. Didn't really get that right. We were looking at that first group, seemed like people were taking a little bit of time to get it up to temp and get that peak tire, but for us it kind of came in immediately and we weren't really expecting that, so caught us off guard.

Q. Is it frustrating when you can only get one lap in during that session? Maybe it's your fault, maybe it's other people's fault, but is it frustrating to only have that one lap on those tires?

DAVID MALUKAS: Yeah, but it's kind of just how it's going to be for qualifying and how it's kind of been for the street courses.

Yeah, it's frustrating, but it's kind of been like that so far this season, so...

Q. They went back to the original tire rules. There was that change for Indy Grand Prix. Does it matter to you?

DAVID MALUKAS: I think it's just I prefer the way it is now because I feel like in Indy GP they were kind of cutting us a little bit from options when it comes to race strategy, forcing those rules.

But I think here having the option to choose what we want for the race is preferable.

Q. In recent years, this track has been known to create some mayhem. Do you see more or less happening this Sunday?

DAVID MALUKAS: Well, with this season, it seems like everything has been a lot less when it comes to yellows. But I'll be surprised if there's not going to be a yellow for this race. It's very -- with the way it's set up, Turn 1, it's very wide on entry and it looks inviting and then all of a sudden it gets very, very tight on the exit, and it happens a lot around this track.

It's going to be -- we'll see. I'm not going to say anything because I've been saying and looking at data and the data says 100 percent chance that it's not going to be a yellow, and we do setups for it and then there isn't a yellow and then there is a yellow, and then the data has been incorrect with how it's been this year. So I don't know what to say.

Q. Also they've changed the start zone. What do you think of that?

DAVID MALUKAS: Yeah, I think it's better. Kyle reached out to me, and I think all the drivers have got to give some feedback beforehand. I think it's a good change, and obviously we'll see how it goes when we get on track.

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Q. Can you just kind of elaborate on that and describe the challenge of this track, how you manage the bumps, obviously the narrowness of it? How hard is this place to drive around, especially coming from Indy to here and the reset that you've got to make?

DAVID MALUKAS: Yeah, it's very difficult. Thankfully I went on the simulator before coming here and did over 100 laps to kind of prepare for it just because I know that transition is very tough from previous years, going for a whole month on an oval and now coming to I think one of the most technical courses for us.

I had a little bit of preparation beforehand but it's just so tough because the way this track is, all the bumps tend to be mid to out when you're trying to accelerate, and those bumps throw you what is a wall.

It gets very tough, especially entering 8 where the alt start line is. That bump is a big one and it's very aggressive, so I think it's catching a lot of people off guard. That's kind of the one that we're heavily focused on, but that's just the general layout of this entire track is all the exits are a little bit more those bumps.

But yeah, I enjoy it. The margin for error is very small.

Q. Obviously a really strong 500, but the season before that maybe hadn't been where we'd seen the team last year on the Santino side. What are the improvements that maybe had to be made from those first five rounds of the season, and are you confident now, especially with the momentum coming from the 500 that a bit of an upswing can be seen?

DAVID MALUKAS: I've kind of said throughout the start of the entire season that we really are looking forward to the month of May because we're with the team for the entire month. We can really build on the car and work on the chemistry of each other and really understand what we want and start building some momentum for the second half of the season.

I feel like that's kind of what's happened, and it's something that I've experienced on my first year in INDYCAR where really things didn't turn around for me until the month of May. That's just kind of being with a new team, how it is. We've made really good improvements with the setup and different things that we wanted throughout the month of May, and I think it's going to be shown for us this week.

Q. I'm pretty sure you were the car that Power and Kirkwood went past during their little incident?

DAVID MALUKAS: Yeah, that was really cool.

Q. What was your view of that?

DAVID MALUKAS: I mean, for a second, getting back in the car, for me it just felt like I was back playing iRacing or rFactor. I was like, yeah, I'd totally do that in a video game. It was pretty cool to see him just push Ericsson, and actually in my peripheral vision, because Ericsson went off and Power just blasted through, and I just drove by and I just see Ericsson's hand like going in the air, like, what the hell is going on.

But it was interesting to see. I couldn't believe it. I was very confused at the start. I thought something was wrong with Ericsson and Power was towing him across like the "Cars" movie. It was interesting at first but then I realized it was not that, so...

Q. Can you elaborate maybe on the dust issue? Is that kind of the nature of street circuits, or is it maybe the time of day --

DAVID MALUKAS: Yeah, I keep coughing right now because there's a bunch of dust inside of me. Yeah, it's always the first session just with the air tube coming in. There's just a lot of dust and cleaning that we have to do. Unfortunately that dust comes off of that car and goes straight into that tube and straight into my face. That's the one downside to having the Darth Vader mask, but I only have that issue for the first practice session, and then the rest I just look really cool.

Q. David, at St. Pete the tires for the alternates were the ones that the drivers said were one-lap wonders, and in terms of getting up to speed and then the speed falling off after one lap in qualifying, what do you think they're going to be like here? Is it a similar situation?

DAVID MALUKAS: I think so. We were thinking it was maybe going to take a little bit longer, but it seemed for us it was coming in pretty fast, so I think it's going to be something very similar.

Q. David, to go back to the whole dust thing, is it exacerbated here because you have IMSA and INDY NXT? At St. Pete you have all different Road to Indy series, MX-5 Cup, limited running here from everybody else to help clean up the track beforehand, quote-unquote?

DAVID MALUKAS: Yeah, I mean, that could probably be it, yeah. But I don't really know. All I know is there's a lot of dust going in my face, so...

