

NTT INDY NXT SERIES

News Conference

Saturday, March 28, 2026

Nikita Johnson

Enzo Fittipaldi

Tymek Kucharczyk

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: Congratulations to Nikita Johnson. Second win this season, second podium as well.

Second, Enzo Fittipaldi. His second straight runner-up finish, second podium of the year.

Tymek Kucharczyk, three races here in 2026, three podiums.

Nikita, your thoughts on another win and what you maybe saw in front of you.

NIKITA JOHNSON: Yeah, it's great to win again. I can't thank the team enough for everything they've done. Practice was a little bit of a struggle. After that, had a few long hours, the team more than myself.

But yeah, I saw a few lapped cars up there. I already knew they were battling with each other pretty hard. Not actually battling (indiscernible). I could see that. I kind of just kept my distance.

When I saw those lapped cars, I knew something was going to happen, some type of chaos. Yeah, it happened. I was thankful to get through it because I was passing one of the lapped cars at the same time while they're both on either end of the track. I was happy to get through it, hold off Enzo on the restart.

THE MODERATOR: The restart, they had the advantage. Talk through the restart there.

NIKITA JOHNSON: Yes, I had a lot less push to pass. I was trying to stay with the two guys up front for most of the race. Then I kind of realized that they're just going all out kind of. I knew that Enzo and Tymek behind me were saving a lot. I don't even know if they used it the first 10 laps or something like that. I just knew they had a lot. I started conserving.

I just had enough at the end where I ran out going into turn seven, eight, nine on the final lap. If I would have used it more, it would have been a lot more difficult.

THE MODERATOR: Enzo, congratulations. Second straight runner-up finish. Your thoughts on another podium for you.

ENZO FITTIPALDI: Yeah, it was definitely an interesting race. I think we had a decent start. I was able to get ahead of Nikita. I just had a big moment on the exit of turn one. He was able to get past me again through turn two.

From then on, it was pretty single-file race. It was pretty hard to make any overtakes, especially when it was green flag running. Just a lot of aero wash in the high-speed corners, turn 12, 13, 14. It's really difficult to set up a move. But definitely it was possible in the restarts.

I think once I was able to get side by side with Nikita into turn two, yeah, no, turn five, almost was able to get past him there. He did a good job to defend.

The rest of the race was just trying to push as hard as you can. We were saving quite a bit of push to pass for the end. I felt like I would have an opportunity on Nikita. It just wasn't enough. He didn't really make any mistakes. So it was difficult to set up a move on him. Yeah, he did a good job.

I'm happy as well with the way the car was this race. I think we had a strong car. Looking forward to tomorrow.

THE MODERATOR: Tymek, for you, congratulations. I know it's not exactly what you're hoping for, another podium, but it is another podium. Talk us through your day.

TYMEK KUCHARCZYK: Another lucky podium this time (smiling). It's been quite a difficult race for me physically. First five laps I felt really strong, but then I realized there is still 30 laps to go. So that was quite tough.

I just tried to tie myself up in the seat and hold onto the



steering wheel. That's something I probably need to work on as well for tomorrow, get some good rest.

Other than that the race was pretty boring from my side, just driving around and waiting for someone else's mistakes. Lucky for us it happened. De Tullio and Tyler crashed. We managed to capitalize on that. We finished ahead of one of my championship rivals, which is a positive thing.

Yeah, fair play to Nikita and Enzo. They also done a strong race, no mistakes from both of them, even though I tried to pressure Enzo a little bit in the early phases of the race. Yeah, really, really hard to overtake around here.

THE MODERATOR: You move up to second in the championship. One-point advantage over Max Taylor.

We'll open it up for questions.

Q. Tymeck, obviously your third third-place finish. Do you feel you're kind of missing something to get a second or victory this year? Something you need to highlight?

TYMEK KUCHARCZYK: Probably a bit of luck, to be fair. I think this morning in quallie I felt really strong. I felt we had the pace to fight for the front row. Just got a bit unlucky with the traffic at the end.

Yeah, basically when everyone was improving for last three laps I couldn't because of the traffic, slowing down. It happens in racing. I think we have the pace, for sure.

I have to know, as well, that most of the circuits around here, like Barber, is my first time ever at this track. All of these guys have done post-season testing or it's their third year or fourth year driving INDY NXT. I came here. Yesterday was my first-ever outing. Only one practice session, then you're jumping into quallie. It's quite hard to expect for yourself to fight for the pole positions and podiums straightaway.

