

NTT INDYCAR SERIES

News Conference

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Marcus Ericsson

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: Marcus Ericsson heads to St. Pete as a former winner, the 2023 winner. Sunday Marcus begins his eighth season in the NTT INDYCAR SERIES and his third with Andretti Global. Marcus joins us this morning.

I know it's been a busy couple of last weeks between content days, tests at Sebring, open test at Phoenix last week. How much are you really ready to officially get started here in 2026?

MARCUS ERICSSON: Yeah, I'm super excited to finally get going again. It's been, yeah, an interesting off-season. I've been working a lot on myself, with the team as well. I felt like we had a really good test in Sebring and Phoenix. We go in with good momentum into St. Pete.

You need that because it's going to get busy quick this year. It's really a hectic start to the year. We love that. That's exactly what we want.

Yeah, exciting to be in St. Pete. It's always a highlight. Won there in the past. We are normally very strong at street courses at Andretti, as well. We are really looking forward to kicking off our season in St. Petersburg.

THE MODERATOR: Off topic, if I can. Yesterday you visited Peyton Manning Children's Hospital and met with what they call Patient Ambassadors who designed your race hats. Tell us about that program.

MARCUS ERICSSON: Yeah, so it came up here a couple months ago. I've done a lot of things in the community, obviously living in Indianapolis since eight years now. Crazy time flies. Really feeling part of the community here. Been doing some stuff with the Children's Hospital here in the past.

The group One Dozen One and Delaware Life have done a lot of things together with Peyton Manning Children's Hospital. They have this idea of doing something really interacting with the kids there, getting them involved. We came up with this idea of them designing some hats that I

will wear on the race weekends when Delaware Life will be my primary sponsor.

I went there yesterday, met up with a bunch of kids there, was just hanging out with them. They were painting these hats, which was really funny. It was fun to see how different the different kids were taking this task. All of them super excited, of course, to know that I will wear that specific hat for a race weekend and they will see it on TV. That was really cool. Yeah, just be part of that.

Hopefully inspire them and put a smile on their faces. Was really cool. Yeah, it's a great initiative, something I'm really proud to be part of.

THE MODERATOR: As someone that lives in Indy, means a good deal to be part of that initiative locally, but you carry it forward for seven races. That storytelling goes on.

MARCUS ERICSSON: That's the cool thing. It's something that you do here in the local community, but it's also nationwide because I'm bringing that with me all across the country, representing them, representing the hospital, all the great things that Manning Children's Hospital is doing for so many kids. It's just fantastic to see that, to in some way help, help their cause. It's something that I'm very proud of.

Yeah, I'm sure those hats is going to help me get another 10th or two out of my race car on those weekends (smiling).

THE MODERATOR: We'll open it up for questions.

Q. The season coming up, having your last win be St. Pete a few years ago, how are you looking to bounce back this year starting with this weekend?

MARCUS ERICSSON: Yeah, I think it's a perfect place to start at. Like you said, I won there a couple years ago. I've been strong there I feel like every time I've been there. It's a good track for me.

For us as a group, I feel like we have a lot of momentum going in from the off-season. We have Will Power coming



in from Penske. He's been a great addition from the team. Also Ron Ruzewski, who is going to lead a team also coming from Penske. Done a lot of things as well over the few months he's been here since 1st of January. It's all a good momentum going on.

I feel like looking at myself personally, I've worked really hard this off-season. I've tried to really put myself a bit outside my comfort zone to challenge myself in different ways. I've driven a bunch of different cars that I haven't driven in the past just to put myself in different situations where you're maybe not so comfortable. I feel like that's really been developing for me. Stuff there really helped me become a better driver.

I'm excited to get back in an INDYCAR and show that on track, as well. A lot of positive momentum for us going into the St. Pete weekend.

Q. Four races in five weekends, how important is it knowing you won't have much of a break to make sure that you are on point going into the year?

MARCUS ERICSSON: Yeah, normally you have a bit of a slow start in INDYCAR. You have a couple of races here in the first few months. Everyone has time to sort of get into it. You do a race, then you have time to analyze that, sort of make adjustments, then go to the next race.

Now it's very different this year. You got to be ready to go when we get to St. Pete. There is no time to sort of feel it out or get up to speed. It's like bang on, you need to be on it.

Hopefully start with a good weekend in St. Pete and bring that momentum to Phoenix and Arlington. It's important to be ready when you get there.

I feel like Andretti Global as a team we're ready to go when we get there. We have a lot of good people that's ready to go. It's going to be crucial to have a good start.

