

NTT INDYCAR SERIES

News Conference

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Alexander Rossi

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: Welcome, everyone. Wrapping up a hectic stretch of five races in four weeks. Another trip out west, WeatherTech Raceway. Alexander Rossi's fifth start at Laguna.

Thanks for doing this, Alex, on a quick turnaround for all of us. One of the reasons is that you have a very busy schedule ahead over the next couple days. So cool that Java House is a title sponsor of the upcoming race weekend. You're getting a lot of Java House love this week.

ALEXANDER ROSSI: For sure. I think it's been quite a whirlwind, four months, when you think about this is just the beginning of what Java House and two groups in Splenda, everyone in that department at ECR is getting started.

This was something that I don't know was initially on the bingo card or not. But the fact that we're already at title sponsor of an NTT INDYCAR SERIES race is pretty exciting. It just shows their belief in the series and the level of the sport. I think it's a really exciting time to be part of that journey as we continue to grow and get better.

Very excited to get out there. It's obviously a home track, it is my home track. To be able to have a home race and the car that I drive is also the title sponsor of the event is sort of like a perfect dream scenario.

Very excited about it. Appreciative of all the support that Java House has provided to ECR and the series as well.

THE MODERATOR: It's a story worth telling again. You and your dad have a ton of great memories at Laguna. How did it begin for you guys?

ALEXANDER ROSSI: It's a father-son trip I took when I was three years old. I obviously don't remember that far back, but there's pictures (smiling).

That's just something that we did every year, go to the CART races there at Laguna. I fell in love with the sport.

My dad was a huge fan of motorsports. He didn't have a background of it, per se, but he wanted to introduce me to it at a young age.

When I was 10 years old, we were walking around the exhibitors. There was an advertiser, Las Vegas Motor Speedway was there. There was a sign-up sheet for kids to start go-karting in a three-day go-kart clinic at Las Vegas Motor Speedway. I had just turned 10, it was my 10th birthday, and we signed up there at the track. The rest is kind of history.

A lot of personal connections for me to that track. My town that I grew up in is under four hours away. A lot of local support comes out, as well.

THE MODERATOR: A unique way to begin what has turned out to be a very good career, including an Indy 500 win.

We'll open it up for questions.

Q. Alex, with four races left in the year, do you look at points? Do you have a points goal, looking at where you're at compared to others, or is it more things you want to perform on the last few weeks?

ALEXANDER ROSSI: That's a good question.

I think at this point, points are irrelevant. We want to make sure we have answers to questions going into what is a long off-season.

It's always one of the struggles with INDYCAR, you have all of these events kind of stacked on top of each other. It's sort of hard to keep up any development program, if you will, because everyone has to be trackside focused. No one can stay back at the shop. You get into this off-season and it's all development focused. You don't have any opportunity to validate it on a track.

We're really trying to answer some questions for some heavy-hitting topics that we know that we're weak in and struggling on. I think these four races should actually be fairly good for us, with two ovals and two road courses. This year has been full of surprises.



Yes, to answer your question, points are not really relevant, but I want to get some good results for the whole organization and the morale going into the off-season.

Q. You talk about answering any heavy-hitting questions. Do you have any research in terms of what happened yesterday?

ALEXANDER ROSSI: The wall was not lined up properly. I'm not going to speculate how that comes to be. It's obviously hard to build temporary street courses. You're building an entire racetrack and infrastructure from nothing.

At the same time we're an elite motor racing organization, so there's got to be quality control. This is not the first time something like this has happened. The first year at Detroit, Kirkwood had some similar issues.

Something to learn from for everyone. That's behind us now. There's probably no more street courses till probably March.

Q. In four races' time, you'll be at the end of your 10th full-time season. Is that surreal at all or have you been living in the moment for 10 years?

ALEXANDER ROSSI: No, not really. I mean, I think the clock continues to tick for all of us. But yeah, I mean, you just try and take advantage of every opportunity you have. Every time you're in a race car is a chance to prove yourself.

On that same token, you're really only as good as your last race. It's a very demanding sport from that standpoint, but it's immensely rewarding if you can get into a pretty good run and have momentum on your side. That's our goal to finish out 2025.

Q. Are you having family and friends coming out? How are you conducting your home race weekend?

ALEXANDER ROSSI: Yeah, some family's coming. It's not really up to me. The people that want to come, they ask if they can come, we take care of them. I don't, like, host a hospitality tent or do any activities or anything.

But yeah, certainly there will be more guests here on the family side than there would be at Mid-Ohio or something like that.

