

NTT INDYCAR SERIES

News Conference

Tuesday, June 30, 2026

Dennis Hauger

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: Good afternoon, everyone. The month of July begins, as it has in recent years, with the return to Mid-Ohio Sports Car Course. Drivers love the facility. The Honda Indy 200 at Mid-Ohio is also certainly a part of a larger 4th of July holiday weekend as the country celebrates the 250th anniversary, and it all begins Friday, and then with coverage on Sunday's race beginning at 12:30 p.m. eastern on FOX, FOX Deportes, FOX One and INDYCAR Radio powered by OnlyBulls, and in many ways this is a return to where it all began for Dennis Hauger.

Mid-Ohio is where he first tested an NTT INDYCAR Series race car, and that was, of course, last fall and returned just last week for a team test where he was third quick of the 14 cars.

Also remember Dennis won the INDY NXT by Firestone race there last year, and this week he returns, driver the No. 19 Ault Blockchain Honda for Dale Coyne Racing. Dennis also leads the Rookie of the Year standings, and with all apologies, if you catch his eye going somewhere else during the next half hour or so, it's because Norway is playing Ivory Coast right now in the round of 32 in the World Cup.

With that, we'll try to keep it as tight as possible. Thanks for doing this. Appreciate it. Go Norway, right?

DENNIS HAUGER: Yep, go Norway. I probably picked the wrong time to do it. But I appreciate you guys and everyone there for chatting.

Q. How comfortable are you with Mid-Ohio? Obviously you've been there a couple times now. You had the test last week. I would think that's got to help heading into this weekend.

DENNIS HAUGER: Yeah, for sure. I had a good race there last year winning the INDY NXT race, and my first INDYCAR test ever was at Mid-Ohio, which I think was good for me also coming into the test we had last week and just already knowing a bit of how everything feels there, and we can sort of continue and build a little bit from

it.

I think we were having a really positive day, probably the best day I've had in the car all year, I would say. So I felt really good, and hopefully that's something we can carry on to the race weekend.

Obviously it's always a bit different with weather, the rubber and how everything changes in a race week, but I think we can go into the weekend with some confidence. I'm really keen to see what we can do.

Q. Maybe with that, talk about your season a little bit thus far. A couple of top-10 finishes. To me, you seem to get more and more comfortable each weekend in the car. Is that accurate?

DENNIS HAUGER: Yeah. I mean, I feel like this year has just been filled with potential. We've had some issues here and there that's kind of not going our direction, but at times we've had some really good pace. Obviously Long Beach we came from 19th to 11th, and Indy Road Course 24th to eighth. Obviously St. Pete as well, a top 10.

But I feel like we've sort of had some good chances, as well, at times, and there's been stuff that's kind of taken it out of my hands on that side. Overall really happy with the season so far. I've learned so much, and just thinking my mindset in race one how little I actually knew in terms of race experience and how much I know now is just a confidence boost for me knowing more and kind of having a bigger, sort of, package in my mind in terms of what I need to do to be the best I can out there.

Q. Dennis, just to follow up a little bit from what Dave asked related to your season, as you look at the second half of this, what more do you want out of this? What are some realistic targets for you the rest of the way?

DENNIS HAUGER: I mean, hard to say. I'm still just going race to race. Goal number one for me this year was finish every race, which I have, except obviously the fuel cell week we had in Gateway which was kind of out of my control. But other than that, it's been clean.



Yeah, obviously I'm pretty happy with how we've been building it up so far, but I definitely want more than that. I don't want to fight midfield. I want to be up there fighting for podiums and fighting for top 5s and wins.

We have a group that's been changing throughout the year, and hopefully now we have a bit more of a consistent group that we can build from.

I think Mid-Ohio will be a perfect way to try and build some momentum, build some good results for the team, and our first priority, I think, is trying to have a clean week and as a team, as well. We always seem to have some bumps along the way throughout the weekend, so that's priority number one as a team, and for me to just maximize what we get out of it, as well, is important.

