

NTT INDYCAR SERIES

News Conference

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Nolan Siegel

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: Nolan Siegel also joins us. He was P8 in that practice session, driving the No. 6 Arrow McLaren Chevrolet.

Just your thoughts; it is your first time here at Phoenix Raceway. Did you enjoy it?

NOLAN SIEGEL: Yeah, I really enjoyed it. I thought it's a very fun track to drive, very unique. The two ends are quite different -- three ends, I guess, are quite different from each other. It's a challenge setup-wise, a challenge driving-wise, and yeah, very much enjoying myself here. I think it's a cool location, as well. Good to hit this region.

We had a ton of fans at the autograph session. I was surprised. We were all like, why are we doing an autograph session here, and then everyone showed up, and we were like, oh, that's why. I think that's a good look into what the race weekend is going to be like.

Q. For the team, you led among the three. What kind of race car do you think you'll have come back here in a couple weeks?

NOLAN SIEGEL: I think we'll be strong. I think we've been strong on all the short ovals pace-wise. I have full confidence that we'll figure it out as a group. We have done a good job splitting kind of test items between the three cars.

That's the advantage obviously of having three cars, three strong teams that you trust feedback from. Learned a lot across the three cars over the two days, and I feel like we're way, way better than where we started.

It's been cool to have Sebring and here as an opportunity to test so many sort of off-season developments that we've done, and I'm very optimistic looking into the year as a whole, but coming back here I think we'll be as strong as we have been on other short ovals as a group.

Q. Did you do sim work for this test, and if so --

NOLAN SIEGEL: I did not. I did not do a lap on the sim here.

Q. How did you get adjusted? Or did you just take a lap around the track in a passenger car and then go at it?

NOLAN SIEGEL: Yeah, I mean, I say I didn't do a lap on the sim. I didn't do a lap on the real sim. I've jumped on iRacing and done it that way at home.

No, we have -- obviously the team has a long history, so we have some info from when we were here last in INDYCAR. Obviously it was a while ago, but some good resources there from the team. Watched the race replays from 2016 through 2018, got kind of as much on board as I could from there, and then walked the track, and it's been really nice to have these two days to just get adjusted.

Obviously when you're at the race weekend and short on time, you have this pressure to get up to speed immediately when it's a new place, and it was nice to have the test where you can take a run to kind of check the place out and try some different things, experiment a little bit. So it was a good opportunity for that.

Q. Kind of curious, we know about the off-season talks that have happened with Kanaan saying some things and then what you had said at media day, and you've kind of put that aside since media day. I'm kind of curious, with all of that, is this maybe the most comfortable that you've felt getting into a race car just because of that experience and everything else, you're able to kind of block that out and get in and run? Is that fair to say?

NOLAN SIEGEL: Yeah. I mean, I think honestly, people have made a really big deal about all of that, and I don't think internally with me or Tony or any -- it's really not that big a deal for us. Nothing has changed. We still have a good relationship.

I'm very comfortable. It's been nice to run with the group that TK has helped put together on the 6 car. I think there's some really good additions. He's done a great job



with that.

Everything is good. I feel comfortable where I am, comfortable with the people I'm with. Working with Kate again; Andy, new performance engineer, has been doing a great job.

Yeah, a lot of familiar faces, which is obviously comforting going into the season. A lot of really strong new faces.

I think honestly, for me, I would say I'm at this point more comfortable and more confident with the group we have than I expected to be. It feels like a group that's worked together for a long time. Yeah, I would say the comfort level is very high, and everyone is happy. Everyone is optimistic.

I think there's been some kind of drama created around all of that in the off-season that didn't actually exist for us. It was just like kind of people spooling each other up. We're chilling over here. We're doing well.

Q. To follow that up, from a performance standpoint in the car, doing some of that LMP2 running over the off-season and obviously coming into now having a couple -- almost a couple of full-time seasons, several starts, how much of your comfort also is because of all of that experience in the off-season running and things like that coming in?

