

NTT INDYCAR SERIES

News Conference

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Marcus Armstrong

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: What's your experience so far today?

MARCUS ARMSTRONG: My experience so far today, it's been pretty quick. I think I'm getting good at these content days. I'm experienced. My third time going.

No, Maddie, she's quite structured. I'm quite determined to finish today early, earlier than scheduled.

Q. Marcus, Felix mentioned yesterday ovals were hit and miss were you guys. You got the podium last year in Iowa. Do you echo that sentiment? Also, what are some areas you feel like you improved on in the off-season?

MARCUS ARMSTRONG: Yeah, I thought ovals were fairly strong last year. Obviously Milwaukee was a bit of an odd one, I'd say. But for the most part, I felt that ovals were, from a speed point of view, a strength of ours. Certainly on Sundays, perhaps on Saturdays not, but always on Sunday we would probably find a little bit, which is great.

I think in Milwaukee, it's a tricky one because it's a very different characteristic, low banking, reasonably low speed. There is something to discover there for sure. I believe we have a test there.

But then again, Alex, he was pretty quick there, so we have the day, so we need to just go and dig through it and understand why.

Q. How do you want to improve from your top 10 finish in the series?

MARCUS ARMSTRONG: How am I looking to improve?

Q. Yes.

MARCUS ARMSTRONG: Well, yeah, I think we finished eighth in the championship last year. I feel like eighth wasn't -- if we didn't make a mistake in Nashville, I think we would have finished sixth, which is not exactly where we want to be, but I feel like we had potential because we

were consistent.

We were consistently finishing inside the top 10. We weren't doing anything spectacular, which kind of hurts a bit. I think in order to actually fight for the championship, you need to have more podiums and just have more pace in general to be fighting right at the pointy end to win races, have more podiums, have those big points as opposed to just consistently six, seven, eight, nine, which is basically where we were.

Q. Now that you've got a year under your belt with the team, do you feel like you'll be able to be more comfortable and lead to more podium finishes?

MARCUS ARMSTRONG: Yeah, we understand each other pretty well. I've been working with the same engineers now for quite a while, which is very helpful. There's a sense of continuity. We understand what we need to do. We've certainly analyzed a lot over the off-season. My lead engineer Angela has been working very hard, as well, and along with the entire Ganassi organization, I think it's one of our strengths as a whole. No matter what the organization has achieved the previous year, there's still a hunger just to deliver, deliver more. There's a lot of determination inside that building.

I feel like we're all pointing in the same direction. I think we're in a very fortunate position where we get to, like I said, have continuity, so we know each other very well at this point.

Q. It's great to hear you're so strong on the ovals. Looking forward to seeing you in Phoenix in a couple weeks. Seriously, I'd like to ask you this because I think you were one of the drivers that was underrated last year. You had a really strong season. At the end of this season, what would you be satisfied with? Is it race wins? Is it competing for a championship? Is it just continuing that consistency?

MARCUS ARMSTRONG: I would be satisfied with a top three in the championship. That would be great. I think that, like I said, we kind of understand where we need to improve. It's not as if it's a million miles away, but certainly we need to make some gains in all areas, frankly.

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In order to be inside the top three, you need to be almost perfect. Even to finish inside the top three in a preseason test at Sebring, you need to be near perfect. It's just the level is very high.

But we understand that. I feel like we're certainly capable of it. We all want it. We've all got so much determination to go ahead and do it.

I've got some very strong teammates as well. Ultimately we're all competing against each other right at the pointy end, which is quite cool. If you look within our technical collaboration with Ganassi, Alex, Scott, Felix, and myself, there's four of us inside the top 8 in the championship last year.

You could argue that inside those engineering meetings we're also fighting against each other, which is great. We're pushing each other to further limits, which I think is an important ingredient when it comes to success.

We're going to fight real hard for that.

Q. You mentioned being in those engineering meetings. Obviously you spent a lot of time with Alex Palou who has been near perfect. I always hear drivers when they talk about Alex, whether they've seen the data or whether just observation him on track, it seems like he's able to do something that everyone else can't do. Is that something that you've noticed, or have you tried to emulate him in any ways, or can you?

MARCUS ARMSTRONG: Well, he certainly has an unbelievable feeling of the car and the grip that he has underneath him. But now, as well, he's very experienced. I feel like from my personal point of view when you get to your four, five, six in the series -- I didn't say seven - there's an element of experience that you can lean back on.

Also, considering that the car doesn't change a whole lot from year to year, obviously we try to improve on the small bits and pieces, but fundamentally it's the same car, you can improve as a driver just consistently.

I've certainly felt that way every time I leave a circuit. I sort of pick up at that point the following year and just continue to build.

I think he's certainly at a point now where he understands the car very well and he's got a great feeling of it, but I'm not trying to emulate him or anything. I still want to make footsteps of my own in the sport with my own driving characteristics and all of that.

But I am very lucky to be sitting alongside these guys and learning from them.

Q. The street courses were inconsistent for you last year. Two of the first three races this year are street courses. How do you get the season started off on the right foot?

MARCUS ARMSTRONG: Well, St. Pete has been strong until it wasn't the previous two years, actually. That's on me. I've made mistakes there during the race two years in a row now when we were in a strong position.

I've always had a very strong car there, which is great. It's typically very warm, and for whatever reason, that place really suits us, I think.

In saying that, I think we need to find a little bit more in order to be fighting for pole, but it's important to start the year off strong, I think, especially with three races back-to-back. You kind of want to have a bit of momentum going from the first race.

Last year was a real average way to start really, and without that poor result, it could have been a very different season. But yeah, momentum, I think, is the key word there.

