

NTT INDYCAR SERIES

News Conference

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Marcus Ericsson

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: How much are you looking forward to getting a fresh start here in 2026, attacking this thing? You've got some new teammates, another Indy 500 winner. Kyle had a really good season last year. Things obviously starting off on a couple of street circuits for Andretti Global. How much are you looking forward to the year.

MARCUS ERICSSON: I mean, I can't wait. It's going to be a lot of fun. It's a bounce-back year for me. I've really been working hard in the off-season to come back strong this year and show what I can do for myself, for everyone.

Super excited about that. Excited to work with Will and Ron that's coming in that's been here a month now, and I think they have already contributed a lot to this team. Will is a legend of the sport, so to be able to work close with him is going to be a lot of fun.

With Kyle, I think we have an extremely strong driver lineup there. Eager to get going.

Q. You brought up Will. How much are you looking forward to picking his brain a little bit?

MARCUS ERICSSON: A lot. I've already -- I don't know how many hours we've been on the phone already. He's a funny guy. He's a lot more technical than I expected. I guess that's why he's been doing it for so long and is still so good at it. We've been talking for hours on the phone. He calls me up randomly and just starts talking.

I'll be like, hey, I'm out for dinner, and he just keeps talking. He's a funny guy.

I learn a lot from him. The cool thing about him, he comes in with so much experience, as well. He's 44, been doing this for 20 plus years, but he still feels as hungry as ever. I think for the team, it's going to be great to have him, and like I said, the lineup with me, Kyle and Will feels super strong.

Q. Coming from Daytona, how was that experience

over the weekend?

MARCUS ERICSSON: It was a lot of fun. It's my third time down there, but it was my first time in a GT car, so that was very different. It's just a fun event.

For me, it's always the start of the racing season with Daytona. It's like the first proper big race. To be part of that, I think it's very cool on a personal level and it's a fun race to do, but also it's a great way to get your mind back into racing, get out there and battle with other drivers and teams and everything.

It's a great preparation for INDYCAR, in my opinion.

Q. I wanted your thoughts on the new independent officiating board given what happened in the 500 last year. What are your thoughts on it from what you know? Do you think it'll be a positive change here?

MARCUS ERICSSON: Yeah, I don't know too much about it. But from what I read about it, it sounds like a great thing. It's only positive things from my point of view.

Q. Nice to see the purple back. Talk about that a little bit.

MARCUS ERICSSON: Yeah, it's nice to see like we're back. We had a really successful partnership last year with a lot of cool things, cool activations like the pit stop challenge and everything. It's been a really cool partnership, and I'm stoked to have them back this year.

Q. You talked about doing a lot of work in the off-season. Obviously you can't test all the time. I know you ran Daytona. What as a driver can you do to prepare for a season or feel prepared for a season when you can't be in the car?

MARCUS ERICSSON: Yeah, you need to try different things. I wish I could have tested an INDYCAR every week for the off-season and work on different things, but you can't do that. That's not the reality. You need to think outside the box.

One of the things I wanted to do this off-season was to

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challenge myself, go outside my comfort zone. That's why I done a couple races in GT3 because I've never driven GT cars in my life.

So that's been really interesting, and I think it's been a great thing to learn things about myself and as a racing driver how I adapt to different situations. So I've done a little of that.

I think everyone that sits here today is going to say they're better trained than ever, so that's just standard.

But yeah, I've been training really well and focused a lot on the mental side. I talked about that before, how much I work on that. We have some new things there on the mental strength and mental coaching that I've been working on a bit of a different technique.

Looking forward to seeing how that's going to play out. Yeah, a bunch of things.

Then with the team of course, I live here in Indy so I've been spending a lot of time with the team. Got a new engineer, new strategist this year, so a lot of changes there, as well. Excited to see all of that come together and see where we are.

Q. We know it's a contract year. You've been able to perform in contract years over your career. Is the goal to just continue to prove who you are and let the results speak for themselves? Obviously as long as you're not taken out you've been there at the end of the Indianapolis 500 with opportunities to win it and obviously you did in 2022, second on track last year. Is that the goal at the start of the season?

MARCUS ERICSSON: Yeah, I mean, that's the way it works. You can do as much talking as you want outside the track, but it's the results that matters. I need to focus on that, and like I said, I need to be on the level I've shown I can be at and running up front, winning races and fighting with the best. That's my mindset going into this year.

