

NTT INDY NXT SERIES

News Conference

Friday, May 8, 2026

Enzo Fittipaldi

Lochie Hughes

Nikita Johnson

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: Once again, good afternoon. Wrapping up today's INDY NXT by Firestone, race number one this weekend for INDY NXT by Firestone. Enzo Fittipaldi, today's champion, will join us here momentarily. Currently joined by Lochie Hughes, who led 25 laps in that race, driver of the No. 26 Andretti Global car. He started third in today's race. It's the first podium of 2026. Ninth career podium for Lochie.

Nikita Johnson to the left, driver of the No. 21 Cape Motorsports powered by ECR car. He started fifth. Again, comes home third. Was tenth on the restart, so made up seven spots from the restart to the checkered flag. Fourth podium of the season and back at it tomorrow. He starts fourth in tomorrow's race number two.

Lochie, we'll start with you. I know you've been chipping away trying to get a good finish here. Disappointed probably with the second, if you will. Just your thoughts on a good points day and maybe a good start to the weekend for you.

LOCHIE HUGHES: Yeah, I guess very disappointed with the second place, which is nice for a change, considering how we've been performing recently. Yeah, it's nice to just get some momentum going, because I just feel like the last few rounds it's just been, like, you know, getting kicked in the head repeatedly.

Now it's nice to just, yeah, hopefully to start building some momentum. Yeah, can't help but be disappointed after, you know, I felt like leading the whole race and then just accidentally, you know, short-shifted through the -- through five, six there with a bit of oversteer in the wet. Yeah, just killed the speed and allowed Enzo to get alongside me, but, yeah, that's racing.

THE MODERATOR: What did you make of driving in the wet first time this year for you guys?

LOCHIE HUGHES: Yeah, it's the first time I think I've driven the INDY NXT car in the wet. We raced it in the wet at least. Maybe we had, like, one session in the wet, I don't know, somewhat a year ago or something.

THE MODERATOR: I would to say Barber maybe, but I could be wrong on that.

LOCHIE HUGHES: Yeah, Barber. So, yeah, it's different. Growing up in Australia, I don't go on the wet very often, so it's different conditions. Obviously leading is difficult as well, because you are kind of like the guinea pig. It was difficult when it started raining, like, in the dry and it started raining. Not wanting to throw it away, but still wanting to push. It's kind of challenging.

But, yeah, I kind of feel like we just burnt the wets off when the track was dryer. I feel like we were kind of pulling away from everyone, and then as soon as it started really raining, then just didn't quite have the tire underneath me anymore.

THE MODERATOR: Well, congratulations on the second regardless. Nikita, for you a third place finish here. Made up, as mentioned, what, seven spots after the restart. What was the difference for you?

NIKITA JOHNSON: Yeah, I mean, it was pretty difficult. It was my first time in the wet in the INDY NXT car. Yeah, just used what I've learned through the years of the junior categories of how to race in a wet race or wet track, but yeah, it was pretty good.

Everybody was just sticking to one line, and I was pretty surprised that nobody was trying different lines, and I was one of the only ones, at least in the pack I was at, trying different lines. Some of them just worked. Just had enough speed to get around people.

THE MODERATOR: You maintain the points lead. You're now up 23 on Enzo, who, again, will join us here once things wrap up at victory podium. We'll take questions.

Q. Obviously in the NXT Series you do these

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double-headers all the time. What are you able to take when you do these from the first race into the next day, or is it something where today the conditions are going to be a lot different tomorrow, you can't really take anything away from it going into tomorrow? For either of you.

LOCHIE HUGHES: I think there's always something you can learn from it. We at least had the first, I don't know, ten laps in the dry or something like that. So, you know, it's something to look at.

But, yeah, obviously tomorrow is going to be, you know, completely different conditions. I know a lot of people are starting in different spots. So, yeah, take what you can from it, but yeah, it's going to be very different.

Q. Nikita, with you being so young, another strong finish here, holding onto the points lead, as Dave mentioned. Is there maybe less pressure on you in the fact that you may be ahead of schedule as far as how well you've performed so far this year?

NIKITA JOHNSON: Yeah, I mean, in a sense. I've always been the youngest in almost every category, so I'm kind of used to being, I guess you could say, the underdog or just I guess the driver with you could say less experience.

I'm happy to show that we make up for it with good speed and stuff. It's a little bit less pressure knowing that I've got a few years on my hand. Obviously I don't want to stay here for a few years. I want to be in and out, but it's a great championship. Hopefully just one year and out.

Q. Lochie, you were on the radio after the pass by Enzo. Did you think that was a fair move in the rain given the circumstances and the conditions?

LOCHIE HUGHES: I think the pass of fair, yeah. I feel like we were racing for, like, two laps wheel-to-wheel after that. I don't know how many laps it was.

