

NTT INDYCAR SERIES

News Conference

Saturday, July 26, 2025

Caio Collet

Dennis Hauger

Josh Pierson

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: Good afternoon. Wrapping up INDY NXT by Firestone Grand Prix of Monterey, celebrating the podium finishers here at WeatherTech Raceway at Laguna Seca. Caio Collet led all 35 laps, driver of the No. 76 HMD Motorsports car with his second win of the season, first since Road America earlier this year, his third career win, now moves up to second in the points standings, minus 81 to Dennis Hauger. And remember, he also has pole position for tomorrow's race too.

Dennis Hauger joins us, driver of the No. 28 Nammo car for Andretti Global with his third runner-up finish of the season. That's his eighth podium in his 10 starts here in 2025. Again, 81 points now up on the rest of the field as they head to race 2 tomorrow.

Josh Pierson, driver of the No. 14 HMD Motorsports car with his first career podium in his 33rd start, fifth top 5 of the season, starts third in tomorrow's race 2.

Caio, we'll start with you. Another win for you. Things got a little tight there at the end.

CAIO COLLET: Yeah, different than what I expected. I think up until lap 20, I had a pretty clean race and everything was going so well, and I started to feel some vibration on my front tires, and I started to ease off the pace a little bit, and I could see Dennis coming very, very fast.

At the end we just managed the strategy with Push-to-Pass to see -- I think the main opportunity was for sure Turn 1 here. It's a tough track to overtake, so I was just having a clean exit off Turn 11 and protecting Turn 1, but the laps, they didn't seem to go down so quickly when I was leading the race. But in the end we did the job, and very happy to win the race.

Q. You learned a bunch of stuff heading into race 2

tomorrow. What did you learn about?

CAIO COLLET: That I need to keep my tires alive for a little bit more. It was a tough last five laps inside the car, but I'm glad that we kept it clean and won the race.

Q. Dennis Hauger, another podium finish for you in 2025. Obviously you were making some ground up on Caio. Talk about what you were trying to do inside the car.

DENNIS HAUGER: Trying to pass him. I mean, struggled a bit in the first half of the race compared to him. Couldn't quite hang on to him. Then he started dropping a bit more towards the last five laps especially. I wish there was a few more laps, to be fair. But no, he didn't do any big mistakes and minimized that. Big congrats to him.

We were close, but we've still got another shot at it tomorrow, so we'll try to improve on what we can and go again.

Q. You increase your points lead after Lochie Hughes finished third, so he's now 89 points back.

Josh, your first career podium. I'm sure you were hoping it would come a little bit earlier in your almost two full seasons in INDY NXT but your thoughts on a podium finish for you today?

JOSH PIERSON: Obviously really strong for myself and a lot of progress shown since starting here in 2023 with the partial year, so really happy with the end results and obviously congrats to Caio and Dennis. I tried to stay with them for as long as I could, but lacked a little bit of pace towards the end. More to find for tomorrow, but we have another good starting spot and another good shot at it.

Q. Was Myles pushing you back behind you, or were you on your own out there in third?

JOSH PIERSON: For sure in the early laps he was really giving me a challenge. He was a bit stronger than me on the initial laps, so I was still trying to build and get the temp, and he was really on the attack then, so he kept me honest on the opening laps.



Once I was able to get a little bit of a gap and things started to settle down, I ended up kind of by myself towards the end, which is nice and also not nice. I would have liked to have been fighting for second or for the win with Caio and Dennis, but yeah, overall it's still a really strong result, and I'm very happy with the performance of the car. HMD gave me a great package, so the No. 14 car was on it.

Q. Dennis, I think yesterday you had some troubles; how was the car afterwards? Was it badly damaged? Then concerning today's race, you just reduced the gap to Caio from lap 27 onwards very significantly. What happened the first 27 laps? Was there a problem with the car?

DENNIS HAUGER: No, I was just too slow, apparently. I think we both started dropping quite a bit from that lap onwards, and I think he just dropped a bit more than me. We were both sliding everywhere. It was like drifting there together side by side at some point.

But yeah, off yesterday, obviously with the crash, didn't really know what to expect for qualifying because I hadn't run the sticker set yet. But we did a good job. Came back into the rhythm straight away. There was nothing special about it.

Probably could have done a lap to get that pole lap, so a bit of stuff to work on for me there. But yeah, overall still a good day, good progress, and obviously don't want to finish second, but good points for the championship, and sometimes you just have to take that.

THE MODERATOR: I should mention that the margin of victory first and second, just over two-tenths, .2092, which is the closest INDYCAR-sanctioned INDY NXT race or Indy Lights race here at WeatherTech Raceway at Laguna Seca, so a little history in that race today.

Q. Josh, your previous experiences in sports cars, do you think this has been of a benefit to you, and do you think it's starting to reflect this year?

JOSH PIERSON: Yeah, I for sure think that the sports car years were very helpful, but more so on the racing side and the race pace.

I think race craft and a lot of that ends up coming down more to strategy on the endurance side sometimes, especially for the silvers. I still had a lot to work on race craft-wise, which is what I spent the last couple years working on, and then qualify pace, as well, is really where I was struggling.

Race pace-wise, I think it's for sure been very, very helpful and also just that experience for if you're going to move up into INDYCAR, I think having that experience of live pit stops and some of the strategy calls makes a big difference.

