

# NTT INDYCAR SERIES

## News Conference

Friday, May 22, 2026

Indianapolis, Indiana, USA

**Kyle Kirkwood**

**Josef Newgarden**

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: Good afternoon. Wrapping up Carb Day practice, Miller Lite Carb Day practice. Kyle Kirkwood joins us, driver of the No. 27 Sam's Club Honda for Andretti Global. Seventh quick in that session, 225.9. Starts 25th Sunday. The car looked really good. Was it?

KYLE KIRKWOOD: It was good. It's been really good. Just like Josef and somebody else -- I got here first. We're going to talk about how we're starting very deep and how our race cars are very good, which he just teed me off for.

THE MODERATOR: Along that theme, Josef, P1 and 228.3, you start 23rd. Fastest Monday, fastest today.

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: Is there any cash for that?

KYLE KIRKWOOD: There used to be.

THE MODERATOR: The funny thing is everyone sitting here has agreed to put in a hundred bucks.

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: Wow, that's so generous. No? I was going to say, it should be the other way around. Everyone here gets a hundred dollars. How cool would that be?

THE MODERATOR: How's the car?

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: Feels like a hundred bucks.

KYLE KIRKWOOD: They used to give out money for Carb Day.

THE MODERATOR: Back in the day.

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: It means nothing at the end of the day. No money.

THE MODERATOR: Both of you are in the Pit Stop Challenge, I think?

KYLE KIRKWOOD: I'm not.

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: Is that going to happen?

THE MODERATOR: Weather permitting.

KYLE KIRKWOOD: We should get our rain tires on.

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: Good idea.

**Q. Kyle, Andretti have obviously gone from four cars to three this year. Does that make a difference? Is that a benefit that usually you get more data, and you get less this year, is the centralization of resources a benefit? Does it not make a difference? What's the balance there?**

KYLE KIRKWOOD: Depends how you look at it. We're losing a data point with the fourth car, but we're also increasing bandwidth for engineers and drivers to only have three cars to look at and only have those three data points.

It depends how you want to look at it. It's been good this year because we have three, for sure, really very fast cars, especially in race trim. And we know it's not diluted in any sense.

I'm looking at it as a positive, but you can look at it both ways.

**Q. Josef, you seemed to end your day pretty early. Is it a case of you're happy with the car and don't want to wreck it between now and Sunday? What were you really looking at for the race?**

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: I think it's just a mileage thing. We don't want to overdo a day like today. It should just be a validation day. We've been out here a lot. Yeah, just ready to get to Sunday, I think, at this point, like everybody.

**Q. Josef, you were pretty conservative on the start last year, starting 32nd. You probably won't be able to do that starting 22nd this year. Describe your mindset**



**going into the start of the race on Sunday.**

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: It'll be different. Yeah, you can do that. You're in the last row. I just hang out at turn 4 while they get to turn 1. I think that's a wise thing to do. You can't do that sitting where we're at, 23rd. We're right in the middle of everything. So you have to go. We've got to be racing and be heads up.

It's chaotic on this style of racing that we have now at Indy. I feel like people are -- everyone is very confident in the way they drive and ambitious.

KYLE KIRKWOOD: You could see it today.

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: Yeah, you could see it today for sure. It was the first day of the month for sure where everyone was like it's race day.

You've got to be heads up and trying to move forward at all points and never sitting back and hope for the best.

**Q. Kyle, you were kind of aggressive today. There was a couple -- I think you kind of ended up in the grass at one point. Talk about the moves you were making and trying the car out. Looked like it was sticking wherever you put it.**

KYLE KIRKWOOD: I wasn't trying any moves. It's just guys out there think it's the last ten minutes of the race, especially the ECR cars, to be honest.

I don't understand the mindset that some people have on Carb Day. They're acting like it's the race out there, and I was trying not to.

But the car's fast, so you're still passing the guys. You're throwing unnecessary moves when they're going to get passed regardless.

**Q. Josef, you seem somewhat confident that you weren't going to be great in qualifying. I'm curious, were you confident that you'd be this good today?**

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: I don't know that we were that great today. I put up a fast lap. That's really all it is. It's always there is positivity to that in that when the car can do that lap, that is a good thing, but that's not the whole story when it comes to our race car.

I think we've been relatively solid all month, but you get these fluctuations every single day with temperature and wind, and you take the car apart, you put it back together, it's never quite the same thing every time you go out.

