

NTT INDYCAR SERIES

News Conference

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Dennis Hauger

Ryan Hunter-Reay

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: Ryan Hunter-Reay joins in the No. 31 PrizePicks Arrow McLaren Chevrolet. He's a 2014 winner, three top-5s in the 500. Sunday will be his 18th 500. He starts 22nd on the inside of row eight. Again, top 5 in that practice session today. What did you learn in the time you had out there, Ryan?

RYAN HUNTER-REAY: Well, it was great that we got it in or at least some of it, because the 31 team is a day and a half behind. So it was good to get into race running. We found some things that we needed to go into Carb Day.

Yeah, thankful for the time on track and that Mother Nature kind of held off for us to sort the front grip out on the car.

THE MODERATOR: Good stuff. We'll open it up for questions.

Q. Kind of just to follow up off of that, obviously some issues early last week. Going through qualifying obviously probably not as eventful as you were hoping it might be, but I mean, how is the race car itself?

RYAN HUNTER-REAY: Yeah, the race car is pretty good. You know, it's funny. You come into this thinking, man, we got all the time in the world, let's just be patient, and all this. A couple hiccups here and there, and you find yourself starting to do Q-sims before Fast Friday comes in, and we're a bit behind on the race car.

But I was happy with it. I was happy with the balance. We're within the operating window that I need to be in when it comes to racing in traffic. So I'm happy about that, and we still will make the most of the hour that we have on Carb Day coming up.

It is an hour, correct?

THE MODERATOR: Two, actually.

RYAN HUNTER-REAY: Oh, bonus. Look at this. I'm looking forward as I'm sitting still.

THE MODERATOR: Things are looking up.

RYAN HUNTER-REAY: Yeah, things are looking up.

Q. Were you anywhere in the vicinity of Rossi's crash?

RYAN HUNTER-REAY: No, I wasn't. I haven't seen it. I'm eager to see the video, but no, I haven't. That's the thing with running in those big packs. One thing goes wrong, right, and there's not really a place to go sometimes, so...

Q. Have you had much of a chance to see what Pato's car looks like?

RYAN HUNTER-REAY: No, what happened with Rossi's crash? Did he hit the curb on the Apex or anything? No?

Q. Defer that to --

THE MODERATOR: Yeah, again, I'm not a professional driver, but it looked like he lost it coming out of two at the Apex, and then same thing happened to Pato. Tried to get on the brakes.

RYAN HUNTER-REAY: Yeah, that's unfortunate. I mean, it's late, right? It's late, late in the big picture to start putting race cars back together, but glad that everybody was all right.

Yeah, it just comes with the territory when running in a big pack like that. There's not really anywhere to go sometimes.

Q. Is this going as well as you had hoped, or is there room for --

RYAN HUNTER-REAY: I've had such a great time with this team and getting to know everybody and really put a lot of effort into being a regular within the team prior to coming here as a one-off. You know, these things happen. It's racing.



Day one, electrical issues. You know, these cars are -- they're complex to run. You really have a -- you get a greater appreciation for that every time, if the computer won't talk to the car and vice versa, telemetry, and all this other stuff. They have to see what is going on. Especially Chevy has to see what's going on with the engine at all times in order to run.

When you have a hiccup on that, we spent a lot of time on Tuesday sitting in the pit box trying to sort that. So good news is we have all that sorted. Unfortunately on Thursday we had a hybrid issue, had to change that out, had to split the car in half. Then Friday gear box issue.

So not ideal. We've definitely faced our challenges, but they've been very resilient, and the crew has been working so hard.

So it's great to get into race running, because I've always said, like I told them before the week started, for me the number one goal is always just focusing on the race car.

Q. With the potential for the weather that's coming and we lost 60-ish minutes of practice today, and there was potential that we might lose weather on Carb Day, does that change your approach at all? As a follow-up to that, do you think it changes other teams' approaches, and does it mean that the track running that we saw today was particularly intense?

RYAN HUNTER-REAY: No, I think a lot of teams are 90% to 95% of the way there on the race car after running so much and the week prior. For situations that we've been in, we need every bit of track time that we can, because we are, like I said, a day and a half behind.

So, no, it doesn't really change anything. Yeah, I would have preferred to continue to run for another 45 minutes or 50 minutes, whatever it is, but it is what it is. Same for everybody.

THE MODERATOR: Dennis Hauger also joins us in the No. 19 Only Bulls Honda for Dale Coyne Racing. Rookie, third quick on the speed chart today. He'll start 29th on Sunday, which is the middle of row ten. Just quickly, your thoughts on your practice today.

