

NTT INDYCAR SERIES

News Conference

Sunday, August 24, 2025

Dennis Hauger

Don Lambert

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: Celebrating the 2025 INDY NXT by Firestone champion for Andretti Global. This is the team's seventh all time INDY NXT championship. That number seven equals the all-time record set by Sam Schmidt when he had an INDY NXT team in the series.

Joining us the 2025 INDY NXT by Firestone champion, Dennis Hauger. Congratulations, Dennis. To his right, Don Lambert, the team's INDY NXT by Firestone team manager.

For Dennis this season, one race remaining in the 2025 calendar. Six wins, seven poles, 10 podium finishes, 11 top fives, 12 top 10s. Clinching it today, congratulations. What are your thoughts on winning the championship?

DENNIS HAUGER: It's incredible obviously. As a rookie this year, I didn't really know what to expect. I had a great team, Andretti, behind me, pushing me, making me build up the confidence throughout the pre-season.

Yeah, from the first round we've been on it, winning a lot of races. We could have won more. Always nice. Yeah, the season's just been incredible. I'm super happy and proud to be a part of Andretti, yeah, to get the championship for us.

THE MODERATOR: Don, congratulations. The team effort in these recent years has been pretty phenomenal. Your thoughts on this team winning another championship and doing it in big fashion, sweep of the podium?

DON LAMBERT: Yeah, that was quite amazing today. I wasn't expecting the 1-2-3, but that was great. Four championships, that's our goal every season. We work very hard, every crew member of 30-some people within the INDY NXT program. We can lean on all of our INDYCAR friends and so on.

It's a team affair. I try to pound that in for all of 'em. Today was another, Hey, it's a team. Obviously they're out for

themselves, but we are all in this together.

THE MODERATOR: Congratulations. We'll open it up for questions.

Q. Dennis, in October could you have dreamed 10 months later you'd be sitting in an oval clinching a championship?

DENNIS HAUGER: Yeah, that was the goal obviously. As Don said, being a part of Andretti, that's always going to be the goal.

But yeah, obviously unbelievable. Was not in my mind yet at that point. Obviously the goal became clearer and clearer throughout the season. We just kept working hard as a team, just going into every race weekend with the same mindset. It's been a great year. I'm really happy about it obviously.

Q. Is there any relief now that you've clinched it?

DENNIS HAUGER: Yeah, it was kind of (indiscernible). Especially the last two races was going to be oval. Obviously the places I have the least experience. I wasn't sure how it was going to be going into this weekend, but I knew Andretti had been great here in the past, and they have good cars. It was just about, yeah, staying calm and doing what we've been doing all year.

Yeah, in the end we got a 1-2-3 for the team. It's been a great weekend, great way to end the championship. We still got one more round to go, so more experience for me on ovals. We can go into that weekend with a bit more relaxed shoulders. But we'll still fight for wins. That will be still the goal.

Q. The importance of winning next week, the oval is the only thing left. Is that the ultimate box to check?

DENNIS HAUGER: Yeah, (indiscernible) today to get that first oval. Yeah, that was the goal. But we knew the big picture was sort of the priority, and that was the championship.

Yeah, Salvador didn't have much to lose. We made a

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mistake. Congrats to him for that. I wish him nothing but the best. He's a really nice guy. He does a good job on the ovals.

Yeah, I was hoping it would come, but we still got one more round to go. We'll try to get it next week.

Q. What have you seen about Dennis, what separates him from a Kyle Kirkwood or Pato or Herta?

DON LAMBERT: It's hard to say what might be different. They all have the same drive. When Kyle first got in, he was just fast. And Dennis, I look back at Mid-Ohio is a pretty tough course, and Dennis was P1 the first time he went there in 14 laps. You just kind of think he's special.

From then on, every test, most every race, he is P1, P2, P3. As a team, if we can just keep him going and give him the tools, he's going to do what he did, so...

Q. Dennis, in the beginning the gap to Salvador was 0.8. At the end 1.4. When you figured second place was enough to win the championship, did you take it easy? Your home country, Norway, there's not much history in automobile racing with much success. The only successful race driver before you was Martin Schanche. Winning the INDY NXT championship, do you think or expect it will help you with sponsorship from Norway to reach your goal into INDYCAR?

DENNIS HAUGER: Obviously I've seen the interest from Norway throughout my career. It's kept building. As you said, there's not a lot of racing drivers that's internationally from Norway. Obviously that would help me going forward.

