

NTT INDYCAR SERIES

News Conference

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Dennis Hauger

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: Dennis, your first content days at the NTT INDYCAR SERIES. How would you describe it to someone that has never experienced this?

DENNIS HAUGER: Intense (smiling). I mean, obviously a lot of stuff on the schedule. Yeah, really fun. So cool to see obviously folks and how professional it is for the upcoming season. It's going to be really cool to see how it looks at the end.

Yeah, so far so good. Looking forward to get the driving started obviously as well.

THE MODERATOR: I was going to say, how anxious are you to get back into a car here next month, and then St. Pete?

DENNIS HAUGER: Yeah, obviously I haven't done any racing outside since the test day, so it's been a while. I'm looking forward to getting started with that, get a feel for it again.

THE MODERATOR: Questions, please.

Q. Nolan was in here earlier and I asked him about the narrow window of opportunity a young driver trying to break into the series gets. You have to put the numbers down in a short period of time. How much pressure do you feel that you're trying to learn a new series and also be sure this is the start of a long career for you?

DENNIS HAUGER: I'm not worried, to be honest. I think from what we showed in testing, we know we can do some good lap times. We have speed. I think for sure some tracks it's going to be better than others. That's just how it is.

I think the work we've done with Dale Coyne Racing, also with the partnership with Andretti, I think we'll be good. It's just about doing the work as I've done in INDY NXT, doing the prep work, staying on top of things. Keep my feet on the ground and just do the work, I think that's going to be

the main thing. We'll see how we get on.

Obviously I want to stay in the INDYCAR SERIES and do good. Hopefully we can have a good start to the season in St. Pete and take it from there.

Q. Dale Coyne seems to be pretty good at giving the entryway to young drivers in INDYCAR. What do you see as being the biggest reason why he's so good at that?

DENNIS HAUGER: Yeah, I think just the team, they are like a family I feel like in certain ways. I feel with Dale as well, he's got tons of experience. I think with a lot of young drivers coming from INDY NXT and Indy Lights up to INDYCAR, he puts his belief in those young drivers, and that gives them opportunity and some hope to do well.

Hopefully we can do that again this year.

I feel like we have a good opportunity to do well. So yeah, we'll see how we get on.

Q. What has your preparation looked like?

DENNIS HAUGER: A lot of training, physical training from testing last year. At the end of the season last year, I could feel that I was in good shape. There were some things I needed to work on. Just been working hard, up to two times a day really, most of the time with training sessions. Just making sure I'm ready for it this year with a bit of a buffer, as well. Hopefully it's not going to be any problems there.

Otherwise it's just been looking at videos, tons of videos. Lots of hours of that from every weekend from last year and years before, making sure I'm looking at stuff with strategy. Obviously there's a lot of new stuff this year for me. It's just about trying to go through everything and adapt quickly when we get on track.

Q. What challenges do you anticipate in this first season?

DENNIS HAUGER: Hopefully none, but for sure there's going to be some (smiling).

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For me the main thing is the ovals for sure, just trying to get as much experience as possible on them and learn as much as possible from the team and from everyone around.

I feel like we're in a good window for some tracks and some tracks we might have to work a bit more as a team to get further up.

Again, we'll see how we get on once we start the season. I'm feeling good about starting on the street course, for example. I feel pretty confident there. Hopefully we can kick it off on the right foot.

Q. For the time being you're on a team by yourself as far as drivers. Who have you been able to look toward and talk to as far as expertise?

DENNIS HAUGER: Honestly, just working with the team. The team has tons of experiences, good engineers, a good team around them. Just trying to learn from that.

Been talking a bit with Kyle Kirkwood, for example, in the off-season, later last year, about the differences between the NXT car and INDYCAR. Just kind of small things here and there.

For me, as I said, it's looking at videos, looking at data, trying to teach myself a bit in terms of what I need to do, what I'm looking at. Yeah, those basic things.

Q. You've been up to Chicago then?

DENNIS HAUGER: To the shop, yeah.

Q. What do you know about the Indy 500? Did you go?

DENNIS HAUGER: Yeah, I went.

Q. What was that experience like? Did it amplify the push to come back next year and be in the race?

DENNIS HAUGER: Yeah, I mean, I watched it since I was a kid. Watching it live for the first time last year was insane. Yeah, you see it on TV, then you go to it live and you see the crowd. The amount of people that is there, the atmosphere, it's something I've never experienced elsewhere on a track, on a racetrack. It was crazy.

For sure it gave me a good motivation boost for the rest of the season in 2025. Looking forward to get back to May this year. Hopefully we can have a good qualifying and a good race.

Q. Your team has a partnership with Andretti Global. Talk through the details of exactly what that partnership means?

DENNIS HAUGER: I mean, it's a fluid partnership. Honestly we'll see how we get on once we get the season going. I'm working with Dale Coyne. We're trying to maximize our stuff. There's not I would say a full partnership in terms of setup, dampers and stuff.

But we're really working together as far as data, working as a team, focusing on the drivers. Then we'll probably have a few tweaks here and there together to make each other stronger on certain stuff, especially on the tracks where maybe one of the teams are weaker and the other one is stronger. I think that's the main thing.

It will be a work in progress as we get the season going.

