

NTT INDYCAR SERIES

News Conference

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Marcus Ericsson

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: Joined by Marcus Ericsson in the 28 Honda-powered machine for Andretti Global, with his first carrier NTT P1 award in his 117th start in the series, second front row start in the series in 2026 after he did the same thing in the streets of St. Pete. How does this feel?

MARCUS ERICSSON: It feels really good. It's been obviously, like you just mentioned, a lot of races in INDYCAR, but before that I did a lot of races in F1 and then GPT was my last pole position in 2013, so it's been like a lifetime since last pole position. It was really close to St. Pete already, obviously second there, just two hundredths of a second off pole. So it was frustrating that night. I was thinking about, I could have done this and this different to get that first pole. It got me really fired up, because I knew we were going to have a good shot here in Arlington. It just feels amazing. I think the team has done a really good job, and the 28 crew has been -- I think we've showed that already in St. Pete, obviously. Phoenix was a bit of a struggle. But really, really good to finish qualifying in P1 and then start from pole tomorrow.

Q. What took you so long?

MARCUS ERICSSON: Yeah, it's been one of those things. I think I've been second four or five times in qualifying in INDYCAR, and been in Fast Six a lot of times. But, yeah, it's just been not my time, I guess. Worked really hard this winter to be better. It's an important year for me. I know that. I felt like St. Pete was already a really good step and my best weekend as a whole as an Andretti driver, and then we've continued that here this weekend. Just building confidence. I've got to give a shout-out to the 28 crew with Ron Barhorst and the rest of the engineers and people on my timing stand. There's a lot of new people there and they've been doing a really good job at sort of getting the car in the window.

Even today we started off too loose in Q1 and I just scraped through there with a bit of a scare, because the car was just out of the window. But then we made some big changes in Q2 and some fine tuning for Fast Six and just made the car better. I think that was the key today to

get us to a position where we could put the pole lap.

Q. The last couple of years at Andretti Global haven't exactly been good for you. What has changed during the off-season, because you're off to a very good start?

MARCUS ERICSSON: Yeah, I think there's a few things. Like I said, I've put a ton of work in. I was very pissed off really after last year and the way I performed, especially the second half. I just felt like I didn't recognize myself as a driver. I wasn't aggressive, I lost confidence. I put a lot of work in in the off-season, tried to drive different things. I jumped in GT3 cars and all kinds of things to build up my confidence and sort of enjoyment of driving race cars again.

Again, like I said, the 28 crew I have this year as well has done a really good job, jumping at the challenge and worked hard to get the car more in the window where I can perform at my best level. I think all those combinations have made it a big step. Like I said, I think St. Pete was my best Andretti weekend and we are on our way to better that this weekend.

Q. Other drivers have said how much they like this track and it's been the first time. Is there one thing you can tell us that you like the most about it?

MARCUS ERICSSON: Yeah, no, I mean, I'm going to say I like it for sure after today. But I felt a lot of that yesterday. I think INDYCAR has done a tremendous job with just the whole organization of -- the build of the track. It looks spectacular. I think it looks really well made. It looks great on TV. I think it's a fantastic track to drive because it's very technical. It's very tricky. It's bumpy, but it's bumpy in that sort of characteristic way, which I think really is INDYCAR racing for me. It's supposed to be bumpy and different concrete, asphalt, different surfaces through the corner phases. There was bricks at some places where you lose grip. It was very difficult, and that for me is really in INDYCAR's DNA.

We need more tracks like this, I think. I think it really raises the standard of INDYCAR racing. I think the race



tomorrow is going to be fantastic. I really believe it's going to be a good show.

Yeah, everyone has done a really good job.

Q. How do you feel like being able to go first in this new qualifying format of that Fast Six really helped you?

MARCUS ERICSSON: Yeah, I mean, I didn't have much time to sit and think about it, right? It was just a quick debrief with the engineers and then off you go.

I don't know if it helped me or not, but it felt -- I was very focused on just doing my lap. It's a bit more pressure in a situation like this where you're sort of on your own and you get one shot at it. But I always liked that sort of pressure cooker. That's what I like with the 500 and qualifying there and racing at the 500. There's always, when the pressure is high, I feel like I really perform my best, and I think that helped me today.

Q. I think I asked you this after qualifying in St. Pete. How does the start you have been able to have this season kind of get that mental side off your back, based off what happened last year and now winning your first INDYCAR pole?

MARCUS ERICSSON: It means a ton. I didn't recognize myself in the last year. I didn't drive with confidence. I didn't drive aggressive. I was just not myself. I've worked really hard to be back at the level I know I can be at, and I think that's been showing these first few weekends. I'm very proud of that and need to keep pushing, of course. It's just the start of the season.

But yeah, hard work pays off, and I feel like I have put it in. But also the team has put it in. It's a team effort, at the end of the day.

Q. A little bit off of that and a little bit off of the question earlier, but is there anything you feel like you're proving to yourself that maybe you just didn't know existed the last couple of years?

