

NTT INDYCAR SERIES

News Conference

Thursday, May 21, 2026

Indianapolis, Indiana, USA

Christian Lundgaard

Marcus Ericsson

Marcus Armstrong

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: Joined by row 6 on the big white couch, changing up the vibe a little bit. Christian Lundgaard starts 18th. Fifth Indianapolis 500. Starting 17th, winner of the 2022 Indy 500, the Sneaky Swede, still accurate?

MARCUS ERICSSON: We'll see on Sunday.

THE MODERATOR: Marcus Ericsson. Starting 16th, making his third Indy 500 appearance, Marcus Armstrong.

How is your Media Day so far?

CHRISTIAN LUNDGAARD: This is my beginning. I've done a bunch of signatures so far.

THE MODERATOR: A light start.

CHRISTIAN LUNDGAARD: Yep.

MARCUS ERICSSON: I'm in the middle of it. Been here all day it feels like. I did have time to go have some tamales.

THE MODERATOR: Marcus, your day is never dull. What has been the highlight of your day?

MARCUS ARMSTRONG: The highlight of my day is seeing you. Such a good-looking lad, that's why I was early (smiling).

THE MODERATOR: How much work do you have for tomorrow? Ready for Sunday.

CHRISTIAN LUNDGAARD: Yeah, I mean, it's an interesting day 'cause you want to go out and learn the last bit of piece, but you also want to keep your race car safe, right? Last practice. There's more to lose than there is to

gain.

Last year it worked out for Ryan Hunter-Reay. His car burnt down at Carb Day, they had to get his pit stop car and it ended up being a great race car.

For the 5 car, they're going to go out and figure out how the new car is.

THE MODERATOR: Marcus, the race car seemed to be really good.

MARCUS ERICSSON: I was really happy. Monday was the best day of the month for us. Car seemed to be in a really good window. It was nice going back to race trim. We felt already from last year we have a good race setup. We've tweaked on that, worked on that, improved that a little bit last week.

Again, on Monday felt super comfortable. I think the conditions obviously a little bit different with the heat. There was some people you could see quite a few cars a bit more tricky to drive than my 28 car.

The biggest thing for me is the question mark with the weather, being cooler tomorrow, then seeing where the forecast goes for Sunday, try and make decisions on setup depending on that. I think that's going to be the big one. That's why I think tomorrow will be relevant to see how the car feels in those cooler temps compared to Monday where it was hot and tricky.

THE MODERATOR: How crucial is an hour or two for you guys?

MARCUS ARMSTRONG: I would echo what Christian said. You're trying to get the last bits and pieces on the car, but at the same time you want to look after it.

I think tomorrow will be a little bit more relevant than Monday. Monday was so hot, like 85 degrees ambient, the wind was strong and gusty. I don't know what happened to Rossi, but I imagine the tailwind sort of caught him by surprise. I don't know, I haven't spoken to him about it. It was a tricky day in general condition-wise.

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I imagine tomorrow is going to be a little bit cooler, might even rain halfway through the session. Might be more relevant to what we said on Sunday.

THE MODERATOR: Open it up for questions.

Q. Christian, after finishing seventh last year, what did you have to work on to make this year better than last year?

CHRISTIAN LUNDGAARD: Going faster is really the easy answer.

Q. Was it a traffic thing?

CHRISTIAN LUNDGAARD: I think we were a little slower this year than we anticipated to be in qualifying trim. I think if you speak to any driver, everyone is going to echo that. Pretty much the conditions were pretty tough on qualifying day.

I think we just seemed to lack more pace than we thought we had. In race pace, I think we were better than we were last year. I think we are in a better position.

I feel a lot more comfortable this year. I think we gained something very early in the week Tuesday and Wednesday just from a comfort level of being happier with the rear of the car moving a lot more than usual. If that's the tires this year, if it's just the track condition, not really sure.

Again, I think what Marcus said, one of the Marcuses, obviously Monday the track felt pretty good, but obviously very gusty and windy.

I think it all comes down to what the conditions are going to be on Sunday, yeah.

Q. Y'all literally are starting in the middle of the pack. How important is it to have the trust with the rows in front of you and behind you?

MARCUS ARMSTRONG: I think Helio is somewhere listening to me right now. He's starting in the row ahead I'm pretty sure. I think he's going to clear the way for me. That's what he said anyway. Isn't that right, Helio?

THE MODERATOR: I saw him earlier. We'll follow up with him (smiling).

MARCUS ERICSSON: We were right in the mix. I feel like the start of these races, you have to be smart and make smart decisions. You can only lose the race in the first lap, you can't win anything there. Just got to be smart out

there, sort of get into the rhythm of the race.

We still have a great chance from where we're starting. We have plenty of time to move up through the field if we have a good race car. Biggest thing is being smart out there.

I think these two next to me are usually pretty smart out there, so I'm not worried about that.

CHRISTIAN LUNDGAARD: Agreed.

Q. I saw this thing on social media, push-ups or chin-ups with the Marines. Kiwis are strong in this race, aren't they?

MARCUS ARMSTRONG: The 30 pull-ups?

Q. Yes.

MARCUS ARMSTRONG: I don't know. That competition was close to my heart, you see, because they asked if I wanted to challenge some Marines at pull-ups. The answer was naturally yes. Then my entire team decided they were going to come and support me. It was quite a bit of pressure. It was just after qualifying. I was heavily caffeinated but at the same time tired. I had to dig deep.