Q. Seems like you found that after the crash at Indy, coming from the back row to finish 18th, and then nine top 10s over the last 11 races last year. So going into your first year with the team, obviously there's a lot of people there that you're familiar with, but what clicked after that? Sometimes it's the darkest days that lead to the brightest.

MARCUS ARMSTRONG: Very philosophical of you.

Q. I just made that up in my head.

MARCUS ARMSTRONG: Love it. Well, prior to Indy, we had quite a few strong days going that just didn't -- that weren't executed, let's say. But only we would know that. There were quite a few times we were on track for a top 5 when just something happened that sort of ruined the day, so to speak.

But from Indy, we certainly started to execute. Strategy and all the rest of it, we were consistently inside the top 10, like I said, one race to the next to the next.

But my point being that there were a lot of -- I would say every single race apart from Indy we were on target for a top 8. But something happened that day, whether I made

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a mistake or whatnot.

It's not as if we sort of just turned it on after Indy. For sure we started to bond better as a team and sort of we understood Sundays a little bit better and also made -- there's an element of understanding the strategy as a driver better and being able to execute that strategy without being told on the radio. Like there's something about that, too, which only comes with experience as a unit, as a group.

I guess that was sort of our range for the entire season was sort of six to ten; we need more top 3s. I don't want to sound like a broken record.

Q. We're going to Arlington. Have you worked on an American accent anymore?

MARCUS ARMSTRONG: Not good at my Texan accent. I need to work on it. I'm good at my Tennessee accent. I'm not an expert. I'm good with my Kardashian accent, too.

Q. You've got a good few years of experience now in the series. A lot of new guys coming in this season, including one that you shared the sharp end of a racetrack with before. What is the main thing that you've learned over the past few years, and have you got any advice for the rookies that are coming in?

MARCUS ARMSTRONG: Yeah, there's some quick rookies coming through. I think I've raced with all of them maybe.

Q. Certainly quite a few.

MARCUS ARMSTRONG: There's Dennis, Caio, Mick -- yeah, I've raced with all of them at one point or another. Mick was my teammate in Formula 3 and Formula 4 and also in Ferrari, so I know him pretty well, as well as Caio; we arrived in Europe together at the same time at the tender age of 13 or 14, so we know each other well.

I would say from an advice point of view, they all know how to pedal a race car, so they don't need my advice. But there's so many variables to this championship that is not so evident coming from other series. From a strategy point of view, you only need to look at a Scott Dixon to understand that experience matters a lot here.

But I'm sure that all three of them are going to be very quick. It's going to be interesting to see how Mick goes. I think he's got all the ingredients to be a great INDYCAR driver. He's certainly quick. Back in those F3 days, it was his second year and my first year and I learned a lot from him that year.

It's cool to see him come over and sort of two feet in on the whole INDYCAR thing, I think. It's great, and he's going to enjoy the racing here. There's no tire saving over here. He's going to love that.

I'm looking forward to it.

Q. Your deal for 2026 was announced pretty early in terms of contract season. How does the vote of confidence from Mike Shank and the higher ups let you push on for this year?

MARCUS ARMSTRONG: Yeah, it was good to get that done early. It seems like a lifetime ago, frankly, that we were announcing that. I think it's brilliant, like I said earlier. We've got a great group of people that we sort of committed to keeping us all together early. Got my strategist Billy and all my engineering crew is fairly unchanged, as well as my crew chief Jimmy and the majority of the mechanics, as well. So it's fairly unchanged, our whole unit, as well as Felix being my teammate.

I think Mike and Jim, I think they recognize the genuine advantage that comes with just knowing each other well and understanding our strengths and weaknesses as a team. In saying that, we push each other hard. It's not as if we sugarcoat the things we want to improve on. Mike was always very clear with me about what he wanted to see from me and what he wanted me to improve on, which is I think fundamental to having a successful partnership.

We've got big aspirations this year, so we've just got to go and do it.

Q. You mentioned how important sticking with the same personnel is, and then I think last year you twitched a little bit about the off-season when you were working with Angela Cullen and stuff like that. In the most recent off-season was there any particular routines or methods that you tried to focus on 2026?

MARCUS ARMSTRONG: Yeah, I did a whole lot of stuff. I did five weeks of karting, which was quite interest, with Tony Kart, my old European karting team. It was interesting to see how the young kids these days drive and behave and how they all TikTok and all that. It's a very different -- I'm not old, but I feel old when I'm around them.

They're the next ones coming through, the next Lewis Hamiltons, the next Scott Dixons, you name it. Those are the guys that I was sort of driving with.

That was cool to see, as well as working on my race craft.

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European karting, frankly there's nothing like it. It's pretty brutal. They don't care who you are; they're going to treat you like rubbish when you're on track with them. It was great to work on my race craft there and work with such a great team.

Like the resource that Tony Kart has is quite incredible. If the kart is understeering they'll just bring a new chassis to the track. It's an extreme resource. That was a fun off-season excursion.

Q. Do the kids these days drive differently than you did?

MARCUS ARMSTRONG: It's weird, I was telling my dad about this and he thought I was an idiot. You can tell a kid's nationality by the way he races. Just how even his lean, the way he leans into a corner, you can tell whether that guy is British or not, or if a guy is dirty or -- not dirty, but aggressive, he's probably Dutch. It's quite bizarre how you can actually see it. You can see the different nationalities.

I spent five weeks watching. As much as I was on track, I was just watching everyone. It was really cool. I think that was a great decision that I made to go and race there. There's nothing like karting. There's no fear of crashing at that level. Ultimately, everyone just races so hard and you end up learning a lot.

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