

NTT INDY NXT SERIES

News Conference

Thursday, May 7, 2026

Nikita Johnson

Max Taylor

Tymek Kucharczyk

Enzo Fittipaldi

Alessandro de Tullio

Press Conference



No. 21 Cape Motorsports Powered by ECR car. Nikita opened the season with a win at St. Pete and followed it up with a win at Race 1 at Barber.

Thanks for coming up. Big weekend ahead. Big month ahead. Nikita, let's start with you. How would you describe what's been a really, really solid start and exciting start to the season?

NIKITA JOHNSON: It's been a pretty good year so far, just the beginning. There's still a lot of races left on the calendar, lots of points on the table. We've just been doing our work with Cape boys and just trying to get the car to be the fastest it can be every weekend.

That's the plan for this weekend, just try to be at the top and stay there.

THE MODERATOR: I know you've had a lot of testing. It's going to be good to get back into race form.

NIKITA JOHNSON: Yeah, we've done a bit of testing. Pretty good at Ohio and in the ovals. Been in the GTD car. We've had a lot of track time. Don't have to shake off a lot of rust.

THE MODERATOR: Max, for you, clearly a strong start to the season as well. How much are you looking forward to a double header weekend, double points, and a lot of excitement for that?

MAX TAYLOR: I love coming here. I love racing here. It's such an iconic track. Like you said, double the races, double the points. A lot more time on track.

Really excited to get after it. Really excited for just getting on track tomorrow and getting back in the car on a race weekend. It's been a little bit. Like you said, we've had some testing, and those have gone really well.

Ready and excited to be back.

THE MODERATOR: Tymek, great to see you back as well racing in the United States for the first time. I'm sure you've heard a lot about the Indianapolis Motor Speedway

THE MODERATOR: We'll go ahead and get started. Good afternoon, everyone. Busy weekend and certainly a busy month ahead here at the world-famous Indianapolis Motor Speedway. It begins with INDY NXT by Firestone and the (indiscernible) Grand Prix races 1 and 2. It's a doubleheader weekend for the series. Race 1 comes up tomorrow afternoon at 4:00 Eastern on Fox Sports FS2, and Race 2 comes up Saturday at 2:30 p.m. Eastern live on FS1.

Joining us, to look ahead, the top five drivers in the INDY NXT by Firestone championship. Alessandro de Tullio is fifth in points. Drives the No. 14 AJ Foyt Racing car. First win at Barber Motorsports Park. Three consecutive pole points. 60 points out of the championship currently.

Enzo Fittipaldi is fourth in points. Enzo drives the No. 67 HMD Motorsports car. He's the grandson of the legendary Emerson Fittipaldi. Two podiums this year, and most recently a fourth place at Barber. 39 points out of the championship lead.

Tymek Kucharczyk is third in the championship. Native of Poland, drives No. 71 HMD Motorsports car, three podiums and four top 5s. He's 33 points out of the championship lead.

Max Taylor, second in points. The 18-year-old drives the No. 28 Susan G. Komen car for Andretti Global. Max has a win on the Streets of Arlington, two runner-up finishes at St. Pete and Barber, race No. 2, he's just 23 points out of the championship.

The points leader after 4 of the 17 rounds here in 2026, Nikita Johnson, the 17-year-old from St. Pete, drives the



over the years. Now you get a chance to race on it. How excited are you about that?

TYMEK KUCHARCZYK: Obviously very excited. I was lucky enough to test here for one day last year, the official test. It's pretty cool. It's kind of my home race because I just live a couple of miles from here.

It's pretty amazing. I think that the weekend itself is quite packed up, especially Friday will be really busy. So you just have to be on top of everything, and every mistake will be very costly. It will be exciting.

THE MODERATOR: Enzo, for you, obviously, a lot of family history here at the Indianapolis Motor Speedway. You've been really good this year, still chipping away at the first win. What are you looking forward to, and what do you have to do to get over that hump?