Q. Dennis, you've got quite a significant points gap and there's not many races left this season. At this stage are you thinking championship? Is there a case that you don't take as many risks as you would earlier in the season, or is it sort of business as usual still?

DENNIS HAUGER: A bit of a combination. Obviously I race to win. Every time I go on track I want to be the quickest and I want to be up front. But at the same time, obviously getting to the end of the season, we know we have a good gap. We don't want to mess with that and try to keep the distance.

Obviously Collet is P2 right now in the championship, but we've still got the gap. It's just about keeping the weekends clean as we have all season, except yesterday, and keep working as a team to maximize every time. If we have a car that's P2, we've got to be P2 and not worse, and just keep the mindset like that for the rest of the year.

Q. For Caio, as Dennis said, you've moved into P2 in the standings now with the results, so do you still think a championship is possible, or do you think the gap is maybe too far out of reach?

CAIO COLLET: Yeah, it's definitely some luck. I think I need him to have sort of a crash or a really bad luck weekend because obviously he will be there in the front. If I win the race we will be second or third; it's not that if I win the race he will be P10, so it's quite hard to get the deficit of points. But to be honest, from my side, it's just trying to maximize every weekend, win the races, and see what happens at the end of the year.

Q. Obviously we have the split format of qualifying this weekend with the two groups. Do you feel that is really necessary because this is a track where, although traffic can be an issue, there is plenty of room I'm sure to have all 19 on track at once?

CAIO COLLET: Yeah, they did that since every single round. But I think that should be nice if they do like a Fast Six afterwards, so top two or top three of each group can have a chance at the same time at the same point in the track, so I think this would be nice for everyone because sometimes the track evolves a little bit in group two and whoever is in group one has a little bit of a less chance to get pole. So if they manage to get top three of each group



and get them to a Fast Six like INDYCAR does, it would be perfect, but obviously there is a lot more reasons to -- it's not so easy to do that, I think. But from my side, I think that's the perfect scenario.

DENNIS HAUGER: Pretty much the same comment. I think that would be a good practice for the young guys to sort of practice the sequence of INDYCAR qualifying. But other than that, I haven't given it too much thought yet.

JOSH PIERSON: Yeah, I'm in agreement. I think the two groups is really nice, especially to make more of those gaps. But having a Fast Six at the end or a Fast 12 would be nice just to give you another shot at it and maybe eliminate some of that advantage that might be given to either or the other group.

Q. How much has the track evolved between sessions this week with the INDYCAR rubber going down, and how much do you anticipate it's going to change going forward tomorrow as well?

CAIO COLLET: Yeah, definitely changed quite a lot from practice 1 to practice 2. I think this morning as the track rained and INDYCAR didn't run, it was pretty much the same as practice 2. But I think definitely for tomorrow we need to search for -- I won't say here what I'll search for, but a little bit of pace as the rubber goes down.

JOSH PIERSON: I have basically the same thoughts. Nothing really to add.

I do think there's been quite a bit of track evolution from practice 1 to practice 2 and even the qualify and the race I felt like there was a little bit more rubber down. So yeah, basically the same comments.

DENNIS HAUGER: Yeah, I wouldn't know too much about practice 1 to practice 2, but for sure from practice 1 to qualifying and the race, it's changed quite a bit. Obviously with the rain overnight or in the morning, made things a bit different for qualifying, especially for group one. I think it will continue to build up for tomorrow in race 2 and change a bit again.

Q. Dennis and Caio, do you see each other as not just title rivals but market rivals when we're talking about INDYCAR for 2026? Are you talking to the same agents, the same teams? Have you got the same people on your shoulder, if that makes sense? I know in Formula 1 and Formula 2 some people are rivals in the sports series, but when they're trying to get to the next level they're actually calling on the same contacts, trying to bring their collective resources together to try and achieve those dreams?

CAIO COLLET: Yeah, I think obviously we all know how hard it is to get to INDYCAR these days, so there's not a lot of seats left, and Dennis is one of the best drivers out there. I consider myself at the same level as well. Hopefully there is two seats next year. I don't think that will be the case. It's very hard to get a seat nowadays. But my job is just to deliver on track and other factors to see if I get an opportunity or not.

DENNIS HAUGER: Yeah, same. Obviously we're all fighting for the goal which is INDYCAR, but not easy to find seats, so obviously that's something you're working on and aiming for for 2026. But we'll see how it goes. I consider Caio a strong driver. We've been fighting against each other since we were kids. I think we're both pushing each other to the limits out there.

Hopefully we can both find something, but we will see how it goes.

Q. When Dennis reduced the gap to you to 0.2 at the end, were you under a panic that maybe you were running out of laps that he could overtake you, or you thought you still had it under control?

CAIO COLLET: The laps, I think he was reducing the gap, and I was managing Push-to-Pass towards the end of the race so I knew how much I could use every single lap to keep the gap, and then in the last corner I saw he was quite close so I just defended put first gear, stopped, and focus on a good exit because I didn't want anything to happen so that's why he reduced the gap quite a lot to the line and it was the last lap, so there was not an opportunity in Turn 1. He did a very good job in the end, and we need to improve a little bit more tomorrow.

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