I just have really high belief in myself, high belief in my team. I know the car is strong. My teammates showed that the car is strong. We have good setups for this track.

It's just more about putting everything together. But if we're able to start so strongly with triple P3 finish, I think it just shows that we'll get there. We'll get the win or a higher places, pole positions.

Q. Nikita, you did three races last year. Started this year strongly. Do you feel those races had an impact on how you've gone into the year to be successful so

quickly?

NIKITA JOHNSON: Yes, a little bit. It was hard last year because the three races I did, I never did any testing. I came in the weekend, went to St. Pete last year, first time in the car. Second time in the car, Indianapolis.

It helped to a certain point. It's just really hard because I kind of didn't really know what I was doing too much because it was my first time in the INDY NXT car.

Of course, going doing the testing in the post-season, then the pre-season this year, really helped. We dialed the car down with Cape. I think we've done a few pretty good results.

I'm happy with what I learned from last year with the three races I did, then all the testing with Cape.

Q. You take the lead of the championship at this point. Young in the season. Do you look at the championship standings already, if not now when do you start thinking where you stand in the championship?

NIKITA JOHNSON: Yeah, I mean, I watch it. It's so early in the season that anything can happen. I just keep that in the back of my head. Keep finishing races, get good points.

It's such a long championship that I'm not really looking at the standings. I think if you're looking at the standings, it's not the smartest because you're going to be overthinking it. I like to just go out and drive and be relaxed.

I'm not really looking at it too much. I'm just finishing races and getting good points.

Q. Tymeck, can you talk us through why it was physically difficult for you in the car today. Did something specific happen?

TYMEK KUCHARCZYK: I think it's just because of the track. The track is very physically demanding. I ran the car for the first time on a proper circuit with high downforce setup with high-speed corners. We don't have power steering. We don't have any help or support. It's just physically demanding in terms of handling. The steering feels heavy.

If you have a lot of compressions, which you do around here, it's just basically like steering wheel trying to kick your hands off every time. It takes a bit of your confidence out if you can't hold the car, you're not basically risking enough, pushing enough. If you have a snap in moment, you might

not be able to catch it. That's why I found it a bit more tricky.

But that's something also that comes with experience in this car. The more laps I will do it, the easier it will be for the future.

Q. Nikita, starting third tomorrow behind the 28 and the 14 again. From staying behind them, something you learned to have a different plan of attack to stay with them? How are you going to go into tomorrow any differently?

NIKITA JOHNSON: I mean, we'll just have to see what happens tomorrow. The only reason today why I backed off was because I saw Enzo and Tymeck behind me were saving a lot of push to pass. I don't think they're really using it at all.

I was just being mindful of I'm going to get third here, I'm just going to get good points and get through this race, not go try to attack the leaders because they're doing their own race, burning through push to pass.

I was worried today about getting good points, finishing, just getting through the race.

We'll see what happens tomorrow. Yeah, if there's an opportunity, I'll go for it. The thing is at the end of the day if there's an opportunity for anyone, they're going to go for it. We're at this level now that if there's an opening, everybody's going to go for that opening. Just have to be mindful of what happens on the restarts and the starts tomorrow, go from there.

Q. After tomorrow's race, you have a month till you get back on track at Indy. How do you keep this momentum going?

NIKITA JOHNSON: Yeah, I mean, I we have oval testing and stuff. Other than that, driving the McLaren for Rahal Letterman Lanigan. That keeps me busy in the seat with all the development, test days we do for McLaren, a few of the IMSA races. For me, I'll be fine. I'll be in the race car. Yeah, get some dry run time and some seat time.

Q. Nikita, you have mentioned a lot about the aggression that Max Taylor and Alessandro were doing in front of you. Was it surprising to see both of them get involved into the incident?

NIKITA JOHNSON: Yes (smiling). It was a bit surprising. I knew they were pushing each other because they're just using more push to pass than myself.

But I've also raced against them for many years now. I know both of them. Really good drivers. They're going to go for it.

I'm not exactly sure how it happened or what happened. I know in seven, eight, nine, saw there was an opportunity. Max went for it. I think then de Tullio went for it right after in 12.

I know they race each other hard. They're hard racers, very fast. I don't know what happened with the contact between them. Yeah, I guess they're racing hard. It happens sometimes. Yeah, they're going for the win.

THE MODERATOR: Thanks for coming up. Congratulations.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports