

# NTT INDYCAR SERIES

## News Conference

Saturday, May 9, 2026

### Christian Lundgaard

### Tony Kanaan

#### Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: Wrapping up today's Sonsio Grand Prix with the champion driver and team principal from Arrow McLaren. Christian Lundgaard led 20 of the 85 laps today in the 7 Arrow McLaren Chevrolet. First win of the season, second career win, matching what he did on the Streets of Toronto back in 2023. Third podium of the season. With the win Christian jumps up to fourth in points.

Also joining us, Tony Kanaan, as mentioned team principal for Arrow McLaren, as McLaren celebrates a 28th win, INDYCAR SERIES win, matching what Pato did and of course the great Johnny Rutherford.

Christian, congratulations. Your thoughts on a win and a track you really enjoy competing at?

CHRISTIAN LUNDGAARD: Yeah, I think, first of all, it's a lot of unfinished business for me around here. Obviously being competitive here pretty much every year except last year, and I really wanted to get some redemption for that. We worked hard to try to figure out where we really went wrong last year.

I think we obviously did, but I mean, it just feels awesome. I hope that it doesn't take another three years for another one, right?

TONY KANAAN: It won't.

CHRISTIAN LUNDGAARD: Thanks. It feels awesome right now, and I'm sure I will probably realize tomorrow what really happened today. It really wasn't what I expected waking up this morning. Obviously with qualifying getting pushed to this morning and racing the same day, it's not really a traditional INDYCAR weekend.

Obviously this is a two-day weekend already, and everything just kind of felt very fast. We made a lot of good progress from P1 to P2. I thought we were going to be a little better in qualifying than we were. So keeping my

head cool after obviously the lap 1 incidents with everything that happened there. Obviously you go into turn 1 wanting to make position, not lose positions.

I felt so bad for Pato, because we had such a good plan planned for how we were going to attack the race between the two of us. We had two cars in the front, and we knew the 10 car was going to be strong. Obviously having one car left up there, but also losing positions kind of hurt a little bit. For me it was just take my race as it was from there. Then the strategy didn't work out for them.

TONY KANAAN: Finally.

THE MODERATOR: The pass in turn 4 is going to be replayed for a while probably. That was a heck of a pass. Just talk through that a little bit.

CHRISTIAN LUNDGAARD: It probably looks more spectacular from the outside than it really did inside the helmet. You know, at the end of the day, I've been now watching it on the TV screen probably 50 times, but it doesn't look the same way as what it felt.

No, I knew I had one chance, maybe two on David at that time. He seemed to be pretty strong in 14, and we weren't. His braking performance was also a little stronger than I thought ours were. I knew I could do it around that pit sequence. Obviously we tried to undercut him. I struggled a lot on out laps. He seemed to be a little better than I was.

I think it was Grosjean that was ahead. There was another car in play at the time that slowed him down. I tried to set him up for 2 and actually make the slingshot to be on the inside for turn 4, but he was pretty slow kind of through the kink of 3.

I thought, okay, F it, I'm going to stay on the outside and see how it goes.

THE MODERATOR: Big win for the team, Tony. Talk about getting one like this heading into the oval portion here at Indianapolis?



TONY KANAAN: A win is always a win. Obviously a great feeling. We've been a lot of ups and downs on the team this year, and obviously for me personally a tough week with the news of Zanardi. For sure wherever he is, he is happy for us. Dedicate that for him.

Obviously been working with Christian quite a bit, and we've started this tradition, you know, giving him a kiss on the cheek, a Brazilian kiss on his cheek every time he gets in the car before the race. I was trying to understand if I should keep doing that, if it was working or not. I guess --

CHRISTIAN LUNDGAARD: It worked.

TONY KANAAN: It worked. It feels good. It feels good for the team. It feels good for Chris, his engineer. It's his first win as an engineer. Moyer, I don't need to say anything else about Kyle Moyer. Really happy for the team. Shame on Pato. He was pretty disappointed. He had no control on that. Good day for the team.

THE MODERATOR: We'll take questions.

**Q. Christian, you mentioned the plan between you and Pato at the start. Now all of a sudden you're the lone ranger when he gets hit. Was that a plan B for you? Did you ever think, oh, if something happens, we're going to do this, or was it just we're just going to do it anyway, it doesn't matter if he is there or not?**

CHRISTIAN LUNDGAARD: Obviously it kind of sounds very spectacular when I say a plan, right? Obviously we kind of had an idea of how we wanted to attack the race. We were on two different strategies, different start tires. Obviously Alex started on the primes.

