

NTT INDYCAR SERIES

News Conference

Saturday, February 28, 2026

Marcus Ericsson

Post-Qualifying Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: Good afternoon. Wrapping up qualifying ahead of tomorrow's Firestone Grand Prix of St. Petersburg, we are joined by the other front row starter for tomorrow's race, Marcus Ericsson, driver of the No. 28 Delaware Life Honda for Andretti Global, his best starting spot in his eighth start here on the streets of St. Pete.

I know you guys were looking for a big bounce-back from last year, and so far, so good. This is a nice way to start 2026 for you guys.

MARCUS ERICSSON: Yeah, great way to start. It's no secret, last year was super disappointing and frustrating and not the way I want to be or we want to be, so worked extremely hard over the winter to come back and be strong and be on the level we should be at. All weekend it's been strong, but to go out in qualifying and do that through all the segments and put it on the front row feels really, really good.

Q. I know reds, primaries, all that, there's a lot of discussion going on about what may happen tomorrow. Did you guys learn anything today?

MARCUS ERICSSON: I only did short runs on the reds, so I don't really know what they will do on the longer stints, so we'll see on warmup what they give us. But the 28 car has been really good every practice on all type of tires.

Starting up front now, I'm excited we're going to have a strong race from there, and then you've just got to handle the tires the best we can.

Q. Maybe it's the hat.

MARCUS ERICSSON: Yeah, the hat is from Josiah from Peyton Manning Children's Hospital. He's made this custom-made hat for me, 11 years old. I hope he's watching at home and is proud of me, and I'm proud of him.

Q. I know it's only the first session of the first race of the season, but just how much does this really pump

you up? I know talking to you, you weren't happy with the way things have gone the last couple of years. How big of a boost is this for you, and how much of this do you owe to the new management that you've got at Andretti Global with Ron Ruzewski?

MARCUS ERICSSON: It was extremely important for me. I've been really pissed off last year with my performance, and that's not the way I want to show, and I know I can do so much better.

This winter it's been a lot about digging deep, working extremely hard on all areas, and just feels really, really good to come out and show that today, show what I can do and run up front. It's only qualifying. We need to do it again tomorrow, but it feels really, really good.

Q. I believe it was 2022 or 2023 when we were introduced to the Marcus fans, the guys that came from Sweden. Have they made the trip here once again? They are a colorful cast.

MARCUS ERICSSON: Yeah, with Ron Ruzewski coming to the team and Will Power and everything, Dan Towriss and everyone is pushing really hard with the Andretti Global team. We're moving in the right direction. It's been really good to work with them so far, so I think we really have great things ahead of us.

But yeah, coming back to the other thing, yeah, we have some crazy Swedes that come here every year, and they seem to be screaming for two hours straight. Someone should tell them that there's also a race tomorrow. They might be struggling for that. But yeah, it feels great to have good support here.

Q. Marcus, you said that you worked really hard in the off-season. What were some areas that had to be addressed to get you in the right place to start this year?

MARCUS ERICSSON: Mental side. I felt like I lost confidence last year with everything going against me or just not performing at a high level. Getting some distance from the season, I could look back and watch back the



races and see I just didn't drive with confidence. I didn't drive like I know I should drive and can drive. So that's been a big thing for me, to build up my confidence.

I worked a lot on that over the winter, and you do that by also working hard on every aspect, working hard with the team. Tried different cars over the winter to challenge myself, but also worked really hard with the group around me in Andretti.

It's a lot of things. It's not one thing. The field these days in INDYCAR is so extremely competitive, so you need to have everything working, and you as a driver make a big difference, so you need to be confident and drive confident. I feel like I've done that this weekend. I'm really happy with that. It's a great start for our comeback year.

Q. You've mentioned multiple times how bad you thought last year was. Despite that, Dan has been very, very supportive of you. How much does that help you, to have the support from him?

MARCUS ERICSSON: It means a ton. Dan has been, I feel like, my biggest supporter since I've been at the team, and he's really been backing me. Last year things didn't go my way, and it looked really bad during the end. There was no doubt from him, speaking to me, he had full confidence in me, and he knows what I can do behind the wheel. I think performances like that show that.

So you just need to do it on a consistent basis, get the car in the window so I can do it on a consistent basis, and we're working hard to do that. I think we've made really great strides there. It means a lot to have that support.

Q. Marcus, were the conditions much different this afternoon with the truck race going on right beforehand, with the track conditions? Was it a little bit more slick?

MARCUS ERICSSON: So I was in group 1, so it was a little bit more slick there to start with, but I felt like pretty quickly already for Q2, there was a good level of grip, and I felt like that was sort of the limit. I think it was just really for group 1; there was just some rubber that needed to go off.

The good thing for me at least, it didn't really feel like it put the balance out. It was just a little bit less grip and then it gripped up. It wasn't a big thing for me.

Q. You talked about kind of getting that mental side right so you can have a bounce-back year this year. After today, how do you mentally prepare yourself for tomorrow, for this to transition into tomorrow?

MARCUS ERICSSON: You just do the homework, work hard overnight to prepare for tomorrow, and you just go out and deliver a good race. I've done it here before. Won here a couple years back. I know how to get it done.

Yeah, this was a great way to start that off and put ourselves in a good spot for tomorrow.

Q. Marcus, .14 seconds separating the top four drivers. What's it going to take for you to stay in that group and get to the front of it?

MARCUS ERICSSON: Yeah, I mean, you need to execute in these races. It's really a lot of things. With the start, tire management, pit stop, pit sequence, there's a lot of things that goes on. Obviously need to have a fast car, as well, but I think we've shown all weekend that we have that.

It's about executing tomorrow. We've put ourselves in a great spot. It's going to be tight. The field this year in INDYCAR is the toughest field, the most competitive field ever in my opinion. There's no bad drivers, no bad teams. You've got to go out and execute, and we did that today, but we need to do it tomorrow.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports