

NTT INDY NXT SERIES

News Conference

Tuesday, April 28, 2026

Mick Schumacher

David Malukas

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: David Malukas joins us. He's got four top 10s here in 2026, coming off a sixth-place finish on the Streets of Long Beach. Currently third in the NTT INDYCAR SERIES points standings. P7 in that second session. I believe overall as well. 223 flat, maybe 223.8.

What did you think of the day?

DAVID MALUKAS: I thought it was great. There was some sitting around, trying to time when we can go out with other people and get some traffic running. But overall, I mean, it was awesome. Good first day back. It feels good to be back here at the Indianapolis Motor Speedway.

THE MODERATOR: Your first time in a Penske car at IMS. What are your thoughts?

DAVID MALUKAS: Oh, she's fast. She's good (smiling).

Yeah, I mean, I felt very comfortable first few laps. I mean, yeah, the race running at the end there, so much confidence. Let's just say I'm very excited for the 500 to come around.

THE MODERATOR: Open up for questions.

Q. I noticed you and Scott were working on a little bit of tandem running. Was that part of the plan to kind of get that chemistry on track with Josef and Scott?

DAVID MALUKAS: Yeah, we went out. All three of us, towards the afternoon, we all went a little bit different on three different programs. Me and Scott ended up back together with some race running at the end.

We wanted to do it between the three of us, but kick-start everyone else, who is willing to join us. Thankfully we ended up getting Pato in that group as well. I actually felt like I was with Pato a lot today. Even after lunch, we went back out, me and him were swapping positions back and forth. We got a lot of data between each other. For the

team it was good.

Q. After having driven for different teams in the past, how long did it actually take you to get comfortable behind the wheel of a Penske car here at the Speedway?

DAVID MALUKAS: I mean, almost instantly. I don't know. I felt so confident. It felt so good. For me it helps having an advantage having James on board. I worked with him last year at Foyt. We did an incredible 500 for us last season. We were able to work off of that previous setup, right?

Went out, felt very similar to last year. Now even after today we already made some changes, some progress forward where I'm even more comfortable.

I think that's the good thing coming into this season. We're not going off of this is a fresh start, let's see where we're going. We're going off of this is what we had last year, now we can start there, continue working, finding more potential, more progress. Makes me even that much more confident coming into this 500.

Q. Driving a Penske car here at the Speedway, were you worried about getting too hyped up for it or playing it cool?

DAVID MALUKAS: Actually, I was very chill, very calm. It's still so early on, we're just about scraping the month of May. It's just the open test. We took things very slow to begin with. Nothing going crazy.

If we feel one little thing that's out of the ordinary, let's pit, let's figure out what's going on, take our time. Today was a good day, but we took things very slow. No reason to rush. Very confident.

Q. A bit on the lighter side of things, did you know the month of May is National Bike Safety Awareness Month?

DAVID MALUKAS: I knew that (smiling).



Q. Do you have any content plans for awareness?

DAVID MALUKAS: I'm going to have to be joining all of that. I mean, I was wearing my safety gear. Make sure you double up on the safety gear and if it's a bike you don't know, make sure the front and back brake are not swapped.

No more bikes for me (smiling). That would be crazy, imagine that. Hey, captain, how are you (laughter)?

Q. Can you describe what it's like going from Foyt last year with the two cars to having three cars, two extra teammates? How beneficial is that coming into the month of May?

DAVID MALUKAS: It's massive. It's so much more helpful. Even if you think about today, all three of us were on three different programs. We can trust each other.

The good thing that we've learned so far in the beginning of this season is our setups are actually very similar to each other. We have full confidence in each other that if we try something different, we know whatever their setup is going to be, it's actually going to relate to us.

It's a very good trio for us. By far for me the best chemistry I've had with teammates in any team I've been with. Yeah, even today, three different programs, learned so much. I'm very excited to head back now and hear what every driver has to say.

Q. As someone who has changed teams a few times, had to get adjusted to the 500, does it help just a little bit that you guys had Phoenix?

DAVID MALUKAS: 100%, yeah. Any oval is going to be helpful to kick-start it for me, a new team. Of course, we saw the technical alliance, but there's many things that are new.

It feels very good. We had the Phoenix test and the race. For sure helped a lot with confidence going into today. I was able to go flat a lot quicker than any other time I've been here before, so...

Q. For today and obviously tomorrow's running, what do you want out of these two days in comparison to what you want the first couple of days for practice?

DAVID MALUKAS: More just getting comfortable, making sure everything with the car is up to par, that there's no issues. It's honestly a very chill two days, but we can get a lot of that early kind of baseline setup changes done.

It's just tough because right now the weather is not very correlated to how it's going to be come month of May. More the heavy setup changes, quallie, all that, we're going to save that for the month of May.