Q. Your first year with ECR, four races left, how would you gauge where you are compared to what your expectations might have been entering into the year?

ALEXANDER ROSSI: I think from a performance standpoint, I would say it's probably honestly higher than what I was expecting. Maybe that's not a fair thing to say, but the performance has been good in a lot of scenarios.

The execution on race day has been lacking. Some of that has been there are elements that are completely outside of the team's control. We've unfortunately had quite a few mechanical failures this year.

I mean, it's the way the sport works. You look up and down the grid this year, and by no means are we alone in that category. It's just there's so many variables and you try your best to control all of them, but sometimes that's not possible, and sometimes it's just a tough go for a little bit.

But I would say the hardest thing to fix for any race team or driver is true performance. I don't feel that's our biggest issue. Obviously it needs to be better and we need to make more appearances in the Firestone Fast Six. But we've been knocking on the door pretty much every weekend. That's good.

We will try and clean things up on Sundays to finish out the year better.

Q. You said earlier in the season the team had evolved ever since you joined back end of last year. Towards the end of your first season with the team, what differences are there between the team that you found in October to the team in the state it's in now?

ALEXANDER ROSSI: That's an interesting question.

I don't know that there's huge differences because, kind of like I said, once you get into the season, it's very difficult to really do much outside of focusing on the trackside performance side of things and really just try and put your best foot forward, whether that's through sim days or whatever.

The year's kind of split up into two categories: you have pre Indy 500 and post Indy 500. The post Indy 500 run is pretty intense for everyone. There's not a lot of evolution that can happen. Kind of what you have is what you get.

I think the real big step will come as we go into this off-season. If you look at where the new ownership group came in, there's a big change in what Ed Carpenter Racing is. That's not an overnight thing. Those people need to have an understanding of what the sport is, what the sport requires to compete at the very top, kind of identify areas that need to be tweaked and adjusted in order to get the most out of everybody.

That's not something you can do kind in October of having one day of a test at Indianapolis to March and having the first race.

I think we've all made a lot of notes and had a lot of conversations about things we need to improve in order to be better next year. At the same time when it's five races in four weeks, that's not something you can really implement on a Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday going into a Thursday prep for a weekend, if that makes sense.

Q. Is there low-hanging fruit from a performance or operational standpoint you feel like need targeting in an off-season?

ALEXANDER ROSSI: I think if you look at this year, ultimately there's really one, two teams, two and a half teams now I guess, that have been the benchmark, and everyone else is following considerably short. I'd say that's not specific to ECR, that's specific to just in general, all about those three teams let's say.

It's a bit of a weird one. I think there's been a lot of surprises this year just in terms of general performance or lack of results up and down the field.

So yeah, I mean, I think there's low-hanging fruit on the operation side, on the performance side, on us as drivers to improve in the off-season.

It is exciting to think about that, but it also takes a lot of effort and buy-in from everyone in order to accomplish that and start seeing the fruits of that labor. It's not just, Oh, we need to do this, we believe we need to do this. You actually have to do it. There's quite a big gap for all of us to close on these three teams this year.

Q. Having spent a while at Andretti and going to Arrow McLaren, how does the environment compare to Ed Carpenter Racing? Is that environment something you have enjoyed?

ALEXANDER ROSSI: Really it might surprise you, but it's not that different. I think the scale is the biggest thing. But ultimately all of these teams, that's what makes this series so challenging and so rewarding at the same time, all of these teams are very good. All the engineers, mechanics, management, drivers, everyone has earned a right and worked their way to get to this level of motorsport.

I would say it's just the amount of people. I wouldn't say it's really anything beyond that. At McLaren, there's kind of in some departments two people or one job sort of thing, whereas at ECR it might be one person for two jobs, which is something that is a target of the organization to build

strength in personnel and to take some of the workload off the people who have been managing a lot of different departments all at once. I think that's pretty high up on the priority list.

But ultimately hiring people in this sport is very challenging. It's not easy. You don't want to hire people for the sake of hiring people either. It's not just as easy as saying, Oh, we're three people short in the engineering group, let's go hire three people.

At Arrow McLaren in '23 when we added the third car for me to come on board, it was very difficult in the beginning. That whole year felt like a little bit of a waste in terms of a lot of those people had never even seen an INDYCAR before. They got to the point where they're very good, but you've got to have a lot of runway in order to make hires like that.