MARCUS ERICSSON: That's a good question. Like I said, I really felt like the beauty in some ways with INDYCAR is you have a long off-season to analyze and think about things, and I really could take a lot of things that I could learn from last year. Been working on that and really the mindset of going racing, as well.

I've sort of tried to push myself to be in the right kind of state of mind when I go to the racetrack, and I feel like that's been paying off this year.

I don't know if there's like one specific thing, but it's just -- again, it comes down for me to hard work and preparation, and it gives confidence knowing that you have put in a ton of work in an off-season. If you've worked really hard on your physical side, mental side with the team, you've been out driving different things, you're really feeling yourself. Like, I put in the work, I'm going to be stronger, I'm going to be better, and I think that really helps too when you're out on track.

Q. Kind of curious about the tires, because Alex said it seems like it's a little bit different than what we saw in St. Pete with the alternates.

MARCUS ERICSSON: Yeah, I agree. I think the alternates seem to fall off a lot more compared to St. Pete. I think we're going to see more degradation because I think the track is still very slippery. Even after day two, today is still a very slippery surface. I think it eats tires a little bit more.

With that said, I thought in qualifying I was pretty strong. Obviously it was used tired for me in the Fast Six and had a lot of grip.

I think when the track grips up it's going to help the tire wear, so tomorrow it might be a little bit better again. But it's definitely going to be an interesting race to see how the red tires behave because that's going to be the key, I think.

Q. What was the communication like between you, Will and Kyle? Kyle obviously didn't make it to the Fast Six. I think a lot of people were surprised. Did you get to talk to Will before his run? What was that communication when you guys went out for that Fast Six between the three of you?

MARCUS ERICSSON: Yeah, I quickly said on the radio to the 26 crew that you need to hustle that out lap to sort of get the tires up to temp. Just small things like that. Apart from that, it's hard to say much more.

Yeah, you can give a bit of feedback so it was good there were two of us in the Fast Six, so hopefully that helped him a little bit.

Q. Over the last couple years, I'm assuming racing hasn't been necessarily fun with the results that you've had. Is racing now fun again with what's happened with St. Pete and now here?

MARCUS ERICSSON: Racing is always fun. I think I'm very -- I'm very lucky to have this as the job. I think we all are in INDYCAR.

But I think the thing is you always expect a lot from yourself, and that was the thing that was very frustrating for me last year where I just felt like, like I said, I wasn't driving to the level I should be driving, and then it gets very frustrating. So I think that was the biggest thing.

But I was still enjoying it. I still love what I do. But of course, going back to what you said, it's more fun to sit here and talk about a pole position than P22 or something like that. It definitely helps with success for sure.

Q. Tell us about Ron Barhorst, not a name most people know, but the two of you have made an instant connection as driver and race engineer.

MARCUS ERICSSON: Yeah, Ron has come in and done a really good job. I got the feeling straight away with Ron that he's got a bit of a chip on his shoulder. He's been in INDYCAR and then last year he was in INDY NXT and now he gets this opportunity to be back in INDYCAR, and he really has been putting a lot of work in.

We've hit it off really well. Testing went really well, and St. Pete we were really strong all weekend, and I think we should have been on the podium there.

I think today was a good showing on how good Ron has been. We started off qualifying, the car was really loose. I was struggling. I was just barely through to the Fast 12. Then Ron did quite a few changes, and from my feedback he did quite a few big changes that you normally don't do in a qualifying session, and it really put the car in the window for me. So I was a lot more happy in Fast 12.

Then we did a couple more tweaks for Fast Six and then off we went and put the pole.

Huge shout out to Ron and also the other people on the 28 stand, you know, with Zach and Dustin and everyone else that's on the 28 crew. They've done a really good job. And when we're walking about the crew, my pit crew is No. 1 so far after two weekends, so they've done a ton of work, as well, in the off-season. Again, that shows. It's a team effort. It's not one guy that goes out and puts a pole up. It's a team effort, and I think the 28 crew and everyone in it has done a really good job to start off the season.

Q. Share your mindset you'll go over with Ron, with your entire team for tomorrow, the balance between downforce, the big winds expected, the advanced tire deg with the alternates. Seems like you'd want to pile on every pound of downforce, but then you become sitting prey. Is there a balance you try to find? Do you go crazy and go light downforce?

MARCUS ERICSSON: Yeah, it's going to be tricky and it's all the unknowns going into a new race. It's going to be, I'm sure, different people trying different things in warmup, and I think that's going to be a big thing for us to try and figure out as a team. We have three good cars so I'm sure we're going to try some different things there to try and make a good decision for the race.

But it's going to be tricky. The wind is going to be quite high and that long straight you need the top speed. But then it's a long lap, so it's that balance.

I don't have a good answer for you yet. I think warmup is going to be an important session for all of us to try and figure that out. It's going to be a great race; I'm sure about that. There's going to be a lot of action.

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