ENZO FITTIPALDI: I think it's been a good start to the season. We've had a very strong pace in all the races. I'm just super excited to be here at this very historic and legendary track. It's very special for me to be here. I think it's a track that my whole family has raced here in the past and did really well. For me to be here and being able to race here for the first time, I'm just super excited, and I can't wait to start the weekend tomorrow.

I saw that maybe there's some rain, so that's going to be quite fun. I'm excited for that.

THE MODERATOR: There might be a little rain. It tends to happen in Indianapolis in May. We'll see what happens tomorrow.

Alessandro, of course, coming off, he's the most recent race winner at Barber Motorsports Park. You gave AJ Foyt their first win of the series since 2003. How do you keep that momentum going now in a doubleheader weekend?

ALESSANDRO de TULLIO: The goal is to obviously keep that momentum going, keep pulling back on the points in the championship. That one win really brought us back into it, so that was helpful. To get that win off my back is really nice.

Now the goal is to keep executing, keep summing up points, and hopefully have a good weekend here for this doubleheader.

THE MODERATOR: Top 5 in championship points here available.

Q. Two questions. One for Tymeck and one for Alessandro. Tymeck, your home country Poland has

not so much history in motorsports. It all changed when Robert Kubica went into F1. Is there any kind of cooperation with Robert? Is there some help from him?

TYMEK KUCHARCZYK: I used to drive for Robert Kubica's team in karting. So I know him very, very well. We used to work together for a couple of years. Now obviously he has his own plans with World Endurance Championship racing. I moved to America. So that's very different.

From time to time, I know Robert -- well, I know Robert watches my races. I know that from many sources. Obviously he's been my mentor, my hero since a very young age.

It's a big part of my racing history, of my racing career, and I'm really glad that he was there to support me at some point.

Q. One question for you, Alessandro. If I was correctly informed, your background is Argentina?

ALESSANDRO de TULLIO: Yes.

Q. About 40, 50 years ago, with the help of Carlos Reutemann, a lot of talent search and help and cooperation from upcoming drivers. What's the situation on Argentina? Is it still going on? For example, in the '70s the gas company YPF helped young drivers move to England into open-wheel racing. Is that still going on?

ALESSANDRO de TULLIO: I know it's still going on in Argentina. They're supporting a lot of drivers, companies like this. That's obviously helped Argentine talent get to the top, whether it be Formula One, here at INDYCAR. Now they're supporting two drivers in Formula Four. They have Nico in Formula Two. Yeah, they're supporting a lot of Argentinean talent, which is nice to see, because in the end in this sport you need it to make it. You need not only talent, but also the backing and the funding.

Right now I'm not focused on that. I'm just representing Argentina because I want to. Yeah, that's just a plus.

Q. Enzo, low hanging fruit here, but talk about your first memories of this place and when you kind of realized as a young kid the magnitude of what your grandfather did here in winning in '89 and '93?

ENZO FITTIPALDI: It's always been a race that growing up we would always sit down as a family, and we would watch all together at home. Obviously I was born in 2001,



so I never got to actually see him race.

Yeah, I was here for the first time in 2021, when my brother had his -- when he raced here in the 500, and I think he got Rookie of the Race or something, and it was a very special moment to be here with all the family.

This track, it's just, honestly -- it's amazing. I think for me it's, in my opinion, the best race in the world, and I'm just super happy to be here. I'm going to have family here with me this weekend. Yeah, just looking forward to having a good weekend and hopefully one day be racing in the 500.

Q. Nikita, real quick for you, how do you balance a double-points weekend but also you want to win at the Indianapolis Motor Speedway, but you are leading in points? How do you balance you want to win races and the points take care of itself, but you're leading the championship and you want to win, how do you balance that risk-reward ratio?

NIKITA JOHNSON: Yeah, just have to be smart. So far I haven't had any major incidents this year, and I plan to keep it that way. I want to bring the car home in general because I don't want to give more work to my boys. It's a lot financially if you go crash every weekend.