It's a constant challenge not just for us, but for everyone. I would say when I show up to the track in an ECR shirt versus a McLaren or Andretti shirt, it doesn't feel any different. Walking into the trailer, you feel pretty proud being part of any of those organizations.

Q. About Laguna, a place you know very well, given your podium here last year and ECR's recent form, what do you feel would be a realistic target for this weekend?

ALEXANDER ROSSI: Good question.

It's so hard in INDYCAR because especially this year kind of everything that existed last year doesn't really apply because of the hybrid, right? Laguna last year was the final race of a non-hybrid engine. The hybrid came on after that.

But then the races we've been with the hybrid, we also had hybrid last year, it's a different tire. Just because there's a connection to past performance, it doesn't really mean from one year to the next it's all going to translate.

So I don't really know. I think that ECR and the team and Christian was pretty happy with the car he had last year. But again, that was a non-hybrid car. The track has gone through another year of weathering so the pavement is obviously going to be a little bit different than what it was in '24, which is different than what it was in '23.

I don't have an answer for you. It's been a difficult run. I think the team in general is very in need of a strong result for both cars, not only for kind of a confidence boost for the whole organization, but also because it's the team's home race now kind of with the Java House being the title



sponsor.

There's going to be a lot of eyes and a lot of opportunity to make people very happy if we can have a good weekend.

Q. The fact you've not qualified inside the top 10 since the Indy road course round, is it because the car has been more difficult to drive, the setup, or is the team fundamentally lacking the raw speed on road courses at the moment?

ALEXANDER ROSSI: I don't know. I wish I had an answer for you. I think that Detroit, Christian qualified in the top 10, I believe, or maybe 12th, but very close. I think he was just the better car that weekend.

On the ovals I think the team has shown the capacity to be very strong in the races. Qualifying has still been a little bit of a mystery in terms of outright speed in the car.

Really Road America and Toronto were very challenging weekends from an overall pace standpoint, for very different reasons. Those are obviously different tracks. They have very different demands, but they were also our worst qualifying of the year by a pretty hefty margin. On that same token, Mid-Ohio was the first time ECR got those cars into the Fast 12.

It's been hit and miss. Unfortunately if we had the answer to that, it probably wouldn't be hit or miss, it would be just kind of consistent all the way through.

It's something that we're continually trying to identify and understand going forward.

THE MODERATOR: Christian started 10th at Detroit dating back to what was the end of May, early June.

Q. In your first season at Ed Carpenter Racing, how do you think things have progressed overall? What are your personal goals for the last four races?

ALEXANDER ROSSI: It's like I said, we're trying to finish off the year on a high note and have positive momentum through the off-season. There's been a lot that's been learned and understood.

Again, it's this series in particular it's hard with having so many races on top of each other coming off of Indianapolis. If things are not fully optimized or you're not in a super good window, there's a lot of races that go by in a short period of time.

We are aware of some of the easy fixes, and some of the harder fixes won't come until 2026. It's a constant

evolution. As the series gets more and more competitive with more and more teams having alliances with each other, it just demands excellence through and through.

It's something we're aware of and working to resolve. As I said, hopefully the last four races we can take a decent step forward and be better than we have been as of the past four weeks.

Q. Is it too soon to think about 2026?

ALEXANDER ROSSI: We're definitely thinking about 2026, especially as the street course phase of the season is now over. There's already things that we have had in development really since St. Pete, but due to the time constraints and the personnel restraints, it can't be on a car before Toronto comes.

Those are things you're very excited about to have available to you in '26, but at the same time there's still four races and four tracks that in theory we should be very strong at.

It's important to not lose sight of the job that you have in the moment. Just because you're excited about something it will come in the future, you still have to execute the day that you're at the track.

Q. Do you get a chance, since you're going to the Bay Area, to get in touch with your boy Brady?

ALEXANDER ROSSI: Tom?

Q. Yes.

ALEXANDER ROSSI: No, no, I didn't see him.

Q. Going back to the Bay Area, is your little guy going to come with you?

ALEXANDER ROSSI: He's coming. But, no, we're not going to go to Nevada City. Certainly he'll be in the state.

Q. You mentioned earlier the repave. How much does that kind of made, tire falloff, obviously more as the years evolve, but sometimes it can take even longer to get that falloff you've seen before. Do you expect more falloff this year compared to last year? How do you think it will be in the third year?

ALEXANDER ROSSI: I think the grip level comes down. I don't know if that necessarily equates to falloff. That really is dependent, as well, on what tire Firestone ends up bringing, which changes every week, it seems.



