

NTT INDYCAR SERIES

News Conference

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Santino Ferrucci

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: What do you think of the weather here in Indianapolis?

SANTINO FERRUCCI: Well, it's Alaska at home for me. I'm pretty sure where I live is still a sheet of ice, and I left three days ago.

Q. So the snow is better than the ice?

SANTINO FERRUCCI: Yeah, you can get through the snow. No, my town is shut down. Everything is still shut down. It's been shut down since Saturday.

Q. You've been in a car in the last couple weeks; not an INDYCAR, but soon enough you'll be in one. What are you looking forward to in 2026?

SANTINO FERRUCCI: I'm just looking forward to the continuity with the team. We have a great new partner with Homes For Our Troops coming on for a full season, Geronimo Hendricks Hospitality, so big thanks to them. It's an honor to be driving the red, white and blue car all season long. So a lot to look forward to there. Raising a lot of money for our post-9/11 veterans that were severely injured and giving them a chance to have their voices heard on a much larger platform of INDYCAR.

Q. What did you think when you heard you were going to be driving the red, white and blue car all season long?

SANTINO FERRUCCI: It's pretty cool. It's becoming more surreal now that I'm in the suit. But it's special. I spent some time with the veterans yesterday up in Wisconsin, and I've spent a bunch of time throughout the winter at different events with them.

It's just really neat to give back, and everything that the Hendricks family has done for them to get them to this point is a big deal, and I very much look forward to being out there.

Q. You've got a rookie teammate this year in Kyle.

How have interactions gone with him? Have you been trying to help with his first full season?

SANTINO FERRUCCI: Honestly, I really like him. He's been much easier to deal with, in my opinion, than some of the past rookies I've had. Just very straightforward, easy. Got to test with him in Nashville. Looking forward to having someone with some very similar driving styles to me this year. I think we can be quite competitive together.

Q. After being up in the top 10 a couple years ago, you fell out last year. What do you think you need to do to get back to that form you were in 2024?

SANTINO FERRUCCI: For Indy? Yeah, I think just preparation is a big part of it. This year was really tough at the speedway.

I think we're way further ahead than we've ever been as a team. We've had no turnover as far as staff goes or crew or engineering, so it's pretty impressive, and I think just building off of that into the season is going to be a big deal for us.

Q. Santino, Kyle is going to be your fourth teammate in three years. How do you adjust to that, having a rotation of teammates? Do you really think about that, or is it hard for you to adjust to having a new teammate each year?

SANTINO FERRUCCI: Honestly, the biggest adjustment was when we went through engineering changes year after year. Whoever is driving the other car is going to do a good job. Having a teammate like David last year that's competitive is really helpful. Kyle I think will be also really competitive, being two years in INDY NXT. He did really well in the championship.

I think having him come in and testing with him in Nashville, I felt really comfortable around him and talking with him and debriefing. He's more similar to me than the past few teammates I've had. So that will be a lot of fun, I think, this season.

Q. A lot of the talk yesterday was about Phoenix and the importance of a high line session, obviously the

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importance of a test. Another oval. You're the guy that likes to go up top and see if those lanes work. How important is that test coming up next month? It's great to have an oval before the Indianapolis 500, as well.

SANTINO FERRUCCI: Yeah, I think just having an oval before the 500 is a good thing for us, to kind of get out there and get going. The high line session has always been a big thing. When INDYCAR brought that into the series, it was a big deal. All the drivers pushed for it. I'm a huge fan of it.

I think Phoenix is quite an interesting track. I'm looking forward to being there. I've only ever run it in a stock car, so it'll be quite an adjustment going to an INDYCAR. But I'm looking forward to that.

I think it'll race well if we get the tires right and the downforce package right, and the series does a good job during the test for us on those parameters, and we'll have a very exciting race when we get back there in March.

Q. Your thoughts on a possible heading to the East Coast, Washington, D.C., and what that could look like?

SANTINO FERRUCCI: Honestly, I thought it was really cool. There's a lot of things that I think have to happen before we get out there. But with that announcement, especially for us driving the Homes For Our Troops car, America's 250th, so many different things, to be able to race in the capital would be an awesome gift to the series and to the calendar. Supporting our veterans and all of our law enforcement, all of those people, and getting that opportunity would be really big.

Q. You obviously had some of the big highs last season, but where do you think some of the inconsistencies came in last year compared to the consistency we saw from you in 2024?

SANTINO FERRUCCI: Yeah, I think some of the inconsistencies are kind of more on my side of things than anything else. I think the team really straightened everything out come the 500 to the end of the season. I kind of made some enforced errors in a couple of races, which kind of put us on a back foot.

Being able to go through those and get everything sorted going into this year will be a big deal. I think having a more consistent platform this year with the team will be a big help and a big change for us as far as a steadier pace.

I think there's no reason as to why we can't keep that same

pace that we had in the middle of the season this year with a couple of podiums and top 5s.

Q. I know this is a kind of stability you've not really had in your INDYCAR career now being the fourth year with the same team. What's this relationship with Foyt been like, and why is it different from what came before in your INDYCAR career?

SANTINO FERRUCCI: Yeah, obviously every year we continue to build the team with Larry. I think me coming back and working with the engineers and mechanics, like I said, this is the first year -- I talked with Larry, I think it's one of the first years in a long time the team has had almost zero turnover, if any at all, year after year as far as mechanics and engineers go. So it's a really big deal.