MARCUS ERICSSON: Should have done the plank thing.

Q. You started to struggle about number 29 the other day.

THE MODERATOR: Wow, calling you out.

CHRISTIAN LUNDGAARD: Post qualifying.

MARCUS ARMSTRONG: Post quallie. I'm going to have another go on Saturday. We'll see how I go (smiling).

Q. Christian, with most of your success coming on street and road courses, what are you looking to try to figure out on ovals and specifically here?

CHRISTIAN LUNDGAARD: Well, survive, first of all. I mean, what am I going to try to figure out? Obviously road courses and street courses comes more natural. I think we've had some decent results. How we get there is what we need to get better at in many ways.

I think I've had so many good results on street courses or road courses where I didn't really feel like I deserved them, then I've had some where I feel like I deserved more. I think that's the same for ovals.

At the end of the day around here you have to be in the race and many things can happen. But for sure we do need to find some more speed, some more natural speed.

Q. Marcus Ericsson, with none of you guys' car making the top 12, what has been the refresh and debrief for you, figuring it out for Sunday?

MARCUS ERICSSON: Yeah, I mean, it was a disappointment. At the same time it doesn't give us anything to sort of dig too deep into that right now. It's something for the winter, off-season, to understand, improve next year.

I think the main thing for us is after Sunday we completely switch focus to the race. We felt like practice last week we were strong in traffic, then again on Monday we felt good, all three cars were strong in traffic again.

Yeah, we're starting a little bit further back than we would have liked. Like I said earlier, such a long race, I don't see a problem with that. If we feel strong in our race cars, we have plenty of time to move up through the field. As a team, we're super focused on that, get all three cars up front by the end of it.

Q. Christian, how much did you learn last year? The first few times you were here, maybe you struggled in the machine you were in. With McLaren, how much did you learn competing more towards the front?

CHRISTIAN LUNDGAARD: Definitely had to unlearn a lot of things, undo many things. I think last year was kind of not a year but at Indy specifically just a learning process of trying to figure some stuff out.

Interestingly enough, I think Ryan verified a lot of things that not necessarily I was complaining about last year, but trying to figure out that was different between the Rahal car and the McLaren car. I think we're working a lot closer together now. I think it's very good that we have Ryan for all of us to really verify some of the things. He has a tremendous amount of credibility but also just experience. He knows what's car is supposed to feel like.

We all know Pato can drive whatever. You can probably take a wheel off and he's still going to wheel the thing. We're not really in that mindset.

Obviously the team is pretty much built around that, which makes a lot of sense. Pato has been there for, what, seven years now. We're obviously trying to improve as a team. I think we're a lot better this year. Obviously Ryan coming in is a great addition for us, and a great addition for me, as well.

Q. You all come from European racing backgrounds. Ovals aren't too big. What were your impressions of this when you were racing in Europe? What were the surprises or differences you learned when you came over?

CHRISTIAN LUNDGAARD: I think we all probably share knowing what speed feels like, but I think there is a different level to qualifying boost around here. When I moved over here, the way that I always explained it to other European drivers is it's driving at Monza at the end of the straight, just turn hard left but don't lift.

Obviously the feel is very different in the car. I think we all know what the Indy 500 was before we came here. I knew how big of an event it is, how incredibly hard and tough it is to win. I think we all enjoy that challenge and we want to be a part of that history.

Q. Today is actually Global Accessibility Awareness Day. I'm blind. When you're on the track, they say the weather is hot or cold, what does that affect on the vehicle or yourself? Are you feeling the road feel slippery, or is it a thing that you see, feel?

MARCUS ERICSSON: I mean, in the speeds we're doing here, the temperature both in the track and the ambient can make a huge difference on the car balance, on the grip level. We obviously have just seen the downforce levels to the ambient temperatures, as well.

With the higher temps, you lose downforce, the car is sliding around more. It's a constant thing. On all tracks it's something you always take into account, but at this place especially the weather can really put your car in a great window or put your car in another window, the balance is not right for the conditions.

It's a very big thing. That's why we're talking about it, as well. Monday was very hot and humid, quite gusty, that makes it a certain challenge. Tomorrow with the cooler temps, it's going to be a different challenge.

It's always a big thing for us, especially on this track.

Q. Ericsson, obviously you know how to get through this field. In the last handful of years, you methodically moved to the front. Last year this race played out differently. What did you learn about last year, effectively how to race Palou, how this race seems to play out now?

MARCUS ERICSSON: I think last year, obviously I have been studying last year's race quite a bit, and the last

couple years, and obviously seems like the starts and restarts, it's crazier and crazier every year that goes by.

I think the big one that I really think stands out is the pit sequence. That's really where you can make a big difference. That's where this race comes down to so much the teamwork, having a good pit crew, but you as a driver, in laps, out laps, stopping on your marks, making smart decisions on pit road. Especially on the yellow stops, there's always a lot of chaos down in pit lane.

You look at a guy like Josef last year, starting from the back, moving up to the top five, he didn't do that many overtakes on track, he was just executing really well with his team all day until they had an issue. I think that's the thing that you got to make smart decisions out there, you got to be aggressive when you have to.

You need a team effort to really have a good day on Sunday.

THE MODERATOR: Guys, thanks for coming up. Have a great day tomorrow, even better day on Sunday.

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