DENNIS HAUGER: Yeah, not too bad. I think it's the best we've felt so far since we started, so that's encouraging.

I think we have a good race car compared to, you know -- we've had struggles in qualifying, but it seems like we've always been getting in race mode, so we'll just keep doing some small tunes.

As Ryan said, I think most people are tuned in in a decent window. It's just about trying to get it right for the conditions as well. Yeah, pretty fun day.

Q. Can we read anything into the speed that you turned today, Ryan? Can we expect you to be coming through the pack like Newgarden did last year?

RYAN HUNTER-REAY: I have every intention of doing that, for sure. I don't know. No, the speeds -- so it's funny, because people have been here for so long. Even my family, like, my dad watches, and he's concerned about -- or asking about where you end up at the end of the day in practice.

Really it all comes down -- if you intentionally go out and look for a big tow, it can happen. If you don't, you have to kind of fall into it out of luck. That's just what happened.

It was the first time this week, week and a half that I just had an uninterrupted lap pulling up to two cars in front, and yeah, it's there.

Like I said, unless you go out with intent to find a tow right on new tires, light fuel, which I know some teams do and tow up to a big group, you can put a big number up, yeah. But, no, it has zero relevance really to Sunday.

Q. Ryan, I know this was the first day your pit crew was here with you since the open test. Were you able to get the hot stops in?

RYAN HUNTER-REAY: We prioritized that just trying to get it in, right, so we could talk about it this week, and they can work on it. Yeah, we had great stops. We had one issue with the air jack, but we got in those stops.

That's so important, right, for a one-off. All these other teams that we're up against are in mid-season form. So are the pit crews. As a one-off, you have to prioritize some of the things that maybe some of the other full-timers don't.

Q. Going into Friday, is that going to be the main priority?

RYAN HUNTER-REAY: No, Friday I just have to continue to run in traffic. Every day is different around here with the wind shifting with the temperatures, everything, so you just have to continue to work through it, because you don't know what race day is, right?

Once you get to race day, then you have to go back and look at the week and a half that you have data from and try and apply those conditions to the balance that you had on that day and put your best foot forward.

THE MODERATOR: Ryan, thanks for coming. Appreciate it. More questions for Dennis.

Q. Dennis, was the most intense time of your month of May here when you had to run up pit lane today, because 32 other drivers were waiting on you because you were apparently didn't realize you had to be in the photo?

DENNIS HAUGER: Yeah (laughing). I was sprinting for that one, but I just forgot. I'm usually pretty good with that stuff, getting on time. Of course, it happened for that exact photo. Pretty important one.

But we made it, so it's all good. Got a bit of a warm-up before we got into practice, so it was kind of perfect.

Q. Did you get any business from any of the other drivers for making them wait?

DENNIS HAUGER: Just a bit of applause coming into the photo, but that's expected. Obviously having to wait for me, that's not optimal. So sorry to everyone who had to wait, but yeah, we'll survive.

Q. Getting back to racing, you're back there in the middle of row ten. You got a lot of ground to cover. What are you going to do in the early parts of the race? This is new to you to run here. So you don't want to be a hero too soon because it may not end up right, but what is your strategy to try to get in there and learn as much as you can and finish the race?

DENNIS HAUGER: I think it's been the same the whole time. Just try and get a clean month doing all the laps, and trying to stay on the lead lap I think is kind of the main priority in the first half of that race and keep it clean.

I don't think there is any point risking everything going into turn one, especially from the back. I think you see that pretty often, end up in the -- yeah, end up in the wall. It will just be about trying learn as much as I can as I have been doing now the last few days.

Going into Friday we'll get some more traffic running with all cars on track. I think we were in a pretty decent spot today. Qualifying has been a very big weak point for us, but in race dream (phonetic) I feel like we're in a decent place.

I was chasing lap time out there today. I mean, we just got in the right place at the right time and got a decent lap in. I think overall we were one of the few who could actually pass people in that train, which was really positive, I think.

We still got some things we need to work on, so as we said earlier. It's all conditions-related, and it's going to change going into the weekend as well. We'll see, but so far I'm happy and just building momentum, building experience is the main thing.

Q. On a scale of one to ten, if ten is the most comfortable as you could possibly be, the maximum, where would you rate your comfort level so far now that you've gotten about a week of running?

DENNIS HAUGER: Honestly it really depends the session, the day. Qualifying I didn't really feel comfortable. We were really on the limit with the car.

