

# NTT INDYCAR SERIES

## News Conference

Sunday, August 31, 2025

## Dennis Hauger

### Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: Joined by Dennis Hauger, the 2025 INDY NXT by Firestone champion. Congratulations. Hard to believe, you blink, go from a test at IMS road course to the end of a season, a championship to boot. We'll see what happens next year for the NTT INDYCAR SERIES.

Just your thoughts about hoisting the trophy moments ago and officially becoming the champion this year.

DENNIS HAUGER: Yeah, it's been an incredible season working with Andretti. There's been a new paddock, new car, new tracks this year. So many new factors.

But I felt pretty good straightaway in the IMS test with Andretti. It felt really natural. We just started working straightaway. What a year it's been, winning at the first weekend, total of six wins, just a lot of podiums. Keeping the consistency and the work ethic up all the way through.

It's been a pretty good year (smiling).

THE MODERATOR: Open it up for questions for Dennis.

**Q. Because you wrapped up the championship a week ago, is it almost like a kid who finds out what he's getting for Christmas but can't really hold the gift until Christmas Day?**

DENNIS HAUGER: Yeah, I guess. Obviously it was nice to wrap it up in Milwaukee. We knew we had the pace and the car there to do it.

Obviously going into this weekend with a bit less weight on our shoulders. Yeah, I was just trying to enjoy the weekend, learn as much as I could as well on the ovals. It's a lot of new factors for me there, as well, especially on a superspeedway. Yeah, I've never been to anything like this before. The intensity in the race, just the way you have to, yeah, drive around there in the race, it's quite different.

It was a good weekend with a good experience. Obviously nice end to the weekend with this trophy on the side.

**Q. From the outside it's been a dominant season for you. Does it feel that way from your side as you look back on this year?**

DENNIS HAUGER: I think, for sure, we were in great shape in the beginning of the year. The first five races we were really on it. I think we won four out of five.

I think the Andretti crew, as well, did a really good job. I think we were a step ahead of everyone else, to be honest. I think the HMD guys, the Abel guys, HMD, especially Collet, just found something in the second half of the season and they were able to close up quite a bit.

Yeah, from then on obviously we were fighting hard with Caio for a while. I think it's been a great year. I wouldn't call it dominant. I think it's been really small margins all the way. But I think overall we could call it a good season, for sure (smiling).

**Q. How does it feel to come over from European racing, now winning a major series which puts you in good stand for INDYCAR? How does that make you feel at the end of the day?**

DENNIS HAUGER: Yeah, obviously coming over here, again, as I said, it was completely new for me. It felt really fresh, having a fresh paddock, really kind of reset a bit coming from F2.

It was a really nice feeling, to be honest. I've been feeling super motivated, positive, and energized the whole year. Yeah, I think a bit credit to that is the Andretti crew working and keeping the momentum going, as well.

**Q. You coming from a country in Europe where oval racing doesn't even exist. How did you prepare for oval racing? Before you came over, were you expecting or thinking it could be a little bit something like a weak point? You mentioned Formula 2. Are the two cars similar? Can they be compared from a technical point of view?**

DENNIS HAUGER: Yeah, the first question, obviously ovals was a completely new thing for me this year. I had

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literally zero experience going into it. In the pre-season, I was just watching a bunch of videos, I mean, from races at least 50 times of each track. Just every day looking at videos, studying, trying to learn as much as possible.

I think when we got to the first test, which was actually in Nashville, I felt pretty good straightaway alone. Working in traffic and driving with other cars on track is just something you have to experience. We just kept building up to it the whole season. First race was not the best, we finished fifth. After that we got three podiums in a row. We got close to a win quite a few times.

Bit annoyed I didn't get an oval win, but I think there is so much you can expect as well when you look at all the rookies, like Louis Foster in his rookie year, he didn't get a oval win. He wasn't up there in the first three, four races fighting at all.

I think the progression we've had has been really good. The learning curve has been steep. That's all I can ask for myself at the moment.

Yeah, it's been pretty good and a really cool experience.

The second question with the F2 to INDY NXT, I mean, you can say whatever you want, but those two cars are completely different. The weight is over 100 kilos or 200 kilograms different. The horsepower is a bit different. Just the driving style is completely different.

I did feel really confident, though, in the INDY NXT car straightaway, which was nice, because it felt like a natural driving style for me. I think that made the progression easier for me, just to really attack it and work with it.

But those two goes pretty far away from each other. Lap times-wise, probably not so different, but driving style is a different story.

THE MODERATOR: Is the INDY NXT car easier to drive?

DENNIS HAUGER: Hard to say if it's easier. Obviously when you look at the season as a whole, there is so many more aspects to INDY NXT and INDY racing. I wouldn't say it's easier as a complete thing.

For me it felt easier to understand the car and understand how to drive the car as fast as possible, compared to the F2 car. The F2 car didn't feel as natural for me.

But yeah, as I said, it's been going pretty natural for me. With these tires, it's been pretty cool. You can push them pretty hard throughout the race, with the Firestone tires. As I said there's so many different factors in this series

which makes the series really interesting and fun.

#### **Q. What's next?**

DENNIS HAUGER: Well, this is my last INDY NXT race, that's for sure. What's next? I'm not 100% sure yet. Obviously the goal is to get to INDYCAR. I think we will figure some stuff out more into the next few weeks, I hope.

But yeah, nothing is certain. I just have to enjoy this moment as of now, then we'll see where we end up.