Yeah, that's the goal to not do that, and then get good points. Also, you win championships by winning races but also scoring. So it's kind of just one of those things where, when you're out there, you have to do whatever's best in the moment. If that's going for the win, taking that high risk, then you go do that. It's kind of a complicated subject in a way.

Q. Max, you've had one bad race, and then outside of that you've been top two. How did you shake that off? Was it any concern, because it is a doubleheader, that it is a high-risk, high-reward weekend?

MAX TAYLOR: Yeah, like you said, we've been quick on all the races. One bad race put us back. Otherwise, we're top 2 in all of them and then one win. Like Nikita said as well, the name of the game is points and finishing races.

We know we're going to be fast. We know we're going to be competing for wins. It's all about making your move and knowing when to sort of send it and when to stay back and be patient. Yeah, name of the game is finishing and getting good points, and that's how you win the championship.

Q. For those of you that raced here before -- Max, is it just you?

MAX TAYLOR: No, Nikita, and Alessandro as well.

Q. Turn one is a very opportunistic place to make a pass, and now with the Push to Pass change that will be available even on restarts, what do you guys think is going to happen down there? Is that going to be a little more chaotic?

ALESSANDRO de TULLIO: I think we should do the oval for lap one. Then once we get single file, we go turn one normal. (Laughter).

THE MODERATOR: We'll see if we can workshop that. Nikita, you want to take a stab at that?

NIKITA JOHNSON: Most likely. Pretty much every year it's chaotic. Usually more in the junior levels it's more chaotic.

MAX TAYLOR: Me and Ale had a bit of a crash in turn one. I think that's an Indianapolis moment that everyone is talking about. It's very inviting to go three, four wide in there, and the corner really tightens up.

We'll have to see with the Push to Pass on the restarts. I think it will lead to more overtakes and more opportunities, but also most likely more crashes. So the name of the game is getting points, not crashing.

Q. TymeK, you haven't been here. Have you been watching film? Have you been studying how these restarts happen or these starts?

TYMEK KUCHARCZYK: Yes, I did. Luckily, I haven't seen both of them come together in T1. To be fair, it's kind of obvious that there will be some stuff happening. It's T1, everyone wants to fight the way to the front. We know how these races are going. Usually it's a single file until the end.

If there's opportunity, every driver will use it to make up some places, and T1 is obviously the best opportunity around this place, especially on lap 1. So let's see how things go. I think we're having an exciting weekend, two races. Hopefully after race 1 everything settles down, everyone knows their position. Yeah, let's see how it goes.

But we're here to race, to win races. Well, I don't expect anyone backing off.

Q. A couple for Enzo. You obviously come here with a lot of racing experience, but just talk a bit about what the adaptation process has been for you in INDY NXT, maybe what have some of the biggest challenges been and how you kind of have overcome them in these first

few rounds?

ENZO FITTIPALDI: I think the biggest challenge, I think, is coming from Europe to racing in the States is definitely the tires. I think the tires are just very different. In Europe basically on a race weekend, especially when I was racing Formula Two, it was all talking about how the prep of the tire is for qualifying. If you don't have the tire in that very small window when you're doing your warmup, you can't extract any lap time or you won't have grip.

Yeah, it was always talking about tire warmup more than driving honestly. It was a very different approach over in Europe, and you only had one lap to do a lap time. If you made a mistake, that was it. Then you just didn't have any more tires.

Then coming over here to INDY NXT, it's just the opposite. We barely talk about tire warmup or procedure. I think you just go out of the pits and push, and you focus a lot more on driving and fine tuning your driving style, technique.

Yeah, I really enjoy it. I think it's been very good. I think I've adapted well to the championship and to the tires here. I really enjoy the Firestone tires. Yeah, I think that's the biggest difference.

Q. Again for you, Enzo, how about the environment over here in the U.S.? I spoke to JM Correa recently, and he said it's a lot more fun than kind of what you experienced in F2. What has your impression been of the racing culture, the racing environment over here?

ENZO FITTIPALDI: I think it's definitely a bit more -- I wouldn't say relaxed, but I'd say it's more easy going than in Europe. I think Europe is a bit more tense in a race weekend, especially like when I had teammates in Formula Two and stuff, it was, I'd say, less friendly than it is here.

