

NTT INDYCAR SERIES

News Conference

Tuesday, May 19, 2026

Mick Schumacher

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: Good morning here on the East Coast of the United States in Indianapolis certainly. Welcome. Glad you're a part of this.

As you know, the countdown to the 110th running of the Indianapolis 500 presented by Gainbridge is in full swing. The field is set. Just one practice remains, Friday morning during Miller Lite Carb Day here at Indianapolis Motor Speedway.

Today we have the fastest rookie in this year's race, a four-lap average of 229.450. He drives the No. 47 Rahal Letterman Lanigan Racing Honda. Please welcome and say good morning to Mick Schumacher. Thanks for doing this today.

MICK SCHUMACHER: Hi, everybody.

THE MODERATOR: It's been a week's worth of practices, qualifying then on Sunday, another practice yesterday. What has this first experience been like for you at IMS, and do you feel really fully prepared for your first Indy 500?

MICK SCHUMACHER: Yeah, it's obviously been a long ways coming now, preparing, done the open test, we've done the full week of testing to obviously get ready for the race, the main event obviously being the race.

We obviously did some quali runs. We had the Fast Friday. Unfortunately, it felt like we lost a little bit of speed during qualification. We weren't quite on it. I think there were a couple things here and there, which we found out yesterday that were maybe not a hundred percent.

Obviously taking that into account, we kind of look ahead to the race now. I think we have a good understanding of what we need to do to be better there and hopefully come back through the field and go forward.

THE MODERATOR: Can't wait to get started on Sunday. Curious if what you anticipated this month would be like versus what you've actually experienced. How different has that been for you?

MICK SCHUMACHER: I guess everybody has been saying like, oh, it is a month, but it's actually just two weeks. I was anticipating a lot more driving, but actually it's gone by really quickly. Obviously things go by very quickly when you have fun.

So we were working a lot, we were trying different things, running a lot of different damper packages, different air configs, and really just to try to build as much data as possible, simply. I think it's been great so far. I've really enjoyed it.

I'm very much now looking forward to the race. I think that's going to be the highlight of the year. It's such a special event and such a special race, and I just can't wait for everybody to be here.

THE MODERATOR: We've got a lot of new media on the call here that may not be familiar with the Indy 500 procedures and the schedule we kind of alluded to a little bit. Describe the process that it takes to be prepared for an oval race like this because, let's be honest, you have other oval races on the NTT INDYCAR SERIES schedule, but certainly nothing like the magnitude on a 2 1/2-mile Superspeedway like Indianapolis 500.

MICK SCHUMACHER: Yeah, the aero config is completely different. We have the small wings on the cars essentially to go obviously very fast. It's obviously a different approach to racing on a short oval. The short oval is quite fast-paced. It's like trying to get the reps in and do as many laps as possible here.

The tires don't last to an infinite time amount. So you kind of want to really make sure that the runs you do are good so that you have a strategy, you have a plan, so that you kind of go through it and not just run through your tires. That's the most important part, I felt, was to really maximize the time that you spend on them.

So, yeah, we start with the open test, we've got two days. Then we go to the IMS Road Course, and then straight into the oval testing again with starting -- it was always from 11:00 till 6:00, if I remember right.



THE MODERATOR: Noon to 6:00, yes.

MICK SCHUMACHER: Noon to 6:00. So you get those good hours, but obviously weather can play a role as well, which luckily it only did later in the week. So we really got a good amount of data collected in the beginning.

Yeah, we could really do those race runs, do the quali runs, and Fast Friday was great, obviously preparing qualifying. Then, yeah, unfortunately, qualifying didn't quite go to plan, but nonetheless, I feel like I'm ready for what's to come now on Sunday.

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

Q. Hi, Mick. Obviously you're coming into your first Indy 500 off the back of a long -- well, a career in F1, done the 24 hours of Le Mans last year as well. How special is the event so far for you? Can you compare the three -- F1, Le Mans, and Indy -- so far?

MICK SCHUMACHER: Obviously they're all very different, and they all have very different targets, right? Different targets in the sense like how you approach the week or the timing.

F1 is very fast-paced because you have one race after the other, and it's a pretty long season, so you kind of have to try to make sure you're in the right mode and stay in the right window for as long as you can.

Then there's the whole development side of things. So you kind of really run through things with the team to kind of improve the car also throughout the year.

Le Mans is -- it's obviously a very -- it's a long period, but then not only is it a long period, but then you also have a long race. Like the 24 hours is mentally very draining. I remember like after it I was pretty depleted, especially because it just feels like you don't sleep for two weeks. You're always constantly driving and day and night; your whole rhythm is shifted.

That was a lot different here because you have these very consistent timings that you will be driving, and you have the very consistent approaches that you have to do. Obviously mentally it's also still very draining because you have the speed, you have to like analyze the car, you have to feel out little bits and pieces.

You only have those four corners, but all the corners will have different feelings, different wind conditions, different car behaviors essentially. So to really rely on what you feel is important here.

