

# NTT INDYCAR SERIES

## News Conference

Sunday, June 15, 2025

## Kyle Kirkwood

### Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: Congratulations to our champion, Kyle Kirkwood, from 10th to first place, you led eight laps, driver of the No. 27 Siemens Honda for Andretti Global.

First oval win of his career, third win in 2025, fifth of your career. You'll have to figure out how all of this really shook out because it was a heck of a race.

KYLE KIRKWOOD: You know, I understand it. I understood the strategy pretty well. I understood that some of those guys there at the end were trying to make the fuel work and if they got a caution, they would have. It would have been pretty easy for them to make it to the end if there was just one caution.

As I come down the front straight I look at the pylon, and when you other guys like after you've done your stop and you're like 10, 15 laps into your stint and you're like, those guys are trying to make it, and now you're looking for those cars. Even though Brian was filling me in on it, I was still paying attention to what was going on out there.

Yeah, no, a good day. Everything worked to plan accordingly. If I'm being honest, we didn't start with an amazing race car; we finished with one. That was just due to the work that the crew did and due to the work that Honda did.

I think as the conditions cooled, we picked up some power, and then as the conditions cooled for our car we got a little better, but we also tuned on it, too. We were making changes at almost every single stop to get ourselves into a good window, and that played a huge factor in today's win because in the beginning stages it felt like we have anything.

So we kept our heads down and stayed calm, cool, and collected, took opportunities where they came, and fortunately came away with that win.

**Q. First win on an oval. How good is it to shed the street course merchant thing that people have been talking about with you before?**

KYLE KIRKWOOD: I mean, it's kind of funny, right? You get on this streak where it's like, oh, he's doing so well, he's winning races, street courses. But then you get your fourth and people are like, another street course for Kirkwood. It's not as big of a deal now. When is he going to win something else?

It takes away from the street courses, so this was huge for me. This was by far bigger than last weekend because of that.

I think Detroit was one of the most satisfactory wins that I've ever had because I actually had to pass some people for some things. But today just like kind of puts a stamp down a little bit more, like hey, this kid might actually be able to contend for a championship and do things.

Everybody knows you've got to be diverse in this series. You've got to win at multiple circuits. You've got to win at multiple venues. Whether it's a short oval, long oval, street course, road course, whatever it might be, you've got to win at all of them. A step in the right direction for sure.

**Q. How were you able to fix your car to make it better?**

KYLE KIRKWOOD: We were making up a lot of grip for whatever reason and I was super loose in 3 and 4 but understeering in 1 and 2, and we couldn't really take wing out to adjust for it.

We tried some other things with the car and I was able to get my tools right with inside the cockpit as well as the tuning that we did outside the car, and fortunately things kind of came together and came out with a good result.

**Q. Your previous best finish here was 15th. What's the importance of -- how important was it to make this the first oval win for you after you had some good success here?**

KYLE KIRKWOOD: You know, I never felt that bad here. I don't know why I finished 15th. I didn't know that, so thanks for reminding me.

Like last year we were running good. I thought we had a

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car to win last year, it's just we got caught up in a little mess. Last year, to be honest, I was too timid on the restarts and starts and kept getting passed. This year my engineer was like, hey, don't be a blank on restarts and starts.

That actually played in our favor here today, so I had to be pretty aggressive and take more risks than I would have liked to, but it worked out.

**Q. In what ways do you feel like you've matured as a driver over the last couple years and turned yourself into a legitimate title contender?**

KYLE KIRKWOOD: I mean, doing the simple things right. Knowing when to attack, when not to. Understanding kind of that dynamic. And I'm beginning to understand the strategy a lot more.

Honestly, it's mostly from just driving and then learning from the guys that have been around a lot. As I've been with Andretti, I've been much closer to the pointy end of the field in a lot of races and have lost to a lot of those guys that have an amazing pedigree. And those losses are big, right? Like you learn a lot on how they win and how they do it. Those are key takeaways that I try and do or try and take away from it and apply it to races like this.

It tends to be working a little bit at least.

**Q. You probably just about as much as anyone was having to work your way through the field and probably had a good vantage point on what a great race this seemed like it was --**

KYLE KIRKWOOD: Was it good from the outside?

**Q. It was. What was your race from your seat in the car, what were these 260 laps like?**

KYLE KIRKWOOD: Physical. Extremely physical. Nobody would have guessed that the pace was going to be that high. I was doing 25 eights. That's like qualifying pace on full fuel. Like that is so, so fast for one of these cars, and I loved every second of it.

I thought in some ways when it's that fast it's really hard to race guys, but man, it made it fun. It made it physical. It made it mentally straining because you just feel like you're on a qually lap for 260 laps.

And, yeah, it was not an easy race by any means, but I'm glad it looked well from the outside. Felt like a fun race for me. Felt very racy. Felt like a lot of passes happening, a lot of strategy, lap traffic causing some headaches for

some guys.

Yeah, looked cool from inside the car, but I'll watch it back and look at the highlights.

**Q. The gap to Alex now stands at 75. Does that feel a lot more reasonable?**

KYLE KIRKWOOD: It does. It's double digits again. Triple digits are never a good sign in a championship. Moving closer. It's still a long ways to go.

He's good at a lot of races that we're coming up to, so those are the ones that are going to really count. This has been a track that we haven't been amazing at so, it's great to claw back some points here.

But everybody knows we're going to go to Road America next week and he's going to put on a show there and we'll have to do everything in our power to keep him from looking shiny once again on road courses.