Q. Is it difficult to not know who your teammate is yet? Do you have any kind of input to push them in a certain direction?

DENNIS HAUGER: I mean, honestly for me it doesn't matter too much. I've been working with myself, what I need to do, as I did last year in INDY NXT. Not focusing too much on the stuff around I can't control.

For me, whoever it's going to be, I'm sure I will be in good hands. Hopefully it will be someone I can fight with well in terms of looking at data. Just gives you more access obviously to adapt and evolve and learn as a driver in my first INDYCAR season.

Q. How difficult was it last year getting used to the American racing scene? How much do you think that will help you get going this year being more familiar?

DENNIS HAUGER: Yeah, I mean, it was certainly not easy to go to every race weekend with a new track that I hadn't been to yet. Obviously a new paddock, a new team and everything. I'm happy that I got some experience with INDY NXT before going into INDYCAR.

I think that makes me more prepared for this year, knowing most of the tracks. I think especially the ovals was a really good thing about last year, which wasn't so easy last year for me. But I think I learned a lot of things that I can bring with me into the future.

All in all I'm really happy about last year and the challenges it gave me that I can bring with me into 2026.

Q. You have an interesting rookie class this year.



What are your reflections on the three of you and the battle that lies ahead?

DENNIS HAUGER: Yeah, I mean, two good drivers for sure. I was fighting with Caio in INDY NXT last year. He's a good driver. Also I know I can beat him. Hopefully I'll keep doing that this year.

Mick, obviously he's got tons of experience. He knows what he's doing, coming from F1, coming from a hypercar. Yeah, I'm sure he will do a good job.

For sure the ovals and stuff will be new for him, as it will for me, but a bit less for me obviously with the INDY NXT season behind me.

I think we can all do pretty good stuff. Hopefully I can be on top of the three.

Q. Looking ahead to the Indy 500, what of the other races on the calendar are you looking forward to?

DENNIS HAUGER: I mean, I've gone to most of them last year. For me it will be fun to go to the ones I haven't been yet. Indy 500 in particular obviously (smiling). That would be insane and a dream come true.

Also I think the Arlington race looks really cool on the calendar. Seems like a cool track as well. Long Beach, for example, is one of the tracks I actually went to last year and I was watching. I didn't race. I was watching on the side.

Yeah, there's a few in there that will be fun to get to.

Q. You arrived in the U.S. and jumped into the American world of racing. You were on fire. You won the championship. Now that you're progressing to INDYCAR, how do you allow yourself to carry that confidence with you that you had in INDY NXT while leaving room for growth?

DENNIS HAUGER: Yeah, I mean, as I said earlier, bringing experience from INDY NXT is good. It gives me confidence knowing that we had really good speed last year. I felt that INDYCAR was in a similar driving style window, which really helped me I think progress early in the testing days as well.

Yeah, hopefully we can just keep building on that. I know there's going to be a few new things. At the end of the day we're driving the car and we want to drive it as fast as possible. That's what I'm going to try and do. Try and adapt along the way as quickly as possible.

Q. You're back to being a rookie. Is there a specific driver on the grid that you look up to whose journey you admire or someone you have as an idol?

DENNIS HAUGER: Not really. I mean, I've never really had that one guy or girl that I've looked up to as I was a kid. My dad was sort of my mechanic when I was a kid. He was helping me all the way. He's always been supportive. That's kind of been one of the people I've looked up to as a kid.

On the racing side, I mean, I've had Vettel maybe and Schumacher when I was younger. I honestly focus on my own stuff and not worry too much about everyone else around. Yeah, no one in particular.

Q. A lot of F2 drivers coming over to INDYCAR the last few years. How does the driving style carry over to the American driving style?

DENNIS HAUGER: I would say F2 especially is a very different driving style compared to F3, F1, anything I think. Coming over to INDY NXT, it was really a breath of fresh air for me. It was a lighter car. The car could move around a bit. You could really sort of tackle the corners a bit more and still just kind of handle the car in a different way, which suited me straightaway. From the first day we were one of the quickest guys out there. That kind of made sense that it felt natural to me straightaway there.

Obviously the INDYCAR as well is a heavier car, but you can still kind of move around a bit, wrestle it a bit, which I enjoy. Kind of, yeah, push it towards the balance that I enjoy. Hopefully that's going to be the case for the rest of the season.

I feel like that was the biggest difference for me coming from Europe to the U.S. That sort of gave me a good feeling straightaway.

Q. You dominated INDY NXT last year. When you look at the rest of the field you competed against, who would you say is next up for a promotion to INDYCAR?

DENNIS HAUGER: Hard to say to be honest. Obviously I think there was a few of us guys last year in INDY NXT series. Lochie was my teammate. I think he fell off a bit in the second half of the season. I'm sure he will do well this year.

Myles Rowe was really quick on the ovals. I think that was his strength. Not as quick on the road courses and street courses though. So I think there's some guys that have good potential and will probably do good this year.

For sure there's some new guys coming into the series this year I think can do well. Fitipaldi I think can do well. Garcia obviously winning the championship. For sure it's going to be interesting to see who gets on top of the standings there. I think it's a bit uncertain at this point. We'll see.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you.

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