It was really just how we were going to attack around the first pit sequence really, and at the end of the day, I lost positions, so for me it kind of just turned out to be, okay, keep your head cool and let's see what we can do from here. What can we salvage really?

At that point I certainly did not expect to win the race. Not necessarily just from where I was on track, but also just the pace we had at the time.

The car kind of seemed to come alive a lot more on the new alts at the end of the race on the last stint, obviously once I got past David. I think a lot of it just had to do with clean air. Turn 14 today was pretty tough for me, and it was just a lot of tire deg from that. Obviously I got some good information from Pato starting on the alts and how their tires degged.

**Q. When you made the pass on David, how important**

**is it to have that trust that he's not going to go further to the left and now you have two more wheels on the curb on the grass there completing the move?**

CHRISTIAN LUNDGAARD: Yeah, I mean, David has always been very respectful to race against. I mean, I've been teammates with him in go-karts many, many years ago now, but again, I mean, there's certainly drivers that you trust less. There's drivers you trust more. That's just how it goes.

At the end of the day, I had, again, nothing to lose. I finished second. Okay, that's fine, but I have so much unfinished business here. For me, I wanted to win. I have enough second places in the past year and a half. I wanted a win. I was kind of willing to do what it took. I also knew that it was going to be respectful. Again, I wouldn't have done that if it was someone else.

**Q. Your career got started here in 2021, and you had a great qualifying effort and a decent first-time race. You've had some good finishes here and now a win here. What is it about this racecourse that's just suited your style so well?**

CHRISTIAN LUNDGAARD: Well, considering it took me nine times to win it, I would say I've been better on qualifying there than I have on race day. I think that's really what feels good right now is just knowing that I finally got that done.

I think that was my big mistake last year was I came in with too much expectation of, okay, I'm in a car that has been so good all year round up until that point. My only reference around this track was in a car that qualified in the Fast Six every single time, if not just on the front row, on pole or second.

I think this year I came in just wanting to manage expectations and continue working on the package that we have. We know that we're very good on road courses. Last year it was the 10 and the 7 car on road courses. We've now done two, and it's pretty much been the same thing.

**Q. You spent so much time in your career with Rahal Letterman Lanigan Racing with Graham Rahal, and to be able to celebrate your victory with him on the podium, how special was that?**

CHRISTIAN LUNDGAARD: Yeah, I mean, we've been on the podium twice this year together now, obviously Barber and here. It feels nice. We actually were going to play golf tomorrow morning at 7:00 a.m. I don't think we're doing that now, but no, it feels good.

I have a lot of respect for Graham. He's a good friend of mine, obviously. I learned so much from Graham. You know, on race craft, racing for Rahal at the time obviously. Just that experience that he had in INDYCAR and just understanding how the races really worked out wasn't really an understanding that I had coming to INDYCAR in the first place.

I think he helped me a lot in the first year. You know, it was very nice, and just kind of satisfying the time when you start beating that guy already in the same car, but I think I have a lot of respect for him. I know what he's capable of, and I think he's showing it right now.

**Q. Christian, it feels like every weekend until now you've ended up saying you just need to qualify better to kind of break through that barrier and get the win. How rewarding was it for you to start on the second row and then follow through on that?**

CHRISTIAN LUNDGAARD: Yeah, I mean, I had a lot of worries, because you know, I qualified further up, first on Fast Six of the year. I was kind of thinking, okay, is this the time where turns to go the wrong way?

It feels nice, and I think we proved the point to ourselves. We need to qualify better, and the results will come.

**Q. To follow up on that, what is your mindset there in that cockpit when you see the big pile-up and everything that happened right away in turn 1 with Felix just locking up and causing a few cars to go off track?**

CHRISTIAN LUNDGAARD: My first impression and thought was I feel very bad for Felix, because I know both Felix and Pato are very good friends. Obviously I felt worse for Pato for obvious reasons, but I also know Felix is not that kind of guy, right?