Also having a good start to the year builds momentum to May. May is the month we're all thinking about, as well. Having a good start, it's really helping to build up momentum, as well.

Q. At one point a couple years ago we were talking about you fighting for wins, podiums. The last couple seasons haven't gone like you had hoped. How much do you maybe have a chip on your shoulder going into this year to try to make people remember that I was the guy that could do this?

MARCUS ERICSSON: Yeah, I definitely feel like I have a

chip on my shoulder going into this season. I felt like the first year with Andretti was promising. We just didn't manage to finish a lot of races. We sort of lost a lot of points. We still had good speed. Was a promising first year.

Really last year should have been a better year. It was just going the other way. Was a really disappointing season. It's been a lot of sort of looking at myself in the off-season trying to figure out how I can get back to the level I know I can be at, like you said, I know I can be at.

Been a lot of work put in from my side, but also the team's side. They've worked really hard to try to get me more comfortable in the car, yeah, get the car more to my liking.

Have a new engineer this year in Ron Barhorst. Been a really promising start with him in Sebring and Phoenix. I felt like we made some big steps to get the car more in sort of the window I want the car to be in. That makes me very excited.

There's a bunch of things, as always. INDYCAR is still tight. That's the thing last year, right? It wasn't that we were bad, we were just missing a little bit. INDYCAR these days you miss a little bit, suddenly you're P20. It's not like you're 10th or 12th. It's such a competitive field, you can't be a little bit off with the setup or your driving. If you are, you're in the back.

I think all those things have made it a tough last year. We've been working hard, like I said, in the off-season to come back and be strong.

My mindset is that I want to be back in the front of the field fighting for podiums and wins on a regular basis, fighting up front in the championship. I know I can do that. I've shown that plenty of times in the past. That's my big goal for the year.

Q. You had a great test at Sebring, a really strong test at Phoenix up until the start of that last hour. You were very upset and frustrated. Your team was trying to rally you, tell you to shake it off, let's go win St. Pete. For you personally, what did you do from that incident to this week to hit the reset button?

MARCUS ERICSSON: I mean, that's the tough part with racing, right? It goes quick from really good to really bad, stuff like that. Thankfully I've been around for a while, so I know that feeling.

Right then and there in Phoenix when it happened, I was very frustrated because it was something out of my control that caused the crash. When it happens, really by the end



of a test, when you've had a really good test, it's just really frustrating.

Yeah, I mean, I was frustrated then. The next day it's focus on the next thing. I've been really busy studying and just preparing for St. Pete. Leave that behind, what happened in Phoenix.

Again, like I said, I think the test was really, really good. Whatever happened there in the end didn't take away any of the test. We really made some really good progress that's going to help us when we come back there in a couple of weeks.

That's part of racing. Sometimes stuff like that happens. You just got to put it behind you and focus forward. I feel like that's what I've been doing and the team around me has done as well.

Q. (Question about a negative spiral.)

MARCUS ERICSSON: The 500 is the biggest race of the year. It's the one that all the teams work year-round towards that race. Also me as a driver, I won that race in the past. I know how much that means to win that race. That's the biggest focus for me every year, to try to prepare myself and perform at the highest level for that specific race.

I felt like I did a really good job of that last year. Obviously was very disappointed to miss out on the win, but still was very proud of the second place. To get that sort of taken away from you, again, for something that's out of your control, I felt like that was really a tough blow. It affected my confidence. Yeah, affected my feelings really.

In a way, I look back at that and learn from that because it's something, again, out of my control. It shouldn't let that affect me. But it did.

Also the way the season is in INDYCAR, that was the same thing last year, after the 500 there were so many races stacked on top of each other, you didn't really have a chance to sort of lean back and think. It's just race after race.

I think that really affected me and also the team, especially my team, we were really bothered about it, what happened. It's something again, you've got to learn from that and look at how you can learn from situations like that. I feel like we've done that.

Again, coming into this year I've done a lot of work in the off-season to prepare to be the best version of myself and be back on the level I know I can be at. I'm excited to

show that on track.

Q. You're heading into a contract year. Does that change the mindset or approach heading into the first few races where people are going to be looking at other people's futures?

MARCUS ERICSSON: I mean, yes and no. It does change it a little bit. For me personally, before I got to Andretti, every season was a contract year for me. That was always the case. I was never more than on a one-year contract ever in my career. It's back to normal sort of in a way for me that you live with that pressure.

To be honest, it's not been really I feel like a bad thing. It's just a part of the game. It's a result-driven sport. Especially in INDYCAR, you got to deliver. I know what I need to do to show what I can do and to get a good situation with '27 and onwards.