The one day that's going to matter is in 48 hours. That's what it boils down to. I think our race car has been in a really good spot for the most part, and even through all the variability that I just spoke about. We've just got to make sure it's right as Sunday comes around.

**Q. Kyle, you posted on social that Kyle Busch was the first driver you ever got a signature from. I'm curious why and -- where did you get the signature at?**

KYLE KIRKWOOD: It was my -- actually, it would have been my second race that I think I ever went to, and it was a NASCAR race. My first race I ever went to was 2004, the Coke 400 Daytona. My second race was Texas Motor Speedway. I think it was 2006 maybe. That was where I got the signature from him.

Yeah, that was the first professional racer that I think I met from all forms of motorsports. I remember I got that signature, and for many years -- still to this day, I still have that hat. I still have it with my trophies at my house.

But I remember that moment, like kind of really turned me on to racing. I thought it was like -- it was one of those moments where I'm never going to wash my hand again, you know? I think I was probably 7 years old or something like that. I fell in love with motorsports kind of after that and then meeting a few other guys and falling in love with INDYCAR.

But that was like one of the first moments that I got around professional motorsports or professional cars, I should say. Yeah, in a way, he turned me on to motor racing and wanting to move forward from karting.

**Q. Josef, I'd like to get your thoughts on Kyle as well. I know you've crossed paths with him over the years. What did you think of the news and his career and the legacy that he leaves?**

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: What do you say? We're not -- gosh, I hate to be a person making a public comment about it, it's just -- because it's an incredibly difficult thing. How can you not be in shock over the situation? I just heard about this yesterday, and then the next thing -- you hear the news about it. I didn't even know about it till yesterday, and the next news you hear is that he's not with us anymore.

I think it just puts into perspective how fragile life is. You just don't know. Makes me think of his kids, to be honest with you. Gosh, I feel terrible about -- I have two sons now. That's the thing that breaks my heart for sure.

The racing deal, he'd probably tell you that too. He was an

extreme racer, one of the best you'd ever see on track, and I'm just speaking about his skill set. I'm sure that the toughest part about it is just what he leaves behind with his kids and what they have to go through.

Yeah, incredibly sad for everybody. I didn't even know Kyle very well. I just, when I look at from afar, how can it not break your heart when you think about his kids?

**Q. (No microphone)?**

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: Yeah, I knew Kyle within motorsport, but it's not like we were close friends or anything. I always love watching people that have just a huge skill set and tenacity for a craft. When you look at Kyle, Kyle was just one of those unique individuals that was phenomenal at what he did. I just admire that about people, I really do.

I've always been curious about what makes that work. I don't think every situation is the same. He had his own unique skill sets that worked for him, but he was by far one of the best, there's no doubt.

Like I said, just a sad day for motorsport that lost one of the best, but my empathy, my feelings are toward his family for sure. I hope their community can rally around the kids. That's what's going to matter at the end of the day.

**Q. Yesterday during Media Day, we kind of talked a lot about false confidence for what these guys have for Monday -- or for Sunday, I mean. Hopefully that's not a bad omen, saying Monday. As you all look at what happened in practice today, how many cars legitimately look like they're going to be real challengers on Sunday, and which ones kind of look like they're pretenders?**

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: I think a lot of people look really good this year, which also invites what Kyle's talking about. I just think everyone just looks like they're ready to race and figure out how do they win the last lap? That's the kind of style that I was seeing from everybody, just as he echoed.

Yeah, I think weather plays a big part. Today is an easy day. Everyone looks good today. Everyone feels good today, in some respects. We'll see what Sunday actually brings.

**Q. Supposed to be similar conditions.**

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: It's quite a bit warmer.

KYLE KIRKWOOD: It's supposed to be a lot warmer on

Sunday. 77 is warm. We haven't really seen that this month. We saw it Monday, and I'd say, what was it, 83 on Monday but sunny? Quite honestly, there was a lot of cars out there that looked like they were struggling, like couldn't keep the car under them.

When you have conditions like this, it's making downforce, the wind's light, track's cool, tires live forever. It's quite a bit different than if you get a little heat involved. That 10 degrees, 12 degrees is going to play a huge factor for some cars.

Quite honestly, we talk about it within our team. We hope it's hotter because we think it exposes everybody with weaknesses more and also shows our strength. We invite the heat, to be honest.

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