I feel like I've kind of done that. Looking at Romain, as well, my teammate. I know he's a quick guy. When he was with Andretti, for example, he had three or four pole positions, so he's super quick. He knows what he's doing, and I feel like I've been matching him at times and getting faster.

Yeah, there's results I want to get, and I want to chase top 10s regularly, and I feel like we can do that. Obviously if we can get some even better results, that would be awesome. Yeah, I definitely want more.

Q. Unfortunately I've got to ask this question. This is the time of year that we start looking ahead to next year, and maybe some of y'all's focus isn't always strictly on the racetrack because you're always trying to figure out your 2027 plans. What can you tell me about that as far as what you're looking at with that and whatnot? We know you're still kind of an affiliate of Andretti and whatnot. What are things looking like?

DENNIS HAUGER: Honestly, I don't know yet. Still pretty open, it seems, across the field of the grid. For me, I just have to see the opportunities I can get.

I know when I have a good car, I'm capable of winning races and being up on the top. I think we showed that when we had a good car in St. Pete. I qualified third for my first race, and I've only gotten better, to be honest, as a driver from here.

For me, we have to look at what opportunities I get, whether that's with Dale Coyne another year, whether it's with Andretti or if it's somewhere else. But I think everyone kind of will slot in more for the next couple of weeks, and we'll know more by then.

Yeah, right now I'm just focusing on my racing and trying to get the best results I can to show myself, as well, and also get the results for the team, and then we'll see where it takes us later in the year.

Q. Just to confirm, you're not necessarily locked in with -- if you're not in an Andretti seat next year, you can kind of go anywhere you want more or less?

DENNIS HAUGER: I can't really talk about the contract stuff. Not too much to say there. Yeah, right now I'm just -- yeah, as I said, doing the best I can on track, and we'll see where it ends up.

Q. You've obviously had a fair amount of time now to kind of adapt and reflect on the season so far. Coming into the preseason and your expectations, what have been some of the biggest challenges, the biggest learning curves that you've had to embrace since you've come into INDYCAR?

DENNIS HAUGER: I mean, I've been pretty happy. I feel like I've maximized the car and the results 90 percent of the year so far, which I think is really good as a rookie. I think the only time I've really made a mistake was at the 500 when I got that penalty for speeding in pit lane, which was super annoying because we started P29, and I was actually right behind Felix before that last pit stop. I passed Armstrong before he pitted, as well.

So we were flying, and it was just super annoying, but it's just one of those things. As a rookie, I think, when you look at the same penalties last year for rookies and years before that, it was a typical thing. But that one beats me up quite a bit, I think.

Just being in that position, as well, and having that pace was super awesome and one of the coolest things I've ever done by far. That one beats me up, but otherwise been pretty happy. Just been building experience every weekend.

I think one of the biggest things for us as a team has been minimizing mistakes. We've had some small stuff here and there, starting the weekend off with some stuff that should be in place that is not, and I think that's kind of where we have potential to build because you're always going to be a bit on the back foot by then.

Otherwise I feel like when we have those clean weekends, we get results, and I think we've showed that several times. For me right now it's just going to be about keeping that going. We had a really clean test in Mid-Ohio, and I think we showed some good results there, as well. The goal will be to start off where we left there in the race weekend and

hopefully not have any issues as we go.

Q. If you look at the Rookie of the Year battle, you do have a little bit of a gap to Caio and Mick. Is that something you pay attention to as the season goes on? Obviously you're focusing on the individual races to maximize the results. In the grand scheme of things, is that something the second half of the season you want to pay attention to trying to achieve that, or is that something you don't really think about?

DENNIS HAUGER: I mean, if I was fighting for a championship, like overall championship, I would think about it, right? So why wouldn't I think about the rookie championship, as well? It only makes sense. If I can't win the championship, I might as well try and win the rookie one.

To be honest, I've not focused on it too much. Every weekend I just try to get the most out of myself and try and get good results. The results we get and everything we do throughout the weekend is just an end result of the point standings and everything. Just taking it step by step in that sense and not really focusing on that specifically, but for sure you're only going to be a rookie once, so I want to get that for sure.