So I'm very curious how it's going to be in the race with the 33 cars on track. It's obviously going to be very different. Unfortunately, we're starting quite at the back of the pack, which doesn't make it easier going into turn 1.

Q. You talked about your preparation for your first Indy 500. How did it go in terms of progress with the field considering it's your first Indy 500 and you are starting in the back --

MICK SCHUMACHER: I didn't quite understand the last part.

THE MODERATOR: The second part of your question is again?

Q. The adaptation to the field considering you start towards the back.

MICK SCHUMACHER: I hear a person more in the background than I hear you.

THE MODERATOR: I think his question was adapting starting towards the second half of the field on Sunday, how that changes maybe.

MICK SCHUMACHER: Obviously it's not ideal. It's not what we wanted. I think that we're looking at the morning practice, and we kind of felt like we had more pace in the car.

Obviously after some analysis, we know what happened, and we know what didn't go right. It's something I won't really discuss here, but it obviously cost us a couple of -- well, a tenth in speed essentially.

Ideally we would have liked to be further up, but hey, we've got to make it work. It's a long race. It's 200 miles. We'll get there.

Q. First of all, congratulations on your first participation this year. How do you live this first experience, like day after day? How do you feel? How do you experience the sensation?

MICK SCHUMACHER: Yeah, it's a very big buildup, and now it's kind of slowing down a lot with the next three days pretty much just being media and appearances and stuff. It's obviously Sunday like going from very fast tech and going from one session to the next to kind of like slowing down and just one final practice before race day.

It's cool, like it's a great event. You can see how many people are even turned up when it was raining, on

Saturday when it was supposed to be qualifying and we didn't qualify. People were still here enjoying their time and just using the facility. It's a beautiful place. You have the golf course. You have everything here essentially, so you can spend a good time out here.

Yeah, it's great to experience it like this, and very, very excited about the race to see -- obviously it's a soldout event, and I think it's totally worth it.

Q. And how do you approach the race starting far from the grid? Have you already spoken to your race engineers about the strategy and the potential obstacles that might come during the race? Like the race is long. Like how do you see it?

MICK SCHUMACHER: Obviously I think the approach is going to be the same as always, like try to maximize our package, try to maximize our strategy and make sure we're on the front foot and not on the back foot. I think that's the important part.

We have obviously Graham starts close by, which will help us to kind of maybe do something together and then hopefully go through the field together.

Q. Hello everyone. Finally have a chance to see you on this side of the ocean, like we spoke seven years ago on the Race of Champions in Mexico City. Thank you finally.

MICK SCHUMACHER: Yes, a long time ago.

Q. Part of the process, you mentioned for Indy 500 but also being some personal changes in your car. Is it true?

MICK SCHUMACHER: What do you mean? Sorry.

Q. Change your engineer before the Indy Grand Prix and change your personal stuff on your car.

MICK SCHUMACHER: Well, we've got Andy Brown as race engineer, that is true. He's been obviously hugely successful in the Indy 500 in the past, with Chip Ganassi and other teams, PacWest Racing. He's got this immense amount of experience that I can really feed off, so it's been great.

Eddie, who's been on my car previously in the road race courses, he obviously moved over to Takuma, which was planned in advance and we knew it was going to happen.

Yeah, I'm super, super happy to work with Andy, and it's great to have him on board.

Q. Second question, in addition to Graham, like your teammate is one of the veterans of the series, not forgetting that his father is one of the winners of Indy 500, have you had a chance with Mr. Bobby Rahal?

MICK SCHUMACHER: Yeah, Bobby is certain present on the team, and he's there every day. We're in constant exchange. It's great to be able to learn from not only Graham, but also Bobby.

Q. Thank you, Mick. All the best this weekend, your first Indy 500. You will have fun a lot.

MICK SCHUMACHER: Thank you.

THE MODERATOR: I think that's the goal, Luis. Thanks. Appreciate that.

Q. Mick, the big moment is getting here today, as a matter of fact. In a few minutes from here or about an hour, you're going to have to milk a cow at the Dairy Association of Indiana Fastest Rookie Luncheon. Are you up to the task?

MICK SCHUMACHER: Of milking a cow or being part of the lunch?

Q. Both, but basically milking a cow. It's not quite as easy as it looks.

MICK SCHUMACHER: (Laughter). I'm sorry.

Q. Hey, it's a tradition in Indiana, so there you go.

THE MODERATOR: It's one of the many benefits you get, Mick, from being a rookie at the Indianapolis 500.

MICK SCHUMACHER: I just wonder how do you know that it's harder than it looks?

Q. Oh, they've had the media try it before.

MICK SCHUMACHER: Okay, okay.

Q. That's why they have milking machines, kind of speed up the process a bit. Anyway, there's a lot of traditions in this race, that being one of them, but the fact is you're the fastest rookie at this year's Indianapolis 500, and there's a lot of great drivers whose names are on that list, and there's also a lot of great winners who never were the fastest rookie. So just to have that honor, how important is that to Mick Schumacher?