It was pretty loose, but we kept it flat, and I feel like I maximized that as well as I could and experienced how a car is around there in the qualifying stint fighting it as long as I can stay flat, which is cool.

I mean, out of one to ten, probably, like, today was probably, like, an eight. We still have stuff to work on for sure, but it's probably the best I've felt so far.

Yeah, I think it's just about keeping it clean, as we said earlier, and building momentum. If you have these small moments or lose some confidence in the car and it goes in the wrong direction, it can hurt you a lot. So it's just about chipping away.

Q. What do you need to get to that ten? Is it just a matter of experience, or is it just more stability? Is it just a matter of the setup and more stability in the rear? What do you think?

DENNIS HAUGER: I feel like we've been getting a bit better and better on setup and stuff. This has been one of the weak tracks for Dale Coyne Racing in the past three years. I think it's the first time my car has qualified in the last three years or four years. I don't remember.

So I feel like we're definitely in the better spot. We know qualifying was not good, but it's a completely different game when you get to the race. So I feel like we've gotten better on setup.

I've got more comfortable. Obviously first time here. But the race day is always a bit different. I'll just do what I always do, study hard to make sure I'm on top of things before I get onto the track, and hopefully we can have a good day.

Q. Just kind of following on from this morning's incident, I know rookies previously have kind of found

the cadence of the month of May kind of off the track much busier than they've ever experienced with the media and the commitments they have. As a rookie, kind of tell us about that experience off track and how busy you found your schedule.

DENNIS HAUGER: Not too bad. I think it's tomorrow I get to milk a cow for the first time, so there's a lot of fun this month to be done, but for sure it's a busy month.

I mean, you kind of expect it to be. It's by far the biggest race of the year, I would say. Just the amount of people, the atmosphere, it's so cool and so unique. Something I've never experienced on a track before.

So, yeah, it's just an awesome month and especially really cool when you are driving.

Q. To start the year the team obviously formed this partnership with Andretti. I remember you saying it was a quite fluid partnership. What's the collaboration between the two teams?

DENNIS HAUGER: I keep saying fluid relationship is kind of the thing I'm going with there, but I mean, I can be open. It's not like an AJ Foyt-Penske collab there with everything open on damper setup. Andretti has an Andretti car. We have a Dale Coyne car. We work on our setup and our stuff to try to get better, and we're trying to communicate. If there's some small things that we can help with each other from both sides to get better, we're really open there, and that's cool.

But at the moment I'm just focused with Dale Coyne to, you know, get as good as we can on track, but definitely good to have that collaboration to kind of help with the small stuff to build the package up a little bit better in that sense.

THE MODERATOR: I like how you said you get to milk a cow tomorrow instead of have to milk a cow.

DENNIS HAUGER: Oh, yeah.

THE MODERATOR: You're thinking positive. I like this.

Q. Dennis, how much attention has this caused in your homeland, because you are going to be the first-ever -- if AI is correct, you're going to be the first-ever Norwegian driver to start the Indy 500. Has there been much media attention back in your homeland?

DENNIS HAUGER: I got that question earlier. I don't remember from who. A couple of days ago. There was actually a half-Norwegian, half-American guy who drove

the Indy 500 from 1911 to 1914, so it's a while ago. Gil Anderson, he was half Norwegian.

But, yeah, to be in this series and, yeah, to be the first Norwegian to be a full-time INDYCAR driver is really cool, and to see all the support I'm getting from back home, it's really been kicking up. That's awesome to see.

I expect we'll see some Norwegian flags this weekend, and I'm looking forward to see that.

Q. My question was similar to that. Have you gotten the moment to relish in the fact that you're going to make history for your country, or is that something that you'll think at some point and leading into this weekend will really hit you? What is that process like for you just from a pride standpoint?

DENNIS HAUGER: I've never really been the guy to get, like, stressed and think about that stuff too much. I'm getting in the car. I'm trying to do my job and maximize what we have.

That's kind of my thought process all the time, so I've never really gotten, like, that, but I'm sure when we get on race day, I'll be proud obviously to represent Norway for the first time in, like, 120 years for the Indy 500 and obviously do my first Indy 500 as a rookie.

It's a dream come true and just trying to soak it all in, the whole month. I'm sure when everything is calmed down after race week, I'm sure I'll look back and think that was just unbelievable.

THE MODERATOR: Thanks for coming up. Alexander Rossi is awake and alert and in good spirits, still undergoing evaluation in the infield medical center. That's from Dr. Julia Vaizer.

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