But, yeah, it was pretty close and tight. Obviously until I look at it not in the car and just watch the onboard, I'll get a better perspective, but yeah, there was a couple of instances where, yeah, it felt, yeah, just I wasn't left any room, but when you're in the cockpit, it's very different to when you go and watch the onboard afterwards. That's also, you know, it's racing, yeah.

Q. Johnson, as soon as the rain started to fall and then your condition with the car, how did it unlock that speed for you? How did it feel comparatively?

NIKITA JOHNSON: Yeah, I mean, I was really happy

when it started raining. We didn't have a good opening lap in lap one, so we went back to 11th or 12th.

Yeah, I was really happy when the rain came down. I knew that a lot of people were going to play it safe. Like I said, they weren't really trying new lines. I kind of just went for it. The opening few laps I pushed as hard as I could. I was just going around people.

Yeah, I think just, you know, nobody else was really pushing, and they were kind of taking it slow, and I just went for it early on.

THE MODERATOR: Nikita, Lochie, thanks for coming up. Lochie starts sixth in tomorrow's race two. Nikita will start fourth.

Meanwhile, congratulations to Enzo Fittipaldi. It was in the 67 HMD Motorsports car who led the last four laps of that race today. Started tenth. His first career INDY NXT by Firestone win. Third podium of the season. Moves up to second now in the championship. Enzo is the third member of the Fittipaldi family to win here at Indianapolis Motor Speedway. Of course, Emerson Fittipaldi, two-time Indy 500 champion, and Christian won a sports car race back in 2014.

Congratulations, Enzo. Win No. 1. That was pretty exciting in the wet. I think I heard you on the radio say, I love driving in the rain.

ENZO FITTIPALDI: Yeah, I knew we had a chance of rain, and I know I'm super strong in the rain. Always have been really strong in the rain through my junior career. I knew that if there was a chance of wet, I could have a good opportunity because I was starting 10th, so it was a bit far.

Was definitely not thinking that we were going to be fighting for the win, but even in the dry, I knew I had very strong pace. We started tenth, and then after lap one, I was already in fourth. I did most of my overtakes around the outside on lap one, which I felt, you know, pretty happy about.

Then when it started raining I said, well, that's even better, I think now I really have a shot for the win. Yeah, the pace was really strong, and I think the team and I, we executed it very well in the last ten laps of the race.

We had really strong pace. I was studying Lochie in front of me, where his weak points were, and I knew that he wasn't very strong through five and six, so I knew I had to make a move around turn seven.

Yeah, it took a few laps to prepare for the move, but I think



I executed it well. I just saw that he made a slight mistake out of six, and I had a big run on him and was able to overtake him around the outside of seven and, yeah, then we got the win. So it was, yeah, a super nice race.

THE MODERATOR: With the rain there was a ton of action throughout the field. There were 284 on-track passes in that race, which is a record here for INDY NXT on the Indianapolis Motor Speedway road course. 253 were for position. 128 were in the top 10. 64 were in the top 5. Again, all those are series highs for the track. What is it about rain that kind of changes things up a little bit?

ENZO FITTIPALDI: I think the rain is just -- it's back to more, like, raw racing. I think there's a lot more the driver can do in those conditions with the lines and easier from drivers to make mistakes as well. So the opportunity window to, you know, move forward is definitely higher in the rain.

So, yeah, I really enjoyed that race. I think these cars to drive in the rain is very nice. Yeah, I hope it rains some more this year.

THE MODERATOR: It was fun to watch for sure. Congratulations. Questions for Enzo?

Q. Obviously when you come here, the fans and the people like us are going to bring up the family aspect of it. Is that something you kind of come into here thinking about and embracing a lot, or do you try to separate it and not necessarily attach that, your history and your family to it as you're out there racing?

ENZO FITTIPALDI: I know for me it's very special coming here, because obviously when growing up all my family would talk about was the 500, so we'd always watch the 500 growing up. I was living in the U.S., and we would always watch this race.

So when I got my first opportunity to test here back in October, that was very special, with the series test there and then the race here was -- getting to race here for the first time was very special for my whole family.

My dad is here. My brother is here. Some other family members as well. Then first time here and get a win on the first race ever here at Indy is honestly super special.

Yeah, I mean, pressure in terms of, like, having the name and coming to race at the 500, which my family has a very good, very successful history here at this track. There's no pressure at all. If not, it's good pressure, you know, I think.

The fans are always, you know, cheering me on here. The

support was very nice there after the win. I also saw some Brazilian fans there. Yeah, I'm just happy to be here.

Q. Then you look at how this INDY NXT season has started. Stadium kind of look different than a lot of people maybe expected coming into the year. What do you think that says about maybe the depth of the INDY NXT field as the grid continues to expand as far as the amount of drivers in it?