At least now we can run through the checklist, make sure everything is working as it should so when we come back we have full confidence to go straight into it.

Q. You've had quite a different experience at all your races here. Do you feel like you've had all the experiences to put you in a position to potentially win the race? Anything you still need to work on on an individual perspective?

DAVID MALUKAS: I think so. I'm still 24 and there's a lot to learn. I think from all the perspectives I've had of this race, I've learned a lot. Especially last year, last season, it played in my head for months and months. Many nights I couldn't sleep thinking back what I could have done differently.

Those last 30, 20 laps after that last pit stop, it's a completely different race, different ballgame. It's something I've learned so much from, studied very much. I'm going to take that knowledge into this season. Now I'm not going to be nearly as flustered come that time.

Q. (Question regarding Football Manager.)

DAVID MALUKAS: Still on the sidelines. Haven't been able to restart it. I actually have recently been getting into Victoria 3. That's my new itch right now.

Eventually I'll go back to Football Manager. I think what drew me out was the new FM 26 was not good, not up to par. Yeah, it drew me away. I'll come back soon.

Q. Looking at the things that happened during the open test and the variables and the weather, how easy is it to get yourself confused even before you get to the month of May, not necessarily Penske, but any team? You can go down the wrong path pretty quick, can't you?

DAVID MALUKAS: 100%. That's a good question.

Yeah, I mean, for sure, even today you start from the morning session, go to this afternoon, you can make some small little change and the car will feel completely different. In those moments, I think it depends on the team, but if you have good people around you, good engineers, it's definitely needed to stay calm and make sure that that change shouldn't have actually been that massive. It's probably not that big of a deal. I think it's probably a little

bit of track change, track progression with temperature. There's no need to panic.

Obviously for me, I feel like I'm surrounded by the best of the best when it comes to engineers and mechanics. They'll always make sure to remind me to stay calm.

Q. From a driver's point of view, you're at an empty track today. A month or so the place is going to be full. Visibility-wise, does that change what you're seeing in the car in terms of the crowd and everything else?

DAVID MALUKAS: Not really, no. The only time that you kind of feel a little bit is maybe race day just seeing the whole crowd. It definitely is a little bit of a different perspective.

No, I mean, I think you're just so focused on what's in front. Going 240, you're already getting tunnel vision. Yeah, you're so focused on what's in front. I think if you're going 230, 240, looking elsewhere, kudos to you. It's not me (smiling).

Q. We have the Grand Prix coming up. The bus is packed up and in the driver lots. Makes you start to feel you're at Indy for the next month, not traveling to various circuits, the mindset comes into play, you're living at the track?

DAVID MALUKAS: Oh, 100%, yeah. Definitely back at the track. I got my welcoming. I came back to Indy here around like 9, 9:30 p.m. I got to the bus. Hear the tornado sirens going off, maybe some hail. I was like, Oh, welcome back to Indy, welcome back to the Midwest. Already got my welcoming here. Feels like home.

THE MODERATOR: Thanks for coming up.

DAVID MALUKAS: Thank you.

THE MODERATOR: Mick Schumacher joins us. 220.7 his top speed today in that session.

Your initial thoughts about driving at the Indianapolis Motor Speedway on the oval?

MICK SCHUMACHER: Was interesting. Obviously going through our RP at the beginning, I think it was great just to get to know the track, get to know the feelings you have driving out there.

Overall just inching my way towards being flat, then trimming and trimming. Essentially then, yeah, we spend a lot of time in the box to try to run through some setup

differences that we wanted to do and change. So yeah, now we got a lot of ties for tomorrow.

THE MODERATOR: Questions.

Q. Talk about the rookie orientation process itself, how you felt about slowly building up that speed.

MICK SCHUMACHER: I think in this case personally I probably would have done it anyways, like slowly getting in and making my way to the speed. So I didn't really feel like I needed a specific target.

Actually when I went a bit quicker, people were a bit upset. Yeah, essentially I feel like this is not a totally new experience. I mean, we had Phoenix. I did the test in St. Louis. I feel like I had a good amount of knowledge of ovals. Obviously Homestead is the closest it comes to here in some ways.

I thought it was very straightforward, very nice for me to get going and get comfortable quickly.

Q. Compare it to Homestead. Was there any difference?

MICK SCHUMACHER: Obviously Homestead wasn't very much driven at all. The track was very green. Here obviously you can see, like, just over the day it was improving, feeling better and better. Like the banking is obviously a lot less out here than it is in Homestead or was in Homestead. On top of that we have the superspeedway wings out here. That's a new visual for me whenever I look into the rearview mirror.