Just seeing how it all unfolded and all the other cars that were involved, I think the most satisfying thing from today and how the race worked out was seeing the 10 car getting called out on the strategy. They've always been on the right side of it. Not going to say lucky, but they've always been on the right side of it, and I think it was very nice to see them in many ways get hurt from that today from a points perspective, but I still think it's impressive to see them drive as far up as they did after that.

**Q. Tony, you've been adamant that when it comes to Christian and Nolan, you just want to see the performance speak for itself. What does his performance today show to you?**

TONY KANAAN: I wouldn't put it --

CHRISTIAN LUNDGAARD: This is why I got hired in the first place.

TONY KANAAN: Exactly, I hired you to win races. I don't think I put him to the judgment. They know my expectations, but I think we're level up at the same -- we have the same expectations.

He drove a brilliant race. I think, you know, it didn't come easy. We qualified really well. In the first lap Felix did us a favor and put us exactly where we didn't want to be. I mean, I think he's been driving extremely well. It was just like when are we going to get a break? He kept asking himself that.

Not a single day that I don't believe in him or Nolan. I'm still doing everything we can to give them and Pato the best equipment and the best support.

Pressure a little bit. A little bit of pressure sometimes is good, and Christian, doesn't phase him --

CHRISTIAN LUNDGAARD: I like pressure, clearly.

**Q. Christian, you're the third driver to win for McLaren at INDYCAR joining Johnny Rutherford and Pato O'Ward. What does that mean to reward this team that has put so much faith in you?**

CHRISTIAN LUNDGAARD: A lot, obviously. This guy that sat next to me, Tony, is a big reason of why I joined the team in the first place. You know, when he approached me, it was, hmm, okay, that sounds like a good idea. Let's see how this is going to work out.

I mean, Tony mentioned it already. It feels better knowing that it's the first win for the 7 car, because I know the drivers that have been through that car. They're not bad drivers. And to get that win for Chris, my race engineer, Chris Lawrence, and the whole crew in general, honestly feels better in many ways, because I've always known what I'm capable of. Again, I don't want to sound too optimistic or cocky in that way, but on a good day, I know I can beat anyone.

I'm sure 95% of the field will say the same thing, but I know the task that I was hired to do, and that's to win races. To finally get it, obviously it took a year and a half. I think we've come close many, many times. I think we've unlocked the door now. I'm pretty confident many more will come.

**Q. Tony, Christian mentioned the concept of the door unlocking. You've been in this position before. Kind of talk about the next few days for Christian Lundgaard and how soon he may get back to victory lane?**

TONY KANAAN: I mean, hopefully in a couple of weeks. It will look pretty good to be back there again.

I mean, it's one of those things how many times I've seen it. It happened to me, and you see a couple of other drivers. They fight. They fight. They fight. They struggle. I mean, it doesn't unlock it. When it does, for some reason it just goes.

Like I said, I never doubted him. We work pretty close together. I support my drivers and my team at any time. I used to say that I got their back, but we will talk -- we need to get uncomfortable, we get uncomfortable. Nice to see that unlock for him. The next couple of days I told him just enjoy. I told him let's go get drunk tonight, which for me will take a glass, so it's not really that fun.

He needs to enjoy. Obviously in a couple of days time the stress will hit again, and it's why we race, and that's why we're here. So next couple of days will be good enough that I will be paranoid again. We live for that, so...

**Q. Christian, you talk about being hired to win races. Just how big of a day is this and is it a feeling of, like, excitement? Is it a feeling of relief? When you look back at the last year and a half, what does this mean just as far as this accomplishment in your career?**

CHRISTIAN LUNDGAARD: Yeah, I mean, I think I've had the question many times. You know, when is it going to come, right? We've come so close many times. How does it feel being on the podium when the 10 car keeps being the guy that wins?

I mean, in many ways I live to win races. I don't live to finish second. I don't live to just be in the race. I think that's how I was always taught, you know, growing up. I don't just compete to compete. I compete to win.

I think, again, that was one of the conversations that Tony and I had. That's the mutual agreement in many ways that we have is we want to win. It's pretty simple.

It feels good, of course. I think, again, I'll realize what really happened today tomorrow, when we wake up from that one glass, but I'm going to hold you up on that, Tony, by the way.

No, I mean, it feels really good. The one thing I'm sad about is knowing that my family won't be here for the 500

this year. Race day is on my mom's birthday this year. In many ways --

TONY KANAAN: Better give her a gift. That's what you need to do.