Like you touched on, always throughout my career I've performed my best when it's high pressure, and I think that's why also the 500 is something I do very well at, because it's the most high-pressure race of the year. I have a good feeling about it. Just got to show on track what I can do.

Q. Talk about the busy-ness of the start of the schedule, obviously the Phoenix and Sebring tests but four total races in the month of March.

MARCUS ERICSSON: Yeah, important to start off strong

for sure. Always seems to be that way. If you have a bad start you're going to say we need to bounce back, but it always seems to be if you get off to a good start it sort of brings a lot of momentum into the season and then May comes quite quickly.

So if you have a good start you bring that momentum into the month of May, as well. After the month of May, there's so many races straight away after it.

It's sort of the way the INDYCAR season is structured, you really want to have a really good start, and for us as a team, we're very strong on street courses. I am very strong on street courses. So the start of the schedule looks good for us. There's no guarantees, of course, but it should be good tracks that we should be running up front, and then hopefully winning a couple of races during the start of the season.

Q. You mentioned camaraderie with Will is good right now, but did his hire date of January 1st, did that put things on the back foot a little bit for you guys as a whole?

MARCUS ERICSSON: Yeah, for sure. The fact that Will and Ron couldn't start until the 1st of January was definitely -- if they would have started in October, it would have been fantastic. We would have been a lot further ahead. But that was the facts that we had to work around.

Not much you can do about that. But yeah, like I said, already from the 1st of January they've been flat out, especially Ron but also Will. It's been fun to see that. It's going to be very interesting to see how it develops throughout the year.

Q. We were talking about it over there, what's maybe your gold, silver, bronze in the Olympic hockey, and how do you think Sweden will fare?

MARCUS ERICSSON: I think Sweden is going to have a great team. I think Canada and (audio interruption) Sweden for gold will beat Canada in the final and U.S. will be third.

Q. I wanted to ask you a little bit about St. Pete. Obviously it's the site of your last win a couple years ago. You always seem to get a good start there. What is it about that place in particular, because obviously that's going to be the focal point to springboard what you're hoping is a good March.

MARCUS ERICSSON: Yeah, like you say, I've always been good at that track. Like you say, I won there a couple years ago, had a couple of top 5, top 6 there the last few

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years, as well, so it seems to be a track that suits me.

Like I said earlier, street courses in general is something that I really like that challenge when there's no margin for error and the walls are close and that type of racing is something I really enjoy, and that's definitely the case in St. Pete. You don't have a lot of margin for error.

I don't know, it's just something about St. Pete. The atmosphere there is always great with so many fans and the start of the season. There's something that's in the air being there, and I really enjoy that.

Yeah, can't wait to get down there and then get the season started.

Q. Lastly, talking to you and Kyle back in Daytona, a lot of mention to Ganassi the last few years hitting at 10/10ths. They've maximized a lot of things over the last few years. How close do you feel like Andretti is to closing that gap?

MARCUS ERICSSON: I think we have the peaks. We just need to find the consistency. I think that's the biggest challenge we have as a team. When we have our day, we can beat anyone. But we need to have more days like that.

We've been too inconsistent, especially on the 28 car. We've been too much up and down. That's one of the big focal points for us as a team, as a group, but also for me and sort of my little group on the 28 car is just to find a consistency in our performances from street courses, road courses, short ovals, superspeedways. We need to find a consistency to always run up front, and that's where Palou and those guys adjust very, very well.

Q. Is that just from a driver standpoint? Is it just execution? Is there something within the damper program or development that's not quite there?

MARCUS ERICSSON: I mean, it all ties together, right? It's so competitive these days in INDYCAR. You miss out a little bit on the balance of the car or tires or whatever and you're a couple of 10ths off and suddenly you're starting 17th instead of starting within the top 8. It's really tough to pinpoint one thing.

I think we as a group just need to be better and sort of be stronger on all types of tracks. I think that's the biggest challenge we have as a team, to be more consistently up front.

Q. I think it's good how open you are about the mental side and the work you do there, but why is that so

important to you when you are in tougher seasons of your career like last year, and what have you learned from that that can help you get through these times of a bit more adversity?

MARCUS ERICSSON: Yeah, I've talked about that a lot throughout the years, the mental side of things. I think it's still underestimated the importance of mental training and mental strength, and it's something I've worked with throughout my career. When you have a tough season like I had last year, it's really even more important to focus on those things and really build yourself up and have a strong mental approach to things. That's where I can learn a lot from last year, how I sort of got into a bit of a negative spiral after the month of May and I couldn't really break out of that and that affected my results and my performances throughout the last part of the year.