But I think the interest has been big and it keeps growing. Obviously if I get to that last step, which is the goal, INDYCAR, I think it will grow even more. Yeah, that would be really cool.

In the first lap, I was obviously staying in the front. The easiest way to control the race. Salvador really had the confidence to go around outside. There was a bit of dust, as well. The track wasn't as grippy as in qualifying yesterday.

I wasn't confident going into that first lap because of that. I think Salvador really sensed it. I was just trying to keep tires underneath me and keep it calm. I was hoping that maybe Salvador would have a dropoff or something towards the end so I could attack, try to do something that's not too crazy.

Yeah, he did a good job and managed well. In the end it was just about keeping it clean and getting it home.

Q. What are the key lessons you've tried to impart onto Dennis and the other drivers? Dennis, what do you think was the most important thing you learned from your teammates this year?

DENNIS HAUGER: From my teammates or team or in general?

Q. In general.

DENNIS HAUGER: I think to be successful I think you need to have good teammates pushing you through, helping each other to maximize the car, maximize the team, motivate everyone together. Also just the team, the work we put in in the preseason, especially with my engineer, he's working harder, he's on it all the time. We're just trying to get to every weekend as prepared as possible as a team.

I think that's one of the biggest strengths we've had this year. We get there and we're on straightaway. I think that puts us a step ahead of someone most of the weekends. That's been a big part of it. All of that leads down to teamwork.

Q. The biggest lesson you've tried to impart onto the drivers this year?

DON LAMBERT: Biggest lesson? Well, I think it's working as a team. We debrief as a group. Everybody can listen to each other. They all will help each other during the season. Sometimes it needs a little bit more help on one driver than maybe another.

Just helping each other, that's going to make you prosper. So he's learned a few things from the other drivers. Honestly, they probably learned a few things from him, which is good. That's going to propel him into his next event.

So yeah, just being a good teammate.

Q. Dennis, you have a very strong sense of instinct when you drive, especially when you first go out on track. How do you hone that skill over the course of the season?

DENNIS HAUGER: Yeah, I think it's definitely been a big part of us just, me, going to new tracks this year and being on it straightaway. I think I'm good at adapting.

More than anything, I think just the preparation work, really just the week before, the days before, yeah, working hard to be as prepared as possible has been a bigger part of it.

I think that's what made us be a step ahead on some tracks especially.

But yeah, obviously that's been something that I think we've been really good at this year, something I will bring with me for the rest of my career.

Q. Obviously coming over to INDY NXT this year, the biggest challenge has been going onto the ovals. How do you find your adaptation to it? How much have you enjoyed racing ovals?

DENNIS HAUGER: Yeah, it's been a really cool experience this year. Like, in the pre-season, watching ovals, just seeing how it looks, you never know really what to expect before you get on track.

I remember the first time I went out in Nashville in the first test day, it's like, Whoa, I feel like a Super Hero driving in a circle (smiling). It can be the coolest thing, craziest thing and the most scary thing, as well.

Yeah, it's been really cool part of the year to go to so many different type of tracks has been a really cool part of this championship for me. Yeah, great learning curve and something completely new.

Q. For your career, how important is it for the series to give opportunities that don't have the funding for INDYCAR, the scholarships, to progress through the ladder?

DENNIS HAUGER: Yeah, obviously it's vital to get to the next step. Yeah, clinching the championship was an important part of that. We'll see how we get on in the off-season now. All I can do now and focus on Nashville, try to get a good result for the team again.

But yeah, obviously it helps. I hope it will help going forward.

Q. Having very competitive and quick drivers on your team, was it difficult to keep the temper under control, not do any crazy things on the racetrack?

DON LAMBERT: It is difficult at times because we do not have any team orders and never have since I've been here. So all you can do is ask them to look at the big picture. Sometimes young kids don't see a big picture. They only see the one directly ahead of them.

This series starts to mature these drivers. As they mature, they start to think about the big picture. By the end of the season, I think they all start to understand.

But you never want to slow a guy down, slow a driver down, whichever. I think we've had multiple times where Colton and Pato, different series, different times, you have to try to keep 'em under control at some point.

They all want to win a race. We want them all to win races. This year we had three of the four drivers win a race out of our camp. We just try to do that every single event.

Whatever it takes most of the time. I don't ever say, Don't do that (smiling). Maybe today it was a little bit more of watching your box, but that's it.

THE MODERATOR: Guys, it's been a remarkable 2025 season. We're not done yet, one more to go. Safe travels. Congratulations on the 2025 INDY NXT by Firestone championship.

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