I don't think, like, I've been sitting in the best car probably compared to Caio maybe at times, but we've still had some really good pace race and race results. I think that's been really cool.

Hopefully we can keep that going. 30 points is not a lot, so it can turn around quickly. Like Gateway was -- when I DNF'd before we even started, that was a day that could have changed things really quickly again, and AJ Foyt, for example, and Rahal, to be honest, had really good pace in Road America, as well, but we seemed to always salvage something compared to them in the race.

I feel like there's potential for us to go even further, and hopefully we can start gaining even more points.

Q. How do you view the work you've had with Dale Coyne Racing so far?

DENNIS HAUGER: I think it's been really fun. I love working with the team, with the people in there, with Dale, as well. He's a super great guy. He loves the sport, and that's so fun to see.

Obviously there's been a bit of a mix throughout the year with the engineering group, unfortunately, but I feel like the group we have now is really a good mix of people that we can work well together with, and hopefully that can build

some momentum for us going forward now with that consistency and just having that data weekend by weekend to try and improve slowly but steadily. I'm really happy with that, and yeah, it's been a great year so far, I would say.

I think as a driver you're just looking at the things that could have been better, and I know we could have been higher up on the total standings and been even better at times, but when I look at the total picture, we're still in a good window, and there's no reason for us to not improve from here, as well.

Excited to see what we can do in the second half.

Q. What's your main goal for the second half of the season?

DENNIS HAUGER: I want to get a podium. I want to be on the podium. I want to get a trophy, obviously preferably on the top. But if I get a podium, as well, that would be great.

For me as well as I think the team, obviously limiting mistakes, and I think the biggest thing for us has been qualifying. We've been struggling a bit in qualifying at times, especially on road courses.

Yeah, getting a bit better there can help us in the race because we do have pretty good race pace, I think, at times. That's something to work on for me, as well.

Yeah, I know I can do something well when we put things together. Hopefully we can try and get some consistency now as we go. That will be important for the rookie standings, as well.

Q. In this moment, Norway is playing with Ivory Coast. What's your prediction of the score in World Cup?

DENNIS HAUGER: I have no idea, but I hope Norway wins. Honestly, we've some pretty far already compared to how we've been doing in a long time, so it's pretty cool. I'm seeing, like, everyone in Norway now literally on a Tuesday afternoon. Everyone is outside and partying and watching the game and going crazy.

It's really a special thing, I think, already. But we'll see how it goes. I'm watching the TV right now, so we'll see.

Q. You've already mentioned having Romain Grosjean as your teammate this year, but over the first half of the season, how has your working relationship with him grown, and has he given any technical feedback or advice that's really helped you progress in your rookie

 . . . when all is said, we're done.®

season so far?

DENNIS HAUGER: Yeah, I mean, I think as a competitor, he doesn't want to give everything away, but I feel like we've had a really good connection so far as teammates. We're pushing each other, and we're pushing the team to try and improve, which has been really good. He's obviously a very experienced guy.

I watched Romain as a kid in F1, so when I heard I was going to be teammates with him, it was a bit of a cool moment for me.

No, it's been great working with him. He definitely is a benchmark to compare myself to as a driver, and that's perfect for me as a rookie this year. That's what I need, and I think that's also good for me to show everyone that he's definitely a good guy. He's been winning races and getting pole positions almost every year he's been driving INDYCAR.

I know that if I'm there with him or faster than him, I'm in a good window, I would guess. No, it's been really fun. He's got a lot of passion, which is good. It's been great.

Q. Looking at Mid-Ohio this weekend, it's a great track, but it is notoriously narrow, so track position is quite vital. Knowing that overtaking is difficult here, how much pressure does that put on you and the team to nail qualifying on Saturday?

DENNIS HAUGER: Yeah, for sure it's important. It's easy to overheat the tires around there. Tire management is kind of a big thing, especially there. As you said, it's a tight, technical course, so it's hard to pass. Strategy comes into play quite a bit.