ENZO FITTIPALDI: It's great. I think it shows that INDYCAR and the junior series, the junior ladder to INDYCAR, is growing a lot. A lot of fans are following all the races. My friends back in North Carolina are also starting to follow the races, which before they would only really -- were watching NASCAR and other more Xfinity car. So it's quite cool to know that.

My friends also supporting me from home, and I think it's just great for the series. I think the series deserves to have a strong junior ladder that I think these are, you know, the best drivers in the world. I mean, you need to be also really good on road courses, but then oval racing. That's a whole other world. That takes a lot of bravery from every driver.

Yeah, INDYCAR deserves, you know, all this that's happening.

Q. Enzo, congratulations. Two questions for you. Number one, you said it was very surprising the car was super nice driving in the rain. What do you think is the reason? Maybe the harmony between the rain tires and the tarmacs, the asphalt? I had seen, maybe I'm wrong, it's very slippery.

ENZO FITTIPALDI: Yeah, I think as a driver, let's say if I had a not so great race, I think I would have said the car is just not nice to drive. I think every driver is like that. You know, if you have a really good race, and honestly my car was really good in the rain, and we were fast. I'm sure if you ask some other drivers that didn't have as good of a race or their car wasn't as strong, I think they're probably going to say that it wasn't as fun as -- as much fun as I had.

Yeah, I think it depends driver to driver, but this car is definitely a fun car to drive in the rain. It's quite loose, so you can really push the limit. I enjoy a car that's loose, and I think it just fits my driving style. So, yeah, I really enjoyed it.

Q. Enzo, I have a family question. There's another Fittipaldi driving in FIA Formula 2. How are you related family-wise?

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ENZO FITTIPALDI: He's my uncle.

Q. Uncle?

ENZO FITTIPALDI: Yes (laughing).

Q. He's much older?

ENZO FITTIPALDI: No, he's younger, yeah.

Q. He's your uncle and he's younger?

ENZO FITTIPALDI: He correct. He's six years younger, yes. Yeah. My grandfather is still, you know -- (laughing).

Q. Did you wake up today thinking that you had the best shot to win at Indy, and just looking at it now, how much does it mean to you to win at this track, albeit the road course, as much as, of course, Emerson has won here, for sure?

ENZO FITTIPALDI: Like I said, honestly I can't believe it. It's so special. I mean, yeah, I knew I had very strong pace. Like practice, we were up there most of the time.

We just didn't have the car in the window in qualifying, which was a bummer, but I knew that I could move forward in the race. I knew I had the pace. I had the confidence in the team, and I'm happy we were able to show it today in the race.

So, yeah, I'm just are super happy to be here. It's an amazing track, and hopefully one day to be racing the 500.

Q. You mentioned the oval program. How confident are you going into when we eventually get to an oval, like St. Louis and Gateway, your skills going into those races?

ENZO FITTIPALDI: I love oval racing. I think it's amazing. I actually did some oval racing when I was from, like, 11 to 12 years old. I did some Legend Car racing and some Bandoleros on short ovals.

So I've always loved the oval racing, because, you know, my family, we were living in North Carolina, and we would go to the Charlotte Motor Speedway, and they had that summer shoot-out. I did some ovals already, but obviously it's very different.

Short oval is very different cars, and then when I got my first opportunity to run in open-wheel at Nashville on the superspeedway, it's, like, man, this is insane. It's hard to explain it. It's very fast.

You can only really experience it if you drive it. Yeah, I think the ovals is very nice to drive, and I can't wait for the first race in ovals this year, which will be at Gateway.

Q. Tell me about the conversation when your with brother, Pietro, got to you? What did he say? I'm sure that was a lot of fun.

ENZO FITTIPALDI: He just said, Man, you were bad ass out there. He said I was a lot of fun to watch, and I'm just so happy to see my family happy.

You know, they came here to support me and be here this weekend. I'm just very grateful to have my family here and have these moments together. Just my mom and my sister that are back at home right now. I'll be seeing them soon, but I know that they were definitely watching and supporting as well.

Q. With another race tomorrow, how long are you going to allow yourself to celebrate this before you turn your attention to tomorrow's race?

ENZO FITTIPALDI: We're going to definitely go for dinner tonight. I would love to go for dinner with all my family and my team, but obviously the team has to prepare for tomorrow. We still got a race to focus on tomorrow.

Yeah, for sure, we had a great moment. Definitely have a nice dinner tonight, but, you know, get good rest because tomorrow we're back at it for the next race. Full focus for tomorrow.

We're going to be starting P7, so further up. I'm confident that, you know, I'll be able to hopefully move forward tomorrow as well, which it will be dry conditions, so it will be definitely more difficult, but the goal will be top 5.

THE MODERATOR: Congratulations, Enzo.

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