NOLAN SIEGEL: Yeah, I think it was super helpful. Last year obviously we didn't have this test, either, so it was just Sebring, and I hadn't driven a race car for a long time, so you get in and it's -- I felt a little bit more rusty kind of than I would have liked, and I think a lot of people have that experience where you jump in and it takes a few runs to get comfortable, whereas this year it was just in and it felt normal right away. Same thing here, just comfortable and right into rhythm, and it eliminates some of that time to get readjusted.

I think it was really helpful. It was also just a lot of fun. It's nice to kind of come into the season having some good weekends recently where it's just -- the confidence is high, everything is comfortable. We're excited to get going. I think it's very positive as a whole.

Q. You talked about just the comfort level with your team, with your guys. I'm curious now with Arrow McLaren's new shop opening up, how comfortable are you in that new shop, and what's been that experience for you?

NOLAN SIEGEL: It's great that the team has a new facility that I think sort of matches the rest of the program. Before

it was a big program running out of a small space. I think it was maybe not the most comfortable for everyone. People were crammed into small offices. The cars were close together. It was definitely cramped. So it's nice to have a bit more space now.

It certainly looks the part, and everyone is settling in.

I think people are still sort of getting used to the new space and getting used to things being different, but ultimately I think everybody is going to really enjoy it, and once everyone gets settled in it's going to be a huge positive for us and just make things a bit easier on everyone.

Q. A lot of the drivers have talked about the different tools that you have at your disposal and being able to do different things as you're navigating different portions of the racetrack. Looking ahead towards the double-header weekend, for the NASCAR fans who don't know, walk us through what you can do in the car throughout a lap.

NOLAN SIEGEL: Yeah, on the ovals we have the weight jacker, which we don't have on road courses, so we can change the balance with that weight jacker, which is a really nice tool to have through a stint. We've got the anti-roll bars, roll stiffness in the front and rear individually, so we can use a combination of all three of those tools. That's been another nice thing to have this testing for, because you do these long runs and you can take some time to go through all of the different positions in the bars and move the jacker around and have time to feel it out before we get to the race.

Definitely kind of increases the workload on the driver, but at the same time, if you have a problem, you do have an opportunity to try and make it better for yourself and try and fix it. I think that's a really cool aspect to the long runs in INDYCAR.

Q. With you guys coming right back here in a couple weeks, what do you feel like are the biggest things you were able to learn in these couple of days about the track in Phoenix?

NOLAN SIEGEL: I think a big one is just as a driver having been here before, obviously coming into practice 1, you get to it right away. That's big.

Then nobody has been here in a long time, so having the opportunity to try tons of things across all three cars is super helpful. I think you get to a race weekend, and sometimes with the lack of time, you're hesitant to take big swings at things and try kind of more experimental items just because you don't have the time to get yourself way

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out of the window and then work your way back, whereas here, you can take a big swing at something and if it doesn't work, that run wasn't good, and whatever. You come back and try something else.

It's fun. I really enjoy testing for that reason, and it allows people to get a little bit more creative. I think we found some big, big things and got a good chunk better as a team with all three cars over these two days.

Very confident with our starting point going into the race weekend. Certainly more confident with that starting point than I would have been coming to a new track without a test.

Q. With there being four races in March, how important do you feel like it is to get off to a very good start in the first three or four races?

NOLAN SIEGEL: It's always important. I think it's important for my confidence, for the group's confidence. It's always nice to go to St. Pete and have a good event and build some momentum going through the first bit of the season. I think at the same time, it's still going to be a new group for us. It's a lot of new people that are working together for the first time and there are going to be little kinks to iron out. We're going to continue working through that and we're going to continue working through our program. I'm quite confident that we'll be strong in St. Pete. I'm really excited for St. Pete. But at the same time, if you're not, then it doesn't really change anything for us. We keep working through it the same way.

We'll see where we're at. I'm confident that we're going to be good, and we'll try and just maximize the potential every weekend.

But I think having three back-to-back races at the start of the season is actually going to be really nice. Normally you wait so long through the off-season, everyone is ready to go, you do your one race and you're just back to waiting again, and I think everyone is ready to go and energized for those three weekends, and it's nice to do those back-to-backs at the start of the season when everyone is excited for it and ready for it.

Q. INDYCAR hasn't been there in a while, but INDYCAR used to be there for a long time. Do you get the sense of the history of what that track means in INDYCAR? It's kind of a little bit like Milwaukee to some degree. When you walk in there, you know the greats of the great have run at that track. It's the same thing with Phoenix.