Yeah, qualifying has been one of our weak spots as a team so far this year, but that's definitely something I want to improve, and I think if we can start that this weekend, that would be great. I don't see any reason after the test that we can't do that, but hopefully we'll be in the same window as the test, and we can go from there.

Q. The international flair that this World Cup has been bringing to the States has been fabulous. I would love if you drivers can continue this momentum throughout the rest of the season, but I want to know more about your tenacity behind the wheel. Who would you best compare yourself to from this team on the pitch? Is it a Larsen? Is it an Erling Holland or is it more of a defender style? Who are you behind the wheel?

DENNIS HAUGER: I don't know. I'm just myself behind the wheel, honestly. I don't know who I can compare

myself to. I would say I'm a really calm guy off the track, and I'm pretty smooth and calm, I would say, in my driving style, as well, especially during the race.

But I think I have the capability to be aggressive on the one-lap qualifying stuff and when I need to. I feel like I'm a bit of an all-around player, I guess.

I guess I'm not Holland; he's more about just score the goal, stay-in-the-box guy, but he gets the job done for sure. I don't know. I don't know. I'm just myself. I do my own thing. It's been working so far.

Q. If you do podium this year, will you bring the Norway Row to the podium, please.

DENNIS HAUGER: I already thought about it. That's my only goal this year, get on the podium so I can row back to Norway and celebrate with that. That would be so fun.

Q. Dennis, just with the on-track stuff, obviously is a big fight for you in the rookie chase, but what's your favorite part about the off-track events and what the 4th of July weekend brings, especially with the America 250 happening and the extra flair that it brings?

DENNIS HAUGER: Yeah, really cool. It was my first experience of July the 4th last year here in the U.S., and obviously I was with some mechanics. I think it was right before or right after the weekend, as well, to celebrate it a bit, and obviously at the track, as well.

It's really fun seeing everyone celebrate, the fireworks, and to be having that at the track, as well, is really fun. Yeah, hopefully everyone is going to enjoy it, and we can have a really good race for the fans, as well.

It's just the best to be at Mid-Ohio every time, and hopefully it will be even better this year. It was awesome already last year, so we'll see if they can top it. But hopefully we can have a good weekend with good weather.

Q. This is a track that you've become familiar with. How does your approach to a track that you are now comfortable or more comfortable with and familiar with differ from when you're preparing for a track that you have not raced before?

DENNIS HAUGER: I feel like I'm probably -- this is one of the tracks I'm most prepared for, just in terms of having the experience in the car close up to the weekend. I think my mindset is kind of the same on every track. Like I go through the same stuff in terms of preparation, videos, strategies, and just working on the details every time.



I feel like I can kind of start to get ahead, and I think that probably helps me a bit. But at the end of the day, you need a good balance. You need the right kind of -- you need the car in a good window to make it happen, as well.

Hopefully we progress that into something that can be a good weekend.

Q. You've talked about this goal of taking a podium this season. Which track do you think you will have the best shot at it?

DENNIS HAUGER: Hard to say, honestly. I've never been with a team at any of the tracks coming up this year or any of the tracks we've been doing this year. And the thing, as well, is the engineers haven't been with the team before the races we're going into. We're all going in a bit blank, and we're trying to get it in the right window, trying to make the most out of it.

When you don't have that data, you don't really know. So for me, we've built on stuff. We've worked on stuff going into Mid-Ohio, and now we have a package. So I feel like we can have a good weekend in Mid-Ohio. I don't see a reason why we can't. From the lap times, as well, in testing, we were third. We were I think P2 or something for a long time. We had an engine failure so we couldn't do the last 30 minutes or 45 minutes, but we looked really solid.

Hopefully we can get a good result there. It's INDYCAR; anything can happen. You never know until the last couple of laps or last lap.

For me it's just trying to maximize every weekend. If that's a P10 or if it's a P15 or if it's a podium, that's what I have to do. In my mind, I don't care too much about the podium specifically, just maximize the car every weekend when I get on track.

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