It doesn't really change much for me. I just want to get out there and show my abilities behind the wheel and show what I can do. That is sort of where my head is at.

Q. You mentioned St. Pete is a good track for you. Can you talk about what makes it a good track and what you expect to see this year that may be different from previous years.

MARCUS ERICSSON: Yeah, I think just in general I love the street courses. It's always been one of my strengths as a driver. I won at Detroit. I won in Nashville on the streets there, as well. It's always been something that has been something I like.

I like the fact where you don't have a lot of margins for error, where the walls are close. You have to be precise in your driving. That just suits me and the way I drive I think.

St. Pete itself, I think what I really like about that race, it's just the energy. The whole city sort of rallies around the race. It's always a lot of Swedish fans coming over for some reason. They want to get out of cold and dark Sweden I guess at this time of the year. That always gives a good boost as well for me. Yeah, it's a cool race to start the season.

I think this year it's not much different. It's the same as always. It's a great place. I think it's a fantastic place to start the season for us in INDYCAR. Again, I go there with good memories. I know how to win that race. I know how to be in the front of the field there. That's my focus.

Q. Yesterday I saw Pato speaking about the season. We'll see you in the next days on TV. I talk this

because INDYCAR this year, it's a new strategy to promote. Obviously you drivers and the different sponsors on different teams.

MARCUS ERICSSON: What's the question?

Q. That's the question. We'll see you on TV or some of your teammates from Andretti.

MARCUS ERICSSON: For the commercials or?

Q. No, different shows, to promote events.

MARCUS ERICSSON: Oh, sorry, okay.

Yeah, I mean, INDYCAR is always pushing. We're always trying to get our drivers and teams, get the series out there. I think it's always a challenge for us. It's a lot of good sports in the U.S., the world, that we're competing against. I think INDYCAR is a great product. I think this year we especially have an incredible field with drivers. There is so much competition, so many good drivers.

We have Mick Schumacher coming from Europe and Formula 1. The last name is going to help us as well. I feel like we have good momentum with FOX as well pushing very hard for the series, getting us out there, trying to show the personalities, because there is a lot of cool personalities in our series.

I think that's a constant thing we're trying to do as a series to get out there on TV, different events. I was in Texas last weekend in Arlington for the Supercross event there. Was there with media and everything.

It's a constant thing, a constant battle where we try to get our drivers and teams out there and showcase the series, get fans to tune in. Usually when fans tune in on the race days or go to a race, they're hooked. We need to get more eyeballs on the series. That's what we're trying to do as much as possible.

Q. Next Saturday, how do you expect the track? Before your qualifying session, we'll see first time the NASCAR Trucks on street courses.

MARCUS ERICSSON: Yeah, no, it will be interesting. Maybe the barriers will be in a completely different place compared to earlier. I'm sure they're going to be bouncing around quite a bit. It will be interesting. We'll see how the track changes with different rubber coming down.

Yeah, it will be an interesting challenge. Again, it's the same for everyone. You just got to be adaptive to that. Again, I think it's great that they are there as well. It's

another great series that we are sharing the track with. I think that's all positive. The week after we're going to Phoenix and we're going to be sharing the track there as well with NASCAR. That's going to be really cool, as well.

I like that we're doing more stuff like that. I think it's just helping everyone, motorsports in the U.S. grow more, hopefully getting even more fans to tune in and watch us.

Q. You mentioned that you've been around for a while, you brought this on yourself. You've raced against Lewis Hamilton in the past. Now you're racing against Alex Palou, who has taken the next level of control in motorsport. As a competitor, have you learned anything from racing alongside Lewis and Alex that you're taking onto yourself? How do you appreciate motorsport like that, witnessing everything in terms of greatness?

MARCUS ERICSSON: Yeah, I mean, it was cool when I was in Formula 1. It was when Lewis was dominating the sport. It was cool to see that firsthand. Obviously in F1 you're still quite separated. When you're not teammates, you don't really interact that much with the other drivers. Even though I was racing with him, you don't really work that closely with your competitors. It was more just an inspiration to see what he was doing there, how he was able to perform week in and week out, win so many championships. It was really cool to see. Definitely an inspiration.

With Alex, I was teammates with Alex for quite a few years there in Ganassi. I got to know him quite well. He's still a good friend of mine. I think what he's doing is super impressive because INDYCAR, in comparison to Formula 1, it's a one-spec series. To be able to be dominant like Alex has been in the last few years is something that is extremely difficult. It's really cool to see that.

