

NTT INDYCAR SERIES

News Conference

Saturday, August 22, 2026

Jeff Gordon

Kurt Busch

Helio Castroneves

Tony Kanaan

Press Conference



because we don't have speedometers in our car.

The rhythm, the track, finding more speed as the day unfolded, it was just a fun challenge. Street courses are something we don't do much in NASCAR. It was more up the INDYCAR guys' alley.

THE MODERATOR: Overall you got to spend some time in DC. As you look back on your experience here this weekend, where does it rank in terms of what you've done on the racetrack?

KURT BUSCH: It's an epic thrill, like a top 10 type of moment. Winning championships and running Daytona, running the Indy 500, racing on a street course like this, just IROC vibe. For me it's the frat house. It's fun being out there with my buddies that we used to race hard and do that competitively all the time.

Just taking the memory away of watching the IROC cars pull out on track. As a kid, I always felt like yellow one, green one, purple one. It's cool. The IROC vibe makes you feel like a kid again.

THE MODERATOR: Helio, podium in race one, nearly came up with it again in race two. A little bit of a loop towards the end of the race. Your feeling and thought about racing in DC?

HELIO CASTRONEVES: Just echo what Kurt just said. Absolutely incredible for us to be here. What a unique opportunity for all of us, having this amazing background. Yeah, if you talking to everyone, at least myself, big smile on my face.

They say there was not a travel machine that exist. I tell you those IROC cars are travel machines. We're turning back time, going back to the times, as Kurt alluded to, so much fun. You're watching the cars, the noise. Absolutely when you're going on a straight line, you hear the echo in the engine, bouncing through the walls, it's so cool. I had a lot of fun.

Thanks again to everyone who put this together. Congrats as well to everyone that still keeping with these cars, they

THE MODERATOR: We're joined by the podium finishers. Very privileged to have some racing royalty here joining us on the podium for today's race.

In race one, podium finishers were Helio Castroneves in third place, Kurt Busch finishing second. In the second race of the weekend Tony Kanaan, Kurt Busch finishing second, and Jeff Gordon with the sweep of the weekend.

We'll start off with Kurt. It's a very special environment we've had here this weekend. It's amazing to see the legendary cars and drivers we had on the track, really entertaining the fans of DC. Tell us your overall feeling and what you saw out there today.

KURT BUSCH: I was completely blown away. First practice, didn't look like there was an empty seat anywhere. The vibe, the crowd, just the excitement. I was like a kid in a candy store. It was like I was in a bowl of M&M's with all the colors and the banners. Where is my braking zone? That's a cool building (laughter).

It was so much fun and a privilege to be out there honestly racing on the streets here in Washington DC. A little bit of fun.

THE MODERATOR: Talk to us about your race overall, race one, race two. It was an entertaining race for everyone to watch, but what did you see from your perspective?

KURT BUSCH: These dogs got some bite (smiling). We were running hard, man. The braking zones, we were on edge. Helio had a little issue in the second race, just showing how we were putting the cars on the edge. The speed and the thrill down Pennsylvania Avenue, I'll never forget it. I don't know how fast we were really going,



... when all is said, we're done.®

just amazing.

Yeah, the second one I was just trying to catch up with Jeff. He was too strong on one of those corners. I feel that I'm young, I make mistake like young as well. That was a mistake. I shouldn't have it.

When I saw Tony coming. Don't crash me (laughter). That was a close call. Wow, what a fun, fun day. It was fun.

THE MODERATOR: You had a smile on your face from the moment you got out of the car, saying, I want to do this again. What appeals to you about this kind of racing?

HELIO CASTRONEVES: When you're talking about the legends here, Rusty Wallace, Bobby Labonte, Bill Elliott, T.K. the other T.K. I got them both (smiling). It's incredible.

I mean, you learn so much from everyone. I understand not many of the guys are racing, but in the end of the day, they didn't get here by luck. Everyone did incredible. Just very honored to be part of this group. Yeah, it was lot of fun.

