

NTT INDY NXT SERIES

News Conference

Saturday, June 6, 2026

Enzo Fittipaldi

Nikita Johnson

Tymek Kucharczyk

Lochie Hughes

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: We continue this morning with the INDY NXT, including the top three in the championship and the defending champion.

Lochie Hughes is the defending winner. The Australian native has four top fives, currently fifth in the championship.

Tymek Kucharczyk, a native of Poland, has five podiums and seven top fives this season. Just eight points out of the championship lead.

Nikita Johnson is second in points. St. Pete native. Nikita opened the season with a win at St. Pete. Seven points out of first place.

Finally the points leader after seven rounds is Enzo Fittipaldi. Grandson of the legendary Emerson Fittipaldi. Two wins and five podiums.

Enzo, big couple weeks for you. Now we hit the first oval of the championship. How might that shake things up a little bit?

ENZO FITTIPALDI: Yeah, I'm super excited for the first oval race this weekend. We tested here a bit more than a month ago. Yeah, I felt like I got up to speed nicely here. I'm just super excited.

We also tested at Nashville Superspeedway. That was actually my first time on an oval with an open-wheel car. Yeah, it's very different to what I'm used to, but I feel like I adapted very well. I feel very well-prepared for this weekend.

THE MODERATOR: Nikita, a big start to your season. Tell me about the test, what you learned, what you can

apply this weekend.

NIKITA JOHNSON: Yeah, just learned how to drive on an oval. Nashville and here was my first time in an open-wheel car on an oval. I've done a lot of oval racing, though, in my time.

Yeah, just looking to get a strong qualifying, hopefully top five, I know we can race from there. I know we're fast. The Cape boys, they have a knowledge, been in this for a while. Take advice from them. Matt Brabham, he won here, he's going to be my spotter, which is pretty cool. I think we'll have a good weekend. See what happens.

THE MODERATOR: Tymek, first time you drove on an oval, what did you think?

TYMEK KUCHARCZYK: Very dizzy. Had a bit of headaches going into the first test. It was a pretty cool experience. I think as a driver, you're required a very different skill set.

Got lucky enough to do my practice race with USF Pro car two weeks ago. I got my first experience on an oval race.

Yeah, this weekend I think it will be so different. We tested here over a month ago but the weather conditions were very, very different. I think everyone is going into a bit of an known.

But looking forward. It can shake up the championship a little bit more around this place.

THE MODERATOR: Lochie, a lot of good memories here for you with the big win last year. A race that saw a lot of action throughout the pack. What do you expect come tomorrow afternoon?

LOCHIE HUGHES: Yeah, hopefully from my position there's a lot of action, a race that everyone talks about for a couple weeks.

But no, I'm excited just to go oval racing. Obviously disappointed after last week. It's nice to be straight back to racing again. Yeah, no, I like oval racing. I wish after the

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month of May we went straight to an oval because after watching the 500, I just want to start turning left.

THE MODERATOR: Whets your appetite a little bit?

LOCHIE HUGHES: Definitely.

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

Q. Enzo, if you want to get to the next level, how important is it to not only show well on the streets and road courses but especially on the ovals?

ENZO FITTIPALDI: Yeah, I think it's very important. I think the ovals are a unique technique and of driving style that you need to learn, especially if you're coming from Europe like myself where we don't do much or any oval racing at all. It's just trying to learn.

We have teammates in our team this year, I have Salvador, who is a good reference as well on the ovals. I was able to lean on him and learn as much as possible in the test.

It's super important. You want to be as good as you can on the ovals. The same level as I am on the road courses, I want to be the same level on ovals. In INDYCAR you have to be very good at both. The biggest race is the 500, which is an oval, so...

I think it's extremely important.

NIKITA JOHNSON: Yeah, I can agree on that. It's a big part of INDYCAR, right, especially at the Indy 500, how massive it is. To win that, you become one of the greats, right?

To be a young driver, to get oval experience in INDY NXT is really good. Can't thank the series enough for getting us a little bit of preparation before INDYCAR.

Yeah, for sure to get a good showing around here, the INDYCAR teams are watching for the next few years of the next generation. If you can go get good results, win or whatever, it just for sure helps you.

TYMEK KUCHARCZYK: I think at the end of the day ovals are very vital. You want to be as complete as possible. INDYCAR, INDY NXT calendar has a lot of varieties. Racing on three types of circuits is a big challenge.

The more complete you are, the better you do on an oval, then as well on road courses, street circuits, then you have a higher chance to reach a top level.

NIKITA JOHNSON: Yeah, just echo what everyone else said. When it comes to INDYCAR, there's a lot more variables involved. But yeah, obviously you got to show what you can do on all three formats of racing.

Q. Enzo, since you live in Davidson, North Carolina, do you get to kick back on Lake Norman or too busy getting ready for the next race?

ENZO FITTIPALDI: I love it there. I do like a lot of walking to the Davidson. I do my Yoga class. I'm the only guy there. There's like 10 other girls (smiling).

I love it. It's great. It's a nice city. There's, like, a college there. I really like living there. My family's been there for quite a while because we moved up from Florida to that area, Charlotte. It's like the home for NASCAR. My brother was racing at Hickory, late models. I was doing the Super Shootout with Bandoleros and Legends.

I do know a bit of oval stuff, but that's a long time ago. It's short oval, right, the Charlotte Motor Speedway. Yeah, I really enjoy it.

Q. For the three rookies, obviously every week you're trying to prove yourself, but is there more to prove going into your very first oval knowing the importance of ovals in INDYCAR?

ENZO FITTIPALDI: Yeah, I think for sure you want to impress at any race you go, any race you do. I think this weekend especially for us rookies, it's going to be our first time in the ovals. You obviously want to do as best as possible. At the same time you also don't want to make mistakes. That's also not going to look good.

You obviously go out there, do your best, hit your marks, and yeah, just have fun.

NIKITA JOHNSON: Yeah, I mean, every weekend's important to do well. This is just another racetrack to me. Of course, it's our first oval of the year. For sure want a strong showing out of here. Just how TymeK was talking about being a complete driver, that's what INDYCAR teams look at.

Yeah, going to be fun to run the first oval of the year and see how we race around here. It's just another track and another weekend for me.

TYMEK KUCHARCZYK: I think the momentum will be really important around this place. It's the first oval of the season. We have two more. The better you are around this place, the easier I'll assume you get for the rest of the season.



Yeah, I think it will be a challenging one and everyone will want to be on top of the game. For us rookies especially, I think the quallie format will be very, very different, something totally new. The championship position obviously helps us with that. That's a cool thing.

As I said, the momentum, how you find yourself in the race with the traffic, with the lap cars, will be so crucial.

Q. Lochie, knowing the other three are not experienced at ovals, you being the defending winner here, does that give you any additional sense of confidence to get it done and catch back up to them, reset a difficult season?

LOCHIE HUGHES: Yeah, I think for sure. I've been saying that. Last year here was my first oval and I won it. Obviously anything's possible around these ovals. I think there's typically a lot more opportunity than road and street courses.

I feel really confident going in here. We had a really good test day here. Yeah, no, I like oval racing now. Yeah, excited to get going.

Q. You mentioned you came here winning your first time here in St. Louis. What advice can you give to the other three drivers on what it takes to get it done?

LOCHIE HUGHES: Yeah, probably won't be giving that away (smiling). Yeah, just... No, we'll see.

THE MODERATOR: Get in line behind you, you'll be fine?

LOCHIE HUGHES: Yeah. I can think of something silly to say, but no.

THE MODERATOR: Guys, thanks for coming in.

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