Obviously frustrating for the rest of us because we also want to win races and championships (smiling). I got to give all the respect for Alex and the work he's done. The 10 car team, the people there, they've really been the ones to beat the last couple years. It's giving the rest of us a lot of homework to try to catch up and challenge him. That's the goal for this year obviously.

Yeah, I think it's come down to hard work. Obviously you have to have the talent, but you also have to work hard, work with your team. All those small details I talked about earlier, how competitive INDYCAR is these days, the smallest things, it all adds up. I think that's what Alex does really well in INDYCAR, he's really good in all aspects of INDYCAR racing. That all adds up, yeah, makes him a great champion that we are all going to chase this year.

 . . . when all is said, we're done.®

Q. We're used to seeing drivers from Europe come stateside to give INDYCAR a go. Colton Herta is going to take on the challenge in Australia. You've raced in Formula 2 and 1 before. Do you have any advice to give Colton?

MARCUS ERICSSON: I don't know about advice. I'm very curious to see how it goes. I've been teammates now the last two years with Colton. I know how talented and how good as a driver he is. There is no doubt in my mind that he has the talent to succeed in F2 and ultimately in Formula 1. There's no doubt in my mind about that. It's more a question about getting used to the cars, the tracks over there. The tires are very different to what we have in INDYCARs. I think that's some of the things where he needs to adapt and learn.

Again, I think from what I've seen from Colton, I'm sure he will do that. The question is more does it take a year, two years, what's the timeline. Again, with Formula 1, it's all about timing, as well, timing your next move and all those things. Yeah, it's going to be really cool to see and watch and follow. I wish him all the best.

Q. You said that you really want a good start in St. Pete this season. What does a good start mean for you? What do you expect for yourself?

MARCUS ERICSSON: It means that I maximize my performance this weekend. It's about getting everything out of myself in practice, qualifying and the race. That means I'm winning the race or finishing third or fifth or seventh. So many circumstances out of your control in INDYCAR that affects that.

For me, I try to really focus on me and my performance. If I go away on Sunday afternoon and feel like I've maximized my weekend, I know I'm going to be up there and have a good result, that will be a good start for me.

Q. You know the race in St. Pete is well-established as a street course. When you're headed to the Grand Prix of Arlington, a brand-new circuit, what are your biggest concerns? Have you seen a map of the circuit yet?

MARCUS ERICSSON: I've seen a map of it, but that's about it. Everyone starts from a clean sheet of paper. It's really a bit going into the unknown.

But I like that challenge. I think that's a fun challenge to take on. You need to be very adaptive during first practice, second practice. You need to be ready to change things on the car, your driving. It's really about adapting to the

sort of situation.

But I've done that good in the past when we changed to Nashville. We went there for the first time, I won the first ever street race there on the streets of Nashville. I feel like I have good memories of those kind of races.

Apart from that, I was in Arlington this week, Supercross, I saw some of the track, the track build that's going on there. I think it's going to be an amazing event. It's really going to be a cool race. I feel like there's a lot of buzz around in Dallas around that race as well. I'm super excited. I think it's a great addition to the series, to the calendar for us.

Q. Do you have any regrets about the series leaving Texas Motor Speedway?

MARCUS ERICSSON: Yeah, I do, because I think that is a very historic race for us. It's a really cool oval. I'm hoping in the future we might come back. But at the same time adding a race like the Arlington GP is just fantastic. I think it's really going to bring a lot more eyeballs to the race from the Dallas crowd because you bring the race to the people in a different way when you have it on the streets like we're going to have.

I'm excited about that. I wish we could also race at Texas Motor Speedway. Who knows what happens in the future.

Q. I know 2025 was quite challenging for you. Obviously disappointing because it's not where you wanted to be. That wasn't always the case. You have won the 500, won in Nashville, St. Pete. When you go through these challenging phases as a driver, it takes a mental toll on you. How do you protect that confidence and belief that you have in yourself when the results are not reflected the hard work?

MARCUS ERICSSON: I mean, that's a constant challenge for I think all drivers because you go up and down in your career. You have really good parts, then you have tougher parts. That's a constant challenge.

I've been working on my mental strength throughout my career. It's something I've put a lot of effort into. As much as I go to the gym, as much as I work constantly on my mental strength.

When you have years like last year, it's really important to continue that. I have a great trainer in Sweden that I work with on a weekly basis. It's a constant thing. In top-level sports, it's a really important thing to work on your mental strength. It's always been a thing for me, to be honest.

Obviously with experience you know there's going to be

ups and downs in your career. It doesn't make me worried, but it makes you appreciate when things go well. When things doesn't go as well, you just got to dig deep, work hard and get back to where you want to be.