MICK SCHUMACHER: Yeah, it's obviously amazing, and it's great to be there. Unfortunately, it's kind of bittersweet because I know that I wasn't supposed to be that. Obviously it came through disqualification.

I feel like we're still -- I'm still not quite satisfied about how qualifying went just because I feel like it could have been a lot better. We had a lot more speed, we were supposed to be a lot faster. So, yeah, hopefully in the future we know what to not do or what to do better. That's the aim.

And to come back to the first question, yeah, I'm excited to experience all the traditions that are out here. I think there's a lot of them. I think it's -- in some ways it's great to keep them in the way they are and to experience them year after year. Yeah, very privileged.

Q. Because this race is so steeped in tradition and you've driven on some of the greatest race courses in the world, is it the traditions and the length of this event something that really -- you like it, or does it surprise you? We've been here for a couple of weeks now.

MICK SCHUMACHER: I would say personally I love innovation and I love going to the future of things. I know that's something my dad also really enjoyed, and he kind of brought that on to me, talking more about race cars and stuff like that.

Obviously in this event, I've noticed how beautiful traditions can be. I know that some drivers have certain traditions. I mean, like Conor Daly going to the Snake Pit every year. It's pretty impressive how still the drivers build their own traditions out here. I'm curious to see what mine will be, when I come back here, what I'll be doing again and what not.

Obviously the golf course is super close. I really enjoy that. I think that that could be my tradition to go golfing at some point. Yeah, maybe riding a bike out on the track.

Q. Finally, I know that you won't really experience the full Indy 500 until race day, but so far has it lived up to your expectations, or has it exceeded your expectations?

MICK SCHUMACHER: It's been great. It's been amazing to see all the fans here. I feel like they really make the event special. You can see how passionate they are for the sport, how passionate they are also to support the drivers. I think that's something that really stood out to me. I'm obviously very excited to see the whole place booming and full of crowds and go and race in front of them.

Q. Good luck, and maybe you can walk away from here Sunday night with the Indianapolis Rookie of the Year award.

MICK SCHUMACHER: That would be great. Although I'd probably prefer the bigger trophy.

THE MODERATOR: Maybe drinking the milk after you know what it takes to milk a cow, you can see the whole process play out. Just a thought.

Q. What part of handling an INDYCAR on the oval is the most intuitive to you? Second to that, how is it practicing inside the 33-car pack with all the dirty air and all the different nuances it can create outside of a race situation?

MICK SCHUMACHER: I think the most intuitive has been to be as smooth as possible. Coming from Europe where you have to obviously work off the tires in quite a specific way, I feel that really helped me in a sense here, where it's important to be smooth on the throttle, it's important -- like all the inputs have to be smooth essentially. I feel like that really came a long ways towards me in those situations.

Yeah, the turbulent air is pretty tough. It's hard to manage the gap and make sure the car feels good at the right moment and kind of time it right so you can have a run. Obviously it's a lot more difficult when you're further away in the pack. So if you keep in a pack of like 10 to 15, everybody just kind of pulls each other.

But if you're up in the front, like the first four probably, that's a bit more different again. Like you really feel the difference between having a lot of cars or fewer cars in front and the behavior of the car.

Q. I want to ask you about this change from Formula 1 to INDYCAR because you were reportedly in talks with Cadillac for an F1 return. In the end, you chose this. It was your decision, so I want to ask you how have you felt with this decision? Also, because I'm from Mexico, I want to ask you about Checo Perez. How have you seen his F1 career during this 2026 season?

MICK SCHUMACHER: Yeah, we were in talks with Cadillac until the very end, and they just decided to go a different direction. So my options obviously at that point were either to stay in WEC or to go to INDYCAR. I wanted to race in single seaters, so I wanted to experience what it was like to race in INDYCAR.

I really, really enjoy it. It's a great championship. It's a very raw and very -- it's a very physical championship. So that kind of brings a lot of the driver aspect back into play.

Obviously to me this year it's been all about learning and understanding what it takes to be quick here, but also learning all the new tracks. That's obviously a big new part of it to me.

So, yeah, like F1 looks to be tough in a way that it's probably not -- it's quite engineering driven, if that's the right word. Obviously the way that the cars work at the moment, it's probably not the easiest to understand and to drive. Specifically, it's probably not the one where you drive flat out anymore 100 percent.

I'm sure with the time being and the time to come now, things will change again there, and hopefully they'll bring back the V8s, which would be great. I think it's an amazing, intuitive -- a good opportunity for them to do that. I think it's a great engine, it's a great sound, and that's what Formula 1 is in my opinion, the big sound and big engine. Yeah, that would be amazing.

Q. Regarding Checo, Mick, how do you feel about his 2026 season? Also, maybe I don't know if there's something specific about how Checo carried himself that you respected or maybe learn from him.

MICK SCHUMACHER: Personally, I've never really spoken much to Checo before. But looking at him, as long as he -- I feel like, as long as he's got the funds to do what he's doing, that's great. Obviously it's probably tough first season in a sport like this, but I feel like they're doing really great and Cadillac is doing really great too. So I'm definitely cheering them on.

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