I don't know how to answer that. I think the lap times will be slower just because, yes, the grip will be slightly lower. Still much higher than anything we had in 2022. Is that when the repave was?

Q. '23 was the first year.

ALEXANDER ROSSI: So 2022, that was crazy deg, which we won't get back to that for quite some time. I think it will be a little slower with the hybrid, as well.

Q. How much have you had to change the way you drive that track? '19 to '22, it's like a cheese grater. Have you had to change your driving style?

ALEXANDER ROSSI: Yeah, you can be much more aggressive now than you could even pre-repave in qualifying you can get away with quite a lot. It was just in the race that you really had to back everything down quite a lot.

But now it is pretty normal. I wouldn't say it's a crazy grip that it was when it was first repaved, but it's still very high. So I think it's in a really nice, enjoyable spot to drive.

We as drivers love repaves in terms of going out there and pushing and getting the ultimate performance out of an INDYCAR. You don't love it from the racing side because usually there's no deg associated with it.

I think year three into it, it should be in a really nice window of high grip but also starting to take some life out of the tire as the stint goes on, which should create a very good product on Sunday.

Q. You mentioned the sponsor. Your goals don't change for a race. Is there maybe more responsibility that you feel because you have more eyeballs on it? Does your schedule change at all, more appearances, meet-and-greets?

ALEXANDER ROSSI: Yeah, for sure it's busier. It's kind of reminiscent of a week of May schedule in some respects. But it's also a good problem to have. It's not good when you're showing up to the racetrack and there's no sponsor, media requirements. That's a whole different problem that you're having. It's not something that any of us should complain about. You just manage it. The team does a really good job of making sure there's adequate time to focus on the engineering and performance side, meeting the obligations that Java House and that whole group will set out.

Q. One year with the hybrid, how to prepare the car? It's really complicated with 45 kilos more in the rear?

ALEXANDER ROSSI: Is that a question or a statement?

Q. No, no, a question.

ALEXANDER ROSSI: Yeah, yeah, no, it's very difficult.

I think the car was gone away from being able to really -- you used to be able to get a lot of lap time out of it by being super aggressive with the car and kind of forcing it to do what you wanted it to do. You could be aggressive with the mechanical rotation and the setup of the car.

But now with the weight, not only does that put a huge amount of demand on the rear axle, but it's also just the bigger pendulum.

Before when you could slide the car through a corner, you could make lap time that way, now it's a much sharper knife edge because there's so much extra weight in that inner that and yaw moment is bigger.

That's why I think Alex has had such a successful season, is he's so the opposite of that. He's incredibly precise and very kind of gentle with the car. That's the current way of being fast in an INDYCAR.

Previously INDYCAR, especially with no power steering, it kind of rewarded the guys who were willing to take the biggest risks and drive the hardest. Now it's kind of taken a little bit of an approach of a LMDh car, a DPi car. It's a similar amount of mass, still a lot of downforce and a lot of grip, but it can't be driven kind of in a go-kart style, if you will, like it used to be able to.

Q. Part statement, but a question, too. I've lost how many times you fought with Pato. What do you think about the fight?

ALEXANDER ROSSI: We seem to find each other a lot. Unfortunately, he ends up higher than I do most of the time (smiling).

You have certain guys that you really enjoy racing with. Pato is one of those guys. There's just a huge amount of respect and appreciation between us. Those guys you always have the best battles with. It's kind of the same with me and Scott Dixon. I've been racing against him for so long, you start to understand each other's driving styles and kind of the things they prefer to do and stuff. You can take advantage of each other. It just creates a really good battle and a good show.

Yeah, Pato is one of those guys. Since I was not participating in the race, I was glad to see he was able to



get a win. That was cool for him.

Q. Maybe coming here as a fan, as a driver now, what is your favorite part of this weekend?

ALEXANDER ROSSI: I think just the location. It's such a beautiful part of the world. This time of year in Indy is not super nice. It's cool to go out to the west and just be in an amazing climate and have the opportunity to drive race cars in one of the coolest permanent road courses in the world. I think it's just as simple as that.

It's nice weather, a cool track. It just goes to the top of everyone's list.

Beyond that, the fan turnout is always really good. A super knowledgeable fan base, as well, which is always nice for the teams and drivers and series as well. Sometimes you get fans that are coming for the event, which is obviously great, but they don't necessarily know anything about the sport or who their favorite drivers are, who they want to root for or against.

Laguna is not like that. The people that show up are diehard fans of the sport and super passionate. That makes it all the much more enjoyable.