Q. INDYCAR obviously feels like a three-way street between the driver, the team and the car. Following a short break, then returning to Phoenix and Sebring for the testing, how do you think the relationship between your team and the chemistry between you guys has changed as well as your connection to your car?

MARCUS ERICSSON: I think we had some good tests here leading up to the season. I had some new people on my car, new engineer, new strategist. We've been sort of starting that process of working together. It's been really promising.

We've made some good progress I feel like on the car side. Like I mentioned earlier, getting the car a little bit more to my liking, the way it sort of behaves on track. That's a constant thing that you always try to figure out and improve.

Again, INDYCAR is so competitive these days, if you can find even a hundredth or two of a second, that's going to be worth it because it might be a position or two on the racetrack.

It's all about looking into all the small details and work with your team around you. I feel like I have an extremely strong team on the 28 car this year. I'm excited to get to St. Pete now and get going, feel that on track, as well.

Q. This is your eighth INDYCAR season. Since you joined, how have you grown as a driver?

MARCUS ERICSSON: That's a good question, yeah. First of all, it's pretty crazy to say starting my eighth season. It feels like not that long ago I came over here after my Formula 1 stint. Now we're sitting here going into my eighth season.

I think one of the things I wanted to do coming here to INDYCAR was to show for myself mainly that I could perform at a top level, win races and fight at the front. I felt like in Formula 1 I never really got an opportunity to really show my talent and my skills as a driver.

I feel it's safe to say I've been able to do that, winning multiple races and winning the biggest race of them all, the 500. I'm very proud of that.

Still I feel I have more goals to achieve. I want to win more races. I want to win at least another 500. That sort of

drives me every day to become better. Yeah, just try and be better every year.

I think that's the thing that really I try and pride myself with, to try and always be a better version of myself every season, try and learn from my mistakes, yeah, be better and better every year.

Q. St. Pete is the site of your last win. What is the most challenging aspect of the track?

MARCUS ERICSSON: I think sort of the section from turn four to nine is very technical. It's very flowy and technical. You need to really have a car that behaves the way you want, but have a good flow when you're driving through there. I think that section is really tough.

Also the start/finish straight being on the landing strip there, it's quite difficult braking into turn one with the lower-grip surface on the white strips there.

Then just in general being the first race of the year, everyone has been out of racing in INDYCAR for a while. Everyone is sort of eager to get going. It's always a challenge because of that, I think.

Q. Why does it make such a good track to open the season?

MARCUS ERICSSON: I think it's a combination of things. I think the setting down there by the water is really cool. It's a perfect sort of I think initial place to be to start the year.

But also the city of St. Pete really comes together for the race. I feel like everyone is excited about it. You can walk downtown during the weekend, everyone is buzzing around the race, all the restaurants. Everything is just really excited to have the race there. There's so much fans showing up every year. I feel like the atmosphere just makes it a really cool place to kick off our season.

I also strongly believe that all the drivers are really excited to be there. It's a combination of those things. Usually the race itself is a really good race. It's just a perfect place to start the season.

Q. With Will Power being your new teammate, has he given you any advice to help (indiscernible) this season?

MARCUS ERICSSON: Yeah, I think Will has come in with a lot of good ideas, good just thinking how he's going about racing. He's been a top-level driver here for, what, 20 years. He really is a legend of the sport.

For us to have him in the team now, being able to learn from him, for me and Kyle, that's been really good in the first part of the year. I'm sure we're going to be able to learn a lot off of him during the season.

But also his technical feedback, how he sees racing, it's been really impressive to see firsthand. He's going to be a great addition in driving the development of the cars, just sort of from weekend to weekend helping us be sort of in the right place with our cars.

Also on the competitive side for me and Kyle to go up against Will, race with him, it's going to be really, really good. I've been, yeah, super impressed with Will so far.

Q. How would you say your journey has shaped you into the driver you are today?

MARCUS ERICSSON: I think it's been a lot of tough years that's really shaped me. I think it's really made me mentally very strong.

Coming up five years in Formula 1 when I was running mostly in the back was really mentally tough. It took me a lot of mental strength to sort of get out of that and get back to being a race winner in INDYCAR, winning the 500.

Last year was a tough year for me. I had to dig deep in this off-season to come out and have a strong year this year. I think all those ups and downs shape you as a driver, as a person. Yeah, I believe all those things really make you stronger in the end. That's how I really see it.

THE MODERATOR: Marcus, thank you very much for hopping on like this today in what is a very busy week. Safe travels and we'll see you in St. Pete this weekend.

MARCUS ERICSSON: Sounds good. Thank you.

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