Overall I thought it was a good comparison. Homestead now is also a couple months back. Yeah, no, it was a good first experience of the IMS.

Q. A lot of drivers talk about how the sim here for this track isn't very good. Did anything surprise you doing it in person?

MICK SCHUMACHER: I did half a day. I mean, I guess you can't really do much in a sim. The thing is on a racetrack you always need that respect factor, and you don't really have that in a sim. Essentially the sim was very easy to just drive and go out there.

Nonetheless, to go through procedures and stuff, the sim is very good just because you can run through the different tools that you have, feel the changes, maybe understand what they might do for you on a track.

As a driver, you always want to be on a real track and not



on a virtual side.

Q. During your second phase, you said you didn't feel right in turns three and four. What exactly happened?

MICK SCHUMACHER: I didn't know you could hear that (smiling).

Yeah, essentially I think one of those important key messages that I've been told since starting on an oval has always been whenever something doesn't feel right, come in and we'll fix it.

For me in that instant, it just didn't feel exactly the way it should have. It felt a little light on the rear specifically. Rightfully so we came in and saw that there was an issue on the car. We got that fixed and went out again.

Q. How important was it to have that happen now instead of having it happen later on?

MICK SCHUMACHER: Sorry, what do you mean by that?

Q. Every driver has that feeling, but some drivers have it much later learning it at the Indianapolis Motor Speedway. You had it early.

MICK SCHUMACHER: That there was an issue?

Q. Something didn't feel right.

MICK SCHUMACHER: I mean, like, I think personally I've always been somebody who is very easy to pick up on things in the car. I don't blindly just drive it. I actually try to listen to what the car's telling me and what I get. Basically trust my butt is what we say.

That's been the case in Homestead. That's been the case in Phoenix and also St. Louis. I think even more so important that we do it here because speeds are so much faster, so much greater.

Whether it was happening today, whether it's going to happen tomorrow or down the line this month or next month, it doesn't really change anything. It's always important to have these feelings and listen to them whenever they do end up coming towards you.

Q. How much fun was it out there today?

MICK SCHUMACHER: I thought, like, it was obviously interesting to drive, though I would say that a short oval personally was a lot more impressive just because in Phoenix when I drove and that new turn, turn three and four, for the first time it felt like I could nearly go a proper

hard entry. That was pretty impressive.

Here you're kind of driving in a way that you always just try and nurture it through the corner, be as clean as possible and stuff, but you never really feel like now I can go because everything is flat.

Now having said this, I don't know how it's going to be once we're trimming, once we've gone through quallie power. These things are still up for me to understand and learn and see and experience.

For now it's been very calm and very understanding. It's just building up, that knowledge, so that when we get to quallie day we're all settled and good to go.

Q. Graham Rahal used the term 'silky smooth' to describe the way you drive on ovals. Are you a little bit surprised that your oval performance so far has been this good? We all thought you'd be great on road courses and street courses. Looks like you've picked up oval racing quickly.

MICK SCHUMACHER: Is that saying I'm not great on road courses and street courses (smiling)?

Q. Just a great surprise on ovals.

MICK SCHUMACHER: Just teasing (smiling).

I think overall learning how to drive in Europe is a lot about how to drive a tire that will dissolve pretty much instantly if you try and move it.

It's obviously one of those things where if you drove a Pirelli rubber, you drive very smooth, you drive very much under the limit, if that makes sense. But to be able to always push it towards maximizing it, you obviously have to understand what does the car do, what does the tire do.

I just brought that over here, right? For street and road courses this car has to be driven very hard, rough, manually basically, because the tires can take it, whereas on an oval you don't really want that.

That's probably why ovals come easier towards me 'cause I'm not, like, the speed is not that much of a concern to me because I'm used to the speed from F1. It's about, like, being smooth and making sure that the rear never steps out.

Q. You've driven on the world's most iconic and awe-inspiring race venues. Now you're here at the Indianapolis Motor Speedway on the oval. Anything that struck you with awe running on the oval at high

speeds?

MICK SCHUMACHER: I mean, the track is very empty at the moment, so I'm sure it will look very different once the crowds are here.

Like, other than that, there's nothing really been where I was like this is very impressive or this is very different. It's just a very long track with four corners in it.

It's been very interesting to drive it. Very curious to see how it's going to be once we go to quallie power.

THE MODERATOR: Looks different when there's 300,000 people here, for sure.

Q. Was there anything today that surprised you, that someone told you it was going to be this way and it didn't turn out that way?

MICK SCHUMACHER: Not really, no. Like, everything was pretty much as I expected it would be. No, that means that we had a good preparation, so...

No, excited to go back and dig through the data and talk to Andy about what we need to do on our side to hopefully, yeah, make everything a bit easier for me and we can go even quicker.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you.

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