**Q. Obviously it looks a lot different being in the cockpit than seeing it on TV, but tonight was a great to showcase INDYCAR to maybe an audience that doesn't watch INDYCAR racing on FOX, primetime, Sunday night. How big do you think it was that they saw a race that was in doubt all the way to the checkered flag?**

KYLE KIRKWOOD: I mean, hopefully it paid off, right? It was great to race on primetime, not only because we're getting a huge viewership and we're opening up to a new audience of some people, but when you race at night, every oval race should be at night, apart from the 500. The racing is so much better. Everything gets so much faster. The ambient temperature is down. The track surface temperature is down.

When things get hot with these cars, they just don't race as well. That's why you see races like this. Things get fast and next thing you know people are flat-out passing each other, and it makes for a very exciting show.

Obviously it's a luxury that we all can't have, but I think when we come back here, it should always be a night race here.

**Q. Once you were in the lead at the end, did you feel that you were in pretty good shape at that point, that Pato was not going to be able to pass you?**

KYLE KIRKWOOD: He made a good charge there at the end, I'm not going to lie. And I had his teammate sticking in front of me making sure I didn't get by him.

I'd expect Colton or Marcus to do the same for me if I'm being honest. But yeah, that almost put -- if we didn't get through some of the traffic a little bit easier in the beginning and stretch that gap between putting a couple cars between us, it would have been really hard to hold them off when Siegel was right in front of me, I'm not going to lie, because I know Pato, and he's going to do everything in his power to win a race.

Yeah, unfortunate conditions when it came to that.

**Q. If you keep up this pace, in another couple of weeks you'll pass Alex for most wins in a season.**

KYLE KIRKWOOD: Yeah, that's not really the focus right now, it's more just beating him.

**Q. A little surprised you led eight laps tonight?**

KYLE KIRKWOOD: You know, I forgot there was guys off strategy, so no, I'm not surprised at all actually because.

I was only in the lead after we did that little short undercut and ran some fast laps and cleared Dixon and Pato. We didn't even clear Pato. Pato may have overcut us or something.

So no, I'm not surprised at all. No, I didn't think about it. It was only there at the end when Callum pit that we were actually in the lead.

**Q. I know you're always motivated, but how much more motivated have you been after what happened in Indy and you're in a championship fight but now you have points to make up?**

KYLE KIRKWOOD: We're just proving that no matter what's happened in the past that we do produce race-winning cars and we are at the pointy end, especially on ovals.

It was an exclamation point at Detroit, but maybe this one is even a bigger one because it's at an oval, like the third fastest oval that we go to. Yeah, that was a big win here today for that reason.

**Q. What's making everything click inside of the team as a whole? We saw the INDY NXT series, Andretti has been dominating that; you've obviously won. What's that atmosphere been like?**

KYLE KIRKWOOD: Well, obviously we're two very separate entities even though we work under one umbrella. They're very separate in engineers and the way things are spread out there.

But in regards to Lochie and Dennis Hauger, they've been doing a great job, a phenomenal job, racing hard. They've got, I think, very bright futures in them, both of them, they do, and I look forward to competing against them in INDYCAR here in the future. But if you look at the INDYCAR stuff, we're doing everything right now. It's been a lot of development. Dan Towriss has taken over TWG Motorsports. Big effort has been put in to make sure that we're producing race-winning cars, and that goes to every single track that we go to and efforts are paying off now.

**Q. Kyle, while not as dramatic as your win two weeks ago in Detroit with a damaged wing, your victory combined with Alex Palou's non-factor night, what kind of confidence does this give you that you could make a championship fight out of what looked like a foregone conclusion?**

KYLE KIRKWOOD: I mean, I'm not surprised of what has transpired with him because -- I'm not taking anything away from him, but a lot of the beginning races of the season are races that he was really, really good at in past years, and it's no surprise that he just pieced them all together and got wins at all the places that he did.

But I think now we're getting to a point in the season where these are races that we are very close to them on, and it will be interesting to see how they shake out. Ultimately we're just going to have to keep doing what we're doing, trying to win as many races as possible and get as many points as possible, and hopefully that will pan us out into a good position.

But I can tell you that we're going to do everything in our effort to claw back at him. It's still a long ways away. 75 points is deep. That's almost two races.

He could still take a little break if he wanted to.

**Q. Kyle, all night you had to thread through traffic, especially at the end there. How did you manage or how did you thread through traffic having to catch Callum with O'Ward charging behind?**

KYLE KIRKWOOD: Well, Callum had to pit, so I didn't even catch him. He was about a second ahead when he pit.

In regards to traffic, we were really fast compared to the guys that we started lapping. I think it would have been harder if we got a little bit further along, right, so if we were maybe starting to lap guys that were running legitimate top 10, it would have been kind of really hard to get by them, and it would have given anybody that was behind me an



opportunity to potentially pass.

You know, it was kind of a fortunate situation. We were passing some Hondas that also didn't want to get in our way and they wanted to see a Honda win, and then right at the end we caught Siegel, which he was not going to let us by, and fortunately Pato couldn't catch us quick enough to really make that a factor.

**Q. The next two races at Road America and Mid-Ohio you've won a bunch in the junior categories, you finished well there last year in both races. What's the level of excitement in the fact that these next two races are tracks that you've done very well at and you know your way around them very well?**

KYLE KIRKWOOD: Road America has been a good one for us. We had a great race there last year. But if I'm being honest, Mid-Ohio has kind of eluded me in INDYCAR. Hopefully we can come back there and that will change.

It's kind of weird, right, because I felt like I won everything there in all the junior categories and then you get to INDYCAR and it's a different world. The things that you do well there are just average in INDYCAR.

That's a place I'm working on. It's a place that we're working on as a team, and hopefully we can come back there and do something like we did here.

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