But at the same time, I really enjoy the atmosphere here, like I have great relationships with my teammates, but at the same time, I'm a very competitive person. When we get on track, there's no friends. It's the same thing on track. I think just off-track it's a little bit different, but I enjoy both worlds. I think it is definitely more fun here.

Q. Alessandro, you were out in Miami for the F1. I saw you sharing a car with Yuki Tsunoda. Just talk about that experience, what you got up to in Miami and just how that was.

ALESSANDRO de TULLIO: Yeah, it was fun. I was riding with Yuki around Homestead in the Mustang. It was fun. I was scared for my life. Yeah, he's good. I was in safe hands with him.

That was fun. I did some stuff with Red Bull there, which was quite enjoyable. I had the time since I was doing nothing that weekend. Then I met Fernando Alonso one of the nights, and that was also very nice.

Q. First I have a question for Enzo. You're having a great start, obviously scoring a couple podiums. Now in the States, I've seen that a presenter from Brazil which commentates the INDYCAR races, he suggested you're on the radar for Arrow McLaren for next season. What do you think of this? I know this is your rookie season, but are you expecting -- obviously the season is long here, but are you expecting the chance to try to fight for an INDYCAR seat for next season?

ENZO FITTIPALDI: Honestly, right now, I'm just fully focused on the championship I have at hand right now and focusing on doing my best possible.

Obviously it was amazing the testing I did with McLaren at the end of last year and at the end of '24. It was obviously an amazing experience, and it would honestly be a dream to be able to race for a team like that. But I think it's still very early on in the year. I just have to focus on what -- and what that is is to perform on track.

That's my full focus at the moment. So no news at the moment. I actually didn't even see that news. That's pretty cool, but I guess I have to keep doing my best and try and go out there and win as many races as possible.

Q. Now I'm going to go to Alessandro. Alessandro, obviously you had that win in Barber one month ago. Obviously you're Argentinean. I'm Argentinean too. If you have some repercussion from Argentina, I saw you on ESPN giving an interview, and I was going to ask you if you got any feedback from Argentina after that spectacular win in Barber?

ALESSANDRO de TULLIO: Nice to see there's an Argentinean here. From that side, I received a lot of support, a lot of nice messages. That was very nice to see. I had already that trip planned to Argentina before the win even, and it was nice to go there and see all the Argentineans and all the news articles about me. I got to visit a lot of, like you said, ESPN and a bunch of others while I was spending time over there.

That was very nice, and they received me super well. They support me a lot. Yeah, it's something very nice to see. I appreciate the support from all of Argentina.

Q. Question for Enzo. You just mentioned Formula Two. How much different is the INDY NXT compared to



the F2 car? Are there some similarities or totally new car?

ENZO FITTIPALDI: I think it's very, very different. Like the Formula Two, it's a lot like focusing on maximizing straight-line braking, and you really can't carry so much speed, and the slow speed corners, like lateral speed, it's quite low compared to the INDY NXT.

I just feel like, honestly, the biggest difference are the brakes. In Formula Two you have carbon brakes, and in INDY NXT, we run with the steel brakes. That is a huge difference.

Honestly for me, coming from F2 going to INDY NXT, it actually took me a while to get used to steel brakes again because in Formula Two, when you have the carbon brakes, you want to brake as late as you can and brake as hard as you can. The car stops. You don't have much issues with locking. Then it's kind of like taking a step back with the INDY NXT with the steel brakes. You can't really hit the brakes as hard as you would like or as late as you would like.

So I think it is really the braking side in INDY NXT is more technical, but the F2 car has definitely a good bit more power than the INDY NXT. But I also feel like the INDY NXT in high-speed corners is very fast, probably honestly similar to the F2 car. I think the F2 is just much quicker on the straights and in braking.

THE MODERATOR: We'll go ahead and leave it there for now. Nikita, Max, Tymek, Enzo, Ale, have a great weekend.

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