We're building something consistent, something that is competitive, and I'm just really happy to be a part of it, and with now the full-time sponsor of Homes For Our Troops, the livery won't change all year, which is another big thing. Less work for the mechanics, less things to worry about come race weekends.

Very excited about all those things.

Q. I know you came in here last year with some quite lofty expectations. Heading into 2026, what would you consider would make it a successful season across the course of the year?

SANTINO FERRUCCI: Yeah, I don't see why we can't have the same expectations. I think losing a bunch of points in Detroit and then a couple of the races to where I wasn't at my best really hurt us. There's no reason as to why you can't sit there and continue to fight to be in the top 5 of this championship, given the consistency and the prep that we're at and the team this winter. I think the odds for us to win the 500 for our car are higher than they've ever been. There's a lot of big things going into this year, a lot of momentum that I'm very excited about.

Q. In the car, what do you look out for to know when you've found the limit, and how far do you then push it?

SANTINO FERRUCCI: I guess when you're finding the limit, you kind of find it when you hit the wall. But it's one of those things to where it's -- this car with the weight, with the hybrid, with so many different things, it wants to move in so many different directions. I think the better part of trying to find the car is with setup work and with engineering.

I think we're very front limited everywhere we go, and trying

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to reverse that and get the rear to come around is -- there's limitations to everything. It's always good to try and find that 101 percent and then dial it back to about 98. It's been one of those things to where I've been able to do that in the races very well this past season. In qualifying I've had a harder time of going from 98 to 100.

I think that's kind of more of my focus this season.

Q. Based on last year, what's your biggest takeaway that's going to help you improve this year?

SANTINO FERRUCCI: Just consistency with the team. I think we had crew changes last year, with engineering changes last year, everything staying the same from the middle of the '25 season going through the '26 season will be a big step forward for us.

Car prep is a big thing. Indy we missed a couple of things, so we're very much ahead of that, and just overall consistency with the team.

Having a good teammate again, there's just a lot of things that are going to make this year a little bit less stressful and easier for everybody.

Q. I saw you recently won the heat race in the Chili Bowl and dedicated the win to your boss AJ and you said that he'd whoop your ass if you didn't win that thing from pole. How has the relationship evolved with AJ over the years, and what's one thing you think if you don't achieve this year he'll definitely whoop your ass?

SANTINO FERRUCCI: Well, I think the relationship with AJ has been really good throughout the years. Every year we get more and more competitive, what we've done with the team. Getting to spend some time with him this season, specifically this past season, was a lot of fun at Indy.

But I think he's put a lot more trust in me and the team and the car, so I've definitely had less instances this year, which is great. Then running the dirt car this winter hopefully scored me some brownie points winning my heats in the Chili Bowl.

A lot of positive momentum there, and like I said, that relationship is one to cherish. He's 91 as of a week ago, or a couple weeks ago. I'm just happy to have him back a couple more races hopefully this year.

Q. About your former teammate, David, who's now got a promotion of sorts to Penske, were you in contention for the seat at the team ever?

SANTINO FERRUCCI: I don't know. That's kind of their decision. Very happy for David. I think there's a lot of different parameters that go into that. I'm also very happy driving for Larry and all of AJ Foyt and getting the opportunity that I have here driving for Homes For Our Troops. Larry and I kind of saw this coming towards the end of last season, so that's what we've been focused on.

Q. Because NASCAR Trucks will race on Saturday in St. Pete, do you believe the grip can change? I ask this question because you have some knowledge about the tires from NASCAR and INDYCAR cars.

SANTINO FERRUCCI: I think it'll be interesting. I don't think any of us know what that's going to happen. The rubber from the Truck Series will be interesting when it goes down for our cars. Normally they do a good job of laying down rubber. Either it's going to really grip the track up or it's going to do the opposite.

I'm hoping it does the opposite and it pulls some of the rubber off the St. Pete course because year after year of running there, the track has got a lot of rubber baked into it, so it makes it a little bit more difficult to pass because of that.

But what I'm hoping for is that the Truck Series puts some rubber down on the airstrip for us so the brake zone isn't quite as tricky and we do open up a better opportunity for passing.

Q. Will we see you drinking a beer on some podium this year like at Road America at the end?

SANTINO FERRUCCI: Let's hope so.

Q. Just wanted to clarify, you mentioned that not a lot has changed on the team this year in the engineering room especially. Does that also include the Team Penske partnership?

SANTINO FERRUCCI: Yeah. So everything is as it was for the last two years. So very much looking forward to working with them and sharing information and all sorts of fun things.

Q. (No microphone.)

SANTINO FERRUCCI: It's kind of weird being called the senior driver at 27 years old.

Honestly, expectations for him are going to be whatever he sets for himself. I think he's a very talented guy. I think for me, my advice would be just to start off just trying to finish

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every race. If he's doing that, he'll be in the top 15, top 10 in no time. Coming up from INDY NXT or any junior series, at least from what I remember, the races are just so long in INDYCAR that you just -- the adjustment to get there takes a lot.

I think if he just keeps in mind, that they are long races and anything can happen, he'll be good.

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