NOLAN SIEGEL: Yeah, absolutely. I think this is kind of

the heart of INDYCAR racing, right, these short ovals. It's going to be a fun race, and it does definitely feel like it's kind of back to the roots of series, which is really cool. Talking to -- obviously we've got TK who's raced here a ton; Ryan Hunter-Reay has been hanging around and has raced here a ton, as well.

I obviously watched this race growing up and watched those guys racing here growing up, and it's cool to hear their perspective having driven the previous generations of cars here.

I really enjoy INDYCAR short oval racing. I think it does feel like the home for the series, and it just feels like this is what INDYCAR was meant for.

Cool to have another short oval on the calendar, and it's fun for it to be somewhere with so much INDYCAR history.

Q. What about the unique characteristic of the dogleg coming out of Turn 4?

NOLAN SIEGEL: Yeah, it's interesting. I think the dogleg itself isn't super exciting. It's very easy flat, kind of just a straightaway. But what is different is Turns 3 and 4 are not full 180 degrees. It is kind of like a 90-degree corner that feels more like a road course corner. Having the mix of more standard sort of I would say Gateway feeling Turns 1 and 2 and then this kind of funky 90-degree big banked compression that feels like a road course is a very interesting combination and an interesting challenge to have the two of them.

Really enjoy driving around this place so far.

Q. What's it going to be like for you -- everybody has grown up seeing NASCAR on TV, to actually be at a short oval with NASCAR out there the same weekend as you guys?

NOLAN SIEGEL: I think it's awesome. I really enjoyed watching the NASCAR race here last year. It was awesome, awesome racing. Very exciting.

I think if we can get some NASCAR fans interested in INDYCAR, get some INDYCAR fans interested in NASCAR and just kind of have an event that's really fun and exciting for all of the motorsports fans in general that come out -- I think the more eyes on INDYCAR, the better. The more eyes on NASCAR, the better. If we can just have this be a big weekend that boosts both series, gets people excited about short oval INDYCAR racing, I think that's a great thing. So very excited about that.

Q. You kind of mentioned earlier about Ryan and his

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impact on the team. How much have you been able to tap into his knowledge so far, and what role has he played outside of his role during the Indy 500?

NOLAN SIEGEL: Yeah, I actually honestly haven't been able to talk to him as much as I would like. He's another great resource, and I'm very lucky to have so many experienced people around me that are so willing to help.

I've had some short conversations with Ryan about just issues I've had here and whether that's something he's experienced and how he dealt with it, and I think there are some kind of track-specific things that are a little different from other places here and how to drive around those things and what we need to work on.

It's been nice to be able to have those chats with him, and I'm looking forward to talking to him more, and obviously when he gets in the car, it'll be cool to listen to how he goes about things when he's driving, as well.

Q. Nolan, as a young guy, when you come to these tracks like Phoenix, Arlington, D.C., does that give you a competitive advantage with everyone starting from square one not having been here recently?

NOLAN SIEGEL: Yeah, I don't know. It is obviously tough being newer to the series and having so many people here that have been in it for so long and have so much experience, so I do think that coming somewhere new where everyone resets a little bit is good.

At the same time, I wouldn't say this is necessarily one of those places because we do have quite a few people here that raced here in 2018 I think was the last time we came.

There are definitely still people with more experience, but yeah, I think going to new street circuits where everyone is learning and starting from scratch is probably not the worst thing for me. I don't think it really makes a huge difference, but I would rather be closer on experience than further away.

Q. You get to hang out with the D-backs tomorrow, right?

NOLAN SIEGEL: Yes.

Q. Do you know what you're going to do?

NOLAN SIEGEL: I don't know. I was just told that I might have to do batting practice, which sounds like it could have the potential to be very embarrassing.

Q. Can you take a 100-mile-an-hour heater?

NOLAN SIEGEL: No, definitely not. I'll do my best, and I will try not to hurt myself.

Q. Do you have any experience with baseball at all?

NOLAN SIEGEL: No. I think I played tee ball when I was maybe five or six years old, and that was the last time.

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