

NTT INDYCAR SERIES

News Conference

Sunday, May 31, 2026

Kyle Kirkwood

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: We're currently joined by Kyle Kirkwood, a runner-up finisher here today. Led five laps this afternoon in the No. 27 Sam's Club Honda for Andretti Global. His second podium here in Detroit, second runner-up finish of the season, back to second place in the points standings now with a ninth career podium for Kyle. Congratulations. There was a lot going on in that race.

KYLE KIRKWOOD: There was, yeah.

THE MODERATOR: To come home with a podium, second in the overall standings, just your thoughts?

KYLE KIRKWOOD: Yeah, it was a good race. I wish we had another opportunity or two to be able to try and pass Palou there. I think the yellows kind of hindered that.

Yeah, overall good day. You can't be very upset with starting sixth and finishing second. We did all the right things. Pit stops were great, strategy was great. I kind of made the decision to run primes when we did, which I think was probably the right call in hindsight. I don't know what we could have done better. All the stones were left unturned.

Q. Even though it was his first win since April 19, the Acura Grand Prix of Long Beach but when you get to a race like this and Alex seemingly knows how to do it, does it get frustrating when you're out there racing your ass off and you still can't pass him, still can't get to him?

KYLE KIRKWOOD: They're fast. They're a good team, and he's a phenomenal driver. It's kind of expected. They've struggled at street courses in recent years, and they don't now. They're clearly one of the best, and they're a group that we're trying to catch up to now almost on street courses.

Can you say it's frustrating? I wouldn't say it's frustrating, it just makes us work harder and want to drive to do better in all aspects because they're doing everything right. They have for many years now.

It's a little disappointing to see that they have pace on street courses now because that used to be our one thing, that we'd be like, okay, we're better than everyone at street courses; we're okay. Can't really say that's the case anymore. Yeah.

That part hurts, but we found pace on all the other circuits. In some ways I think I'd rather take a little hit at street courses and be good at all circuits, so there's an argument to both.

Q. You're up to second in points now but it's a 62-point gap. Do you still see it as a situation where he's going to have to have some bad luck to make it a good battle?

KYLE KIRKWOOD: Not really. Think about how much he's closed in on me or how fast he closed in on me in a few races. If we have the run that he's had in the middle part of the year here, it would be very possible for us to catch up. If we have a good weekend next weekend -- that was a track like Ganassi struggled at in recent years. Maybe they get better, I don't know. But there's a lot of good races on our schedule that I still think we can catch up.

It's not done and lost by any means. He was about 50 points behind us I think at one point. It's very possible still.

What are we, eight through, 10 to go? There's a crazy amount of races left.

Q. Obviously you knew about the caution procedure change, but were you surprised that just about every time today was a full course caution?

KYLE KIRKWOOD: Not really. To be honest, when you get ridiculed and criticized so much by the media, the drivers, everyone involved, that's what you expect from race control is to throw cautions when there's incidents. Do I think it was the right idea? No. But at the same time, it seemed like they got way too much pressure for leaving a driver on the front straight that was kind of in a safe position, 25 or 26 competent drivers that weren't going to



hit him. It wasn't like it was raining. There was 100 yellows out there.

This is what happens when you guys rip into them, to be honest. It was disappointing to see. Two yellows out caught me out fighting for the lead, where we almost overcut Palou and then went to make a pass on him. Yellow comes out right when I have a run on him, so I was pretty disappointed with it.

But I understand their position. You guys all called for yellows, so they're going to throw yellows.

Q. I guess it may not be a conversation you have this week, but how do you expect the strategy to change going forward after having experienced one race with it?

KYLE KIRKWOOD: I think probably by now, they've probably proved a point. I think everyone will go back like hey, that was probably a little bit too much and that's probably what they expect is for us to rein back. There's a reason we had the rule in place -- not the rule but the procedure in place. If a car is stopped and he's in safe position you leave it green. We can't just race thinking there might be a caution. That's not the smart way to race. You've got to race your race as if it's going to be green, which we've had a lot of green races in recent years.

It would be ridiculous to handcuff yourself to a strategy because you're hoping on a caution. That's what guys from mid-pack back do, not the leaders.

Q. To that point about the yellows, it seemed like the 10 car adjusted. They typically go long on the stints. They went short today. You guys still took the risk to go long. You knew what the situation was going to be; why did you risk it, I suppose?

KYLE KIRKWOOD: No, we didn't risk it, right. So this is what would have happened. He pit off of reds. He was starting deg bad and he realized that gap was closing so he realized he needs to get on primes. He's early for the last stint, very, very early, but he knew he was degging, and he kind of handcuffed us to be in that position where it's like, okay, we've got to go one or two laps, then we've got to pit because we don't want to get caught out by a yellow.

We almost pit and then we went an extra lap because we had not covered him yet, and if we got that extra lap in, we would have pit on that lap that the yellow came out, and we would have covered him.

But that was kind of just circumstantial. If he was going

quicker at that point, it would have been a much different case scenario.

Q. Kyle, you were running up front a lot of the time. Were you close to any of the incidents, and if you were, what did you see?

KYLE KIRKWOOD: I didn't really see any incidents. I saw one in front of me where Mick and someone got together -- that's right, it was Mick and Malukas. He just locked up and went kind of straight. It looked like he had a broken wing. It looked like he had damage for sure. That was the only one that I saw, and I kind of favored it because I just went from like fifth to third, so it was pretty good for me.

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