#### **Q. Dan Towriss sounded promising in the championship ceremony. How much does that help your confidence?**

DENNIS HAUGER: Well, it helps a bit. Obviously the biggest part of my career over here. The only part of my career over here has been with Andretti. It's really cool to see the work they put into the junior drivers, how much we learn as well as junior drivers being a part of Andretti. We can be in the Andretti pit lane looking at the big boys driving around. That's been a really good experience. Hearing the confidence obviously in them is pretty cool.

#### **Q. This was obviously the longest oval you've raced on as well as the fastest. How did you find the racing a bit different to a Milwaukee or Iowa or Gateway?**

DENNIS HAUGER: It was so different, to be honest. I was in the middle of the race, Holy shit, this is like crazy. It's so intense. I think people were side by side for four or five laps at some point. The high line was getting more and more dirty. When I got Lochie, for example, I was really hanging on on the top there. It was working well.

I think we had a good race car. If there was no caution, I think we would have been in a good position to get forward. I think running the highest downforce, we were kind of a bit stuck once it was just clean racing and clean driving from the guys ahead.

But it's such a different way of driving. It was a really cool experience, probably the race I learned the most about ovals was today. I'll definitely take that with me.

#### **Q. What would you say is specific that you learnt today?**

DENNIS HAUGER: I think what you need from the car to drive fast around ovals, especially in a race and in traffic. Try different lines, get up to the high line, work it, use it all the way through the race. I was trying different things, trying different lines. Just experimented with it with the tools I had in the car, as well.



I was really happy with the progress we had in that race. We didn't have the best start, but we worked our way progressively up to the podium again. That's definitely something to take with me.

But yeah, couple of intense moments going side by side, as well, which is something I haven't experienced in that way on the other ovals.

THE MODERATOR: About what was going on on the racetrack, there were 147 on-track passes in that race, 81 for position, 56 happened in the top 10, 26 in the top five. Most on record for INDY NXT here in Nashville.

**Q. You've done four races in total on ovals, pretty different ones. How are you going to prepare for doing more of those in INDYCAR? Given the INDYCAR season just finished, it's not like you can shadow an INDYCAR team. What are you going to do to prepare yourself and build your oval knowledge?**

DENNIS HAUGER: Yeah, obviously I think the work we've done so far this year has been going pretty well. As I said, I came into this year with zero experience. We've been on the podium four times. It's just about keep learning about it, keep progressing when you get on track, really make the most of it.

Yeah, I mean, other than that, on the ovals you kind of have to learn the stuff by experiencing it. That's been something I've been trying to do this year. For sure this race was the one I learned the most.

If I went to these tracks again for a second time, I'm sure I would be better, I would know what to do, I would know what I need to do better for the next one.

So coming into the ovals, every time it was kind of a new kind of oval. Just having those new experiences every time is definitely something I'll try to bring into next time and just carry with me, that knowledge.

**Q. Earlier Myles said he was actually shocked by how much grip there was in the high line. Given INDYCAR does a practice session, were you surprised you could take that high line as much as you could?**

DENNIS HAUGER: Yeah, I was surprised looking at the INDYCAR guys yesterday. They were actually crashing when they were going up to the high line, some of them. I wasn't sure how it was going to be.

It worked pretty well, especially in the start when they got the track grip as well. It was getting harder towards the

mid, end of the race for me. It wasn't bad in one and two, it was pretty good there. Three and four was getting too risky at some point.

It was surprisingly well. It's the most I've run the high line the whole season in this race, so it was a good experience.

**Q. You said earlier before you came over you watched videos. Was it also preparing you for oval racing in simulator work?**

DENNIS HAUGER: Yeah, before every weekend I do some simulator work with my engineer. I just focus on different lines, focus on scenarios and stuff like that. It's definitely been a part of the preparation work I've done before every oval.

I think that's kind of the only kind of practice that I get in terms of experiencing different things. Even though it's not exactly the same, it's still an experience.

Yeah, that's been a big part of the preparation for most of the ovals.

**Q. We have a very early season finish. Is there a possibility we see you racing in a different discipline in America or Europe?**

DENNIS HAUGER: At the moment, I don't have any plans for that. Full focus on trying to get a seat for INDYCAR. That's the work we're putting in right now.

Obviously it would be cool to do what some of the INDY NXT and INDYCAR drivers are doing, long distance, couple races. If the opportunity comes, but we're not in a situation to do that or anything. For me it's just about seeing the opportunities as they come.

Right now the focus is fully on INDYCAR.

**Q. In May in Indianapolis, I was surprised to see Harald Huysman as your coach or manager. Did he prepare you the contact to Andretti in INDY NXT before you came over?**

DENNIS HAUGER: Yeah, when we were looking at options, we were looking at INDY NXT, it was clear that Andretti was a good choice, a good team obviously, a good experience to be a part of the team, as well. So we were talking.

Actually we got some help from Anders Krohn, which is another Norwegian driver who did INDY NXT, who has been over here a lot. He helped us get in contact with Thurman as well. They were both a bit younger, know

each other well.

Yeah, in that sense we got in contact and we got the test. Obviously it went really well. From then on, the goal was clear of what we needed to do. Obviously really happy and grateful for getting the opportunity with them, as well.

THE MODERATOR: Championship ring, is that the largest ring you have now?

DENNIS HAUGER: Yeah, by far (smiling). I keep touching it. No, it's pretty cool, something unique, that's for sure.

THE MODERATOR: Congratulations on a terrific year and the championship.

DENNIS HAUGER: Thank you so much.

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