THE MODERATOR: Four-time Indy 500 winner, Helio Castroneves. This is the celebration of America's 250th birthday. From Brazil, but you spent so much of your life in the U.S. What does it mean to you to get a chance to race here?

HELIO CASTRONEVES: Well, as I said, it's a unique opportunity for all of us. INDYCAR is putting a stamp on the map. A lot of people understanding what this is all about. Not only for me.

Look, I came here as a young driver, young Brazilian. All of a sudden the country offered me the opportunity to show my talent, to work hard. I can't thank enough for that.

Just now celebrating this incredible, incredible anniversary date, and be here, it's mind-blowing.

THE MODERATOR: Tony Kanaan finished on the podium as well today. You put on a good show out there for everyone today. Talk to us a little bit about your perspective, getting a chance to race in IROC for the first time.

TONY KANAAN: I didn't realize until this morning when I woke up, my wife said, Good morning to me. I was actually moody. She goes, Here we go, the race car driver is back (laughter).

For me, when Ray called, I've never run these cars, I

watched these guys at the time that we had a chance to run, Helio did a couple races. My boss at the time, Michael Andretti, didn't let me do it. Man, I want to be there.

Having the opportunity to do this today is awesome. Then the pressure came. When we racing the legends, apparently my boss is watching, I don't know why, to judge me or to give me a hard time. Then I'm running the team now. If I don't do well, how am I going to go back in the truck, talk to my drivers.

What do you mean? You suck over there today (laughter).

It was a lot of pressure, but I had a lot of fun. What a great event. We keep talking about it. For us, racing, everybody that is up here, is our lives, part of our lives, part of the rest of our lives.

Moments like this is something you go back and you go, Indy 500s, championships, we all have it, but when we get together and talk about stuff. Jeff was, We have a race together?

No, now you beat me, we're done, I don't want to talk to you (smiling).

It's awesome. What a great way to start the weekend here, the anniversary of the country. My wife is American, all my kids. Helio and I came here in 1996, and here we are. Very thankful for it.

THE MODERATOR: Does that feel special for you, to share that experience with him?

TONY KANAAN: We start racing together since 1986. I have to say in the back straight today, he was behind me. I am like, When this is going to end (laughter)? Again, my last race that I retire, we're battling for 11 and 12 like it was for the Indy 500 win, until the last lap. I'm like, Can't I have somebody else? I don't want you behind me (laughter).

Then he hits me. He is like, You went too slow in the corner. I almost hit him.

That's destiny. I don't know what it is. He's my brother that I never had. I love giving him a hard time.

THE MODERATOR: Do you guys feel like you're representing the INDYCAR ranks when you're out there?

TONY KANAAN: I hope so. Obviously we're the old guys. We're the people they're looking up for. Pato, sometimes it's funny to see Pato. He asked me if I ever raced in Phoenix.



I'm like, I won there three times (smiling).

Hopefully we are represented in INDYCAR. Obviously I think we are. It's great to see the mix and how Ray can bring all of us together. There's no this NASCAR, INDYCAR, it's just racing. Everybody loves racing, so yeah.

THE MODERATOR: Our champion here from the weekend, Jeff Gordon, winner of both races today. Very impressive run whether you're coming from the front or the middle or back.

JEFF GORDON: This is just an amazing event. I've known all these guys, others in the field, for a long, long time. It is like a brotherhood. This is an elite group of champions and drivers.

To me you walk in and you start talking about life, you talk about this raceway back then, doing things, the friendships. I think that's something I find the most special.

Then of course being on the streets of DC, being in the role that I'm in now, I realize how difficult it is to pull together an event like this. So I'm super appreciative of INDYCAR and Bud, all the folks there that made this happen. Ray Evernham on the IROC side. He and Rob Kauffman have been building this series up. Kurt and I have been playing in it a little bit.