I've been analyzing that, learning from that, and have tools now to use how to not get there. It's an interesting thing, and I think it's still a lot you can learn from the mental side. Everyone is different there, as well. I'm lucky I have a very good coach in Sweden, Stieg, that I work with, and we've had some really cool stuff that we've done that I think is going to really pay off this year.

Q. I know you spoke this time last year on media day about what you've done to improve after a tough first year, how you sometimes improve in your second season at teams. I know you mentioned the spiral after May, but why do you think it unfolded as it did for you and you couldn't get out of that rut that you got yourself in?

MARCUS ERICSSON: I think it was a lot of different things that contributed to what happened last year. I think that negative spiral after the month of May was something that was really tough for us and for me. The start of last year was really strong. I was one of the fastest leading up to May.

Just need to get back to that, get back to the basics. Again, I've looked a lot at myself; what can I do better, how can I work better with the team to get the car I need and balance I need. There's a lot of self-reflecting and seeing what I can do better as a driver that's been my focus point.

I know the team has worked extremely hard to also do things better, and like we talked about, there's a lot of changes there, as well.

It's not one thing you can point at. It's just a lot of small things together that makes a difference. We've put down the work to really make sure we are better and stronger.

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Q. Following up on that, what do you feel like you can do this year that maybe you did while you were at Ganassi where obviously you had some very impressive consistency? What can you do this year that you've learned that you can apply to make that step forward again?

MARCUS ERICSSON: It's exactly what you're saying. I need to get back to that consistency that I had with Ganassi. I think it was last season I had 15 out of 17 races in the top 10 and that's the sort of consistency you need to be running up front, and I know I can do that because I've shown that in the past. The key point for me is to get back to that, to have a car underneath me that I can trust every weekend and know what it's doing, then be able to deliver those performances when we get to the races. That's a big, big focus point for me.

Q. You did Daytona recently; what can you take from doing that different style of racing to help you in INDYCAR?

MARCUS ERICSSON: Yeah, I've tried purposely this winter to do things that I have not done so much before, so like go outside my comfort zone to really challenge myself, and that's been -- I feel like I've learned a lot from it.

Driving GT cars, it's very different to driving single seaters, so you need to learn about how do you use the brakes in the most efficient ways, how do you use the weight of the car to your advantage, not fighting against it.

I think a lot of those things you can also translate to an INDYCAR, with the weight of the car, car placement. That's something that's very crucial in a GT car that in an INDYCAR you might not think as much about that, but it's also crucial in an INDYCAR. So there's been things there which have been like, hmm, this is very interesting, I think I can apply that to my INDYCAR stuff, as well.

There's been a lot of those moments when I've done those GT races where I think it's going to help me when we get to INDYCAR, as well.

Q. You've said that you need to get the consistency you had at Chip Ganassi back this year. What can you and Andretti do to achieve that?

MARCUS ERICSSON: I mean, it comes down from preparation, preparation before race weekends, how we analyze after race weekends, how we work as a team, as a group. There's a lot of things.

Like I said, also looking at myself and what can I do better, how can I perform better on a consistency basis from week

in to week out. There's a lot of small details. It's not one specific thing we can just flick a button and suddenly we're going to be consistent. There's like a package we need to do better as a group, and we've worked a lot on it. We've analyzed a lot this winter, and we feel like we have a strong game plan going into the 2026 season.

Q. It's a very busy start to the season with I think five races nearly back-to-back. Obviously that's incredible; you get to drive a lot and the fans get to see a lot. But what sort of toll does that take on you as a driver, not really having a break between races?

MARCUS ERICSSON: Yeah, it's going to be a very busy start to the year, so you've got to be prepared. When you get to St. Pete you've got to be ready to go. I think that's the biggest thing. Sometimes I think previously when you have St. Pete in a couple of weeks and then one more race and a couple of weeks, then you sort of can -- you're still prepared for St. Pete but if you're not there for race 1 you're going to struggle because it's going to be uphill very fast. You need to be very good here for preseason testing in February and then when you get to St. Pete you've got to be ready to go. I think that's the biggest thing.

Busy, busy start to the year. I love that. I think it's going to be great but tough, as well.

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