Q. Java House, can you touch on what was it like filming the TV spots earlier this year with you, Christian and Ed?

ALEXANDER ROSSI: Yeah, I mean, very impressive actually. When it was first kind of brought up, I was thinking it was going to be your typical kind of ha-ha social media, cell phone sort of situation.

It was a complete production with a very skilled and professional group of people. I think each set had something like 50 people that were working on it. The end result you got was a really good product and something that I think introduced the Java House brand to people that otherwise wouldn't have known about.

That's what it takes to be successful as a sponsor/partner in this sport. Unfortunately we're not big enough to justify a sticker on a side pod resulting in enough ROI to offset the cost of that. The only way to actually make it make sense from a marketing standpoint is have consumer-facing brands that are willing to activate. I think Java House really understands that and it set as good example for other brands in the sport to make the most of their spending.

Q. Christian hasn't finished worse than eighth on an oval. How does this boost confidence in the team,

going into Nashville, Milwaukee, how does that help your confidence?

ALEXANDER ROSSI: No, it's great. I think the cars have been fantastic on the ovals really since May. I don't think that was a surprise. I think Christian has really maximized the performance of the car better than I have, especially Gateway.

So yeah, it's really put us on a really solid path in terms of, like, the development of the car and things that we know are working versus not working.

Both of us are kind of on that same road. We're driving the same car. There's no real big offsets between us. It's a really good thing. It's something that you dream to achieve on the road and street courses, as well, which is obviously something we haven't found yet.

Yes, Milwaukee and Nashville, the whole organization is super excited about. We know we'll have good cars, so then it just becomes a matter of making sure that you get the end result come Sunday.

THE MODERATOR: Were you impressed by Ed's acting skills?

ALEXANDER ROSSI: I think they met my expectations (smiling).

Q. You scored a podium in every single season you competed in INDYCAR. This year you haven't scored a podium yet. How frustrating is for you as a driver who always fight for the best result to be in this position? How confident do you feel in order to achieve the top three this weekend in Laguna Seca, considering is the place you scored your latest podium?

ALEXANDER ROSSI: Very confident. It's entirely possible and it's something that I don't have a doubt that we will be able to accomplish by the end of the year.

This sport is frustrating for many reasons. Having a podium or not is not really one of them. I haven't really thought about it from that standpoint.

But yeah, I mean, podiums aren't what you're here for either. It is what it is. It's something that it clearly hasn't been a very smooth season. That is, again, it is what it is. We've got four good tracks for us, I believe. Especially as we just talked about the two ovals.

I have 100% confidence that we will be able to accomplish that and keep that streak going.



Q. About the hybrid unit, Laguna last year was one of the first races the hybrid unit was introduced. How much has it changed since that race last year? How much do you think the teams can evolve the car?

ALEXANDER ROSSI: Yeah, the hybrid wasn't there in Laguna year. Laguna was the last race without it.

In terms of how it's changed, it hasn't. It's the same. I mean, I think the teams' understanding of how to get the most out of it has evolved a little bit with things you can do in terms of some of the mapping you can do on the re-gen side.

But no, ultimately it's not a component that is like a make or break if you're using it or not using it. It's not going to affect your end result.

Yeah, hasn't changed a lot at all.

Q. There's another Alex, of course. For a driver who has the experience like you have, and the motivation that you have, how is the challenge of seeing someone like Alex performing races like this past weekend, to see Alex performing at the top level? How exciting is the challenge to beat up Alex?

ALEXANDER ROSSI: Yeah, I mean, you know you have to beat everyone in order to be the best, right? It doesn't really matter if it's Alex. For so many years it was Scott. For a couple of years it was Josef.

There's always someone who's going to be the benchmark. You can never think that you've ever arrived or you've ever made it to the point where you don't need to continue to improve, learn, develop yourself.

I think what Alex has done this year, as I explained with the car and the weight and the driving style, he's exposed a lot of people. I think guys are slowly starting to be able to make adjustments and to change their way of thinking a little bit.

But it's not as easy as that. When you have so many years of setups, of past success doing things a certain way, you're going to continue doing that for races. It's not going to be one race it doesn't work, so you abandon it, right? It's something that you have to see a trend develop before you're going to make any sort of major shifts to your mentality or philosophy.

I think Alex has kind of forced everyone to do that. I don't think that it's going to be like this forever. Teams are going to learn, drivers are going to learn, engineers are going to adapt. That gap will close.

Certainly he has reset the benchmark, and it's up to all of us to close that gap.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you, Alex.

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