I've been following him for the last three, so it was nice to get this win today. So many reasons why. These cars are raw. They're a lot of fun to drive. He and I probably have more laps in them than we want to count. More how they relate to what we did in the Cup Series.

But to just see the names and the guys that are competing and being invited to come here and do such a special, meaningful race, celebrating 250 years. I've never driven on a street course before. This is my first one.

TONY KANAAN: Great, rub it up. One out of one. Came here, clean house, leave. Thanks (laughter).

JEFF GORDON: I can go on and on. If we had just gone out there and had practice, I was worried about the rain. By the way, I didn't sleep at all last night. These days I sleep like a baby. I have no problem sleeping. I could not sleep last night at all.

It goes to show you, doesn't matter what's on the line, you can't help but be competitive and take it serious and know that there's pressure on you.

By the way, my boss was putting a lot of pressure on me.

He's been asking me how come I haven't won an IROC race. I've been telling him, Well, I'm trying, boss, doing this, having fun.

He was like, You better go get this one.

I couldn't let them down, otherwise they're not going to let me back in the shop on Monday.

THE MODERATOR: You talk about where this ranks, how you feel. You probably felt the fan support from around this place. People were on their feet. Remembering all the great memories you had produced in the Cup Series, Daytona 500 wins, championships, do you get a sense for how many fans you've made here this weekend?

JEFF GORDON: Listen, we all realize we're in an INDYCAR race. They're INDYCAR fans. They've done an amazing job making this event happen.

I was a little bit taken back today in the driver autograph session that people were coming through. Some diecast cars. I think this was an amazing blend of race fans from all over that wanted to be a part of this event. They're INDYCAR fans, NASCAR fans, IROC fans. That to me is just great for motorsports.

THE MODERATOR: You got a hidden talent, some dancing?

JEFF GORDON: No, no, no. Not anymore. I had it when I was young. Helio can still do it. He's still young. Somehow we're not that far away in age, but for some reason this guy is like the Fountain of Youth.

HELIO CASTRONEVES: I was ready, but Tony said don't do it.

KURT BUSCH: The banter in the locker room back in the day is, How fast do you run in the mile? How much do you bench press? Now it is like, Man I pulled my hamstring. My eyes aren't good.

JEFF GORDON: I got a blister (laughter).

TONY KANAAN: Our jobs between ourselves, you're going to look terrible, so just don't.

JEFF GORDON: There were cameras (laughter).

THE MODERATOR: Questions...

Q. Jeff, Kurt said this dog still has bite to it. Does that bite ever go away when you're a race driver?



JEFF GORDON: I think the level of where you can put the car on the edge does. To me, to get out there and push the car, remember how to do the downshifts, all those things, it does come back.

Like I said, I've driven a couple IROC races. I drove the Porsche Carrera Cup. Totally different car. I get to do some rides in two-seaters at times at the track Ten Tenths in Charlotte. I get some laps.

I think it's one of the things I'm enjoying most in life, I get to get behind the wheel, maybe not a competition like this, but push a car to whatever my limit is. I love that. I hope that never goes away for me. It's really special. It's what this all started with when I was a young kid. To know we can still do that... It makes my kids proud.

Q. When Ray Evernham was leaning into your window, did that bring back some old memories?

JEFF GORDON: Listen, Ray and I, I think it's one of the very special parts of my life right now. That's probably been the last maybe 10 years of the bond that he and I have. I mean, he truly is my brother. We had so much success together. We built a bond.

But he went his way and did his team, and I stayed at Hendrick. But our friendship never wavered. Now we're spending more time together with events like this. I go up to his property that he has near Wilkesboro. We go camping together. Our families hang out together.

I love that guy so much. He puts so much into this. There's a reason why he's a great crew chief, because he treats this just like it was a Cup race as far as how to organize the event, make sure the cars are ready, get the drivers together. There's just special people out there in the world that can do unique things. It takes somebody like him to pull off a day like today.

Q. How do you see this event stacking up with other great street courses in American motorsports? How does it stack up in terms of the layout and the design, the stuff they've done with the walls?