CHRISTIAN LUNDGAARD: It's Mother's Day tomorrow. So I kind of tried today. I think it's a very good way to start the month of May, obviously. I fell short so many times. I mean, in the past two years I don't even know how many seconds I've had. I finished second around here before.

I think that was what felt sweetest was the unfinished business that I had around the Indianapolis Motor Speedway Road Course was I knew I've been so competitive here and I never got it done. Getting it done in the beginning of May in a car that I know is good enough to win the 500 feels very good.

**Q. Do you hate losing more than you love winning?**

CHRISTIAN LUNDGAARD: I would say so.

TONY KANAAN: I think he fears losing a lot more than anything else. We do.

CHRISTIAN LUNDGAARD: Yeah, it sucks.

THE MODERATOR: Christian, one glass for Tony is more than I've ever seen him have.

TONY KANAAN: Exactly.

CHRISTIAN LUNDGAARD: At least if I can get him to have a glass.

TONY KANAAN: I said that, if I do that, I won't be able to speak for ten minutes.

THE MODERATOR: Good point.

**Q. A couple of questions for Tony. The first one is not just Christian, but this team in general, this 7 team, we knew you had a right rear -- new right rear tire changer for this race for this weekend. Just overall, from engineer throughout the team, what did this team tap into that it hadn't had a chance to yet previously?**

TONY KANAAN: I think, you know, looking at my job, I think we had always had the right people. I think it's trying to put everybody with the same mentality and the same culture of we're here to win a race. We need to lay it out there every weekend with the best people and making people accountable when we rightfully so let Christian down in Barber on a pit stop. I mean, I'm not saying we

were going to win the race, but we lost a race there or a chance to win a race.

I think having this team with Christian and Chris Lawrence, they are very particular. They have a personality that we actually -- we're very similar in many ways, and we don't -- if I tell Christian I dare that you're going to do this, I'm asking him to do this. I think Chris and Christian had a very good dynamic there that actually transpired to the team.

Like you said, we had a few issues. We're not replacing people. We're placing people at the right places at the right time. Anybody is allowed to make a mistake, but at the end of the day, we all hate losing, so everybody is on the same page.

To answer your question, I think we do have to make some changes. We do have to relocate people, but everybody is part of this team. It doesn't mean that we send anybody home.

Unfortunately, sometimes you have to have a tough conversation, and your ego is going to get hurt. It happens to me. It happens to Christian. We had some many tough ones, but at the end of the day, the result is there. They executed.

Yeah, I guess hopefully I answer your question, but I'll keep -- somebody said to me the other day, sometimes looks like you spin the revolving door. I said, yeah, I keep spinning until I'm happy to stop. So hopefully they got the message.

**Q. Then just lastly, I know you met with a lot of us media Muppets in Long Beach. One of the things that we talked about was contracts, and it was about Nolan and it was about Christian. You said that winning helps everything obviously. You might have to do something sooner than you would like if the results start ticking in. Obviously there's not a better result than winning. What does this do to the mindset to try to get things wrapped up with the guy sitting next to you?**

TONY KANAAN: Yeah, I told you guys. And that's nothing that, you know -- I said that I hate talking about contracts because I was on the other side for 25 years. I told Christian and his following and Nolan is on the way, if you guys keep winning, I don't need to make a decision, and nobody needs to make a decision. I think we're all on the same page on that.

There is no -- it's not going to do a driver or myself any good to try to threaten like that. We all know. Nobody

comes to a race weekend to just think that, you know, we're going to be happy with a non-win.

Obviously Christian was one of -- I remember back a couple of years ago when we talked, and I still support all of them. I don't think it's the time, especially during the month of May, to talk about it. Look what happened. In one race you can change your life. I'm never making my decisions about one race or not results because I felt that myself throughout my career.

I was extremely useful when I was Scott's teammate, and he won three championships, and I won one race. Chip did not fire me. So I guess I was useful for the team. Everybody have a part of the team. Obviously we have a big brand that requires that we need to win every race. I can be the most popular guy in Mexico one weekend and probably the one that they want me dead the following weekend.

In Denmark the same thing and -- I mean, it's just the way it is. So we're here. The drivers that I have are the drivers that I'm going to support until, you know, we all decide that we'll talk about what's going to happen.

THE MODERATOR: Congratulations on a great start to the month of May.

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