JEFF GORDON: Don't ask me. This is the first time I've ever been on a street course. Ask these guys that have done it (laughter).

TONY KANAAN: I think you need to look at various different ways. We haven't raced here yet. Qualifying now. The racetrack, it's a street course, so we don't know what it's going to bring.

Event, exposure, this could not be better for INDYCAR. I

think we have a great product, but we've been fighting quite a bit over the years to get more fans, new fans. I think this is the step towards it. With FOX coming into the series, I think it brought a little more awareness. These are the type of races we need.

If it's going to be a good or bad race, we're going to have different opinions about that. But look around, look at the scenery, look how many people we have in here. I think it's a win for INDYCAR, for sure.

Q. Jeff, you said earlier it's the first street course. What is the secret that you're winning here two races? Helio, I think you said maybe two years ago you do Brazilian stockcars. Any similarities to these cars?

JEFF GORDON: Well, I mean, I'm curious to know what the INDYCAR guys are saying about the course. To me, what I like about what my experience was is how challenging it is. I felt like all the way to the last lap I could not lose focus. You can wheel hop, there's places to do lockup, the car's bouncing around, you can lose the car pretty easily. You could hit the inside wall, outside wall.

When I watched these guys in INDYCAR running at the pace that they are, I'm like, Wow. These guys do this far more often than they do it in NASCAR. We're starting to do a little bit of it in NASCAR, too.

I miss that. When we went to Chicago, I really wanted to be out there competing because it was such a cool event, something I never did before.

I don't know what your question was. Did I answer the question?

Q. How did you win your first time?

JEFF GORDON: First of all, I watched Kurt, what he did in his car. I was like, might need to tune it up a little bit.

KURT BUSCH: How many cameras and radios did you have in your car? Looked like you were communicating with NASA.

JEFF GORDON: I'm not saying I didn't bring an advantage, but listen, I did what I had to do.

KURT BUSCH: You were communicating with FOX. You had all that extra weight, too (smiling).

JEFF GORDON: Exactly. I had so much more weight in the car with the cameras (laughter).

HELIO CASTRONEVES: Stockcars in Brazil, I still racing



down there. It's been a lot of fun. Very competitive. I'm learning different. It's not the same as those Pontiacs, Thunderbird, which they are a lot of fun.

I knew a little bit about the history because I asked today, What was the first car? They told me it was a Porsche. They then they went to Camaros, then Thunderbirds. It was cool to be part of that history.

I like it, because I feel the sound of these cars are so much fun, incredible. I think when you talk about to everyone, everybody knew that they were all there because they heard. That was pretty cool.

THE MODERATOR: I think it's Firebird, by the way.

TONY KANAAN: It's Helio. Doesn't matter. You should know that.

KURT BUSCH: I speak Helio. Just translating (laughter).

TONY KANAAN: He's a bird. Goes fast, flies (smiling).

Q. Jeff, I have photos of you break dancing in Vegas.

JEFF GORDON: I don't need to do it again because I've done it and you have photographs. There's video of it (smiling).

Q. There's never been a race on the streets of DC before. There was a race in a parking lot, football stadium. You guys actually completed the first race.

JEFF GORDON: Maybe the only.

Q. Maybe the only.

JEFF GORDON: This could be the only weekend. I hope they come back. I think this is special. I'd love to see NASCAR and INDYCAR here.

I think we're all sitting here going that this is really unique, really challenging to do. Is it ever going to happen again? I think we're all feeling very nostalgic to be a part of this.

I'm pretty sure I won't ever be here in an IROC car again. Let's at least say that.

Q. Kurt, are you going to ask for tech on Jeff's car?

JEFF GORDON: He can't ask for tech on my car because then they'd have to tech his car (smiling).

KURT BUSCH: The integrity of the cars, what we're doing. You got to rebuild your stuff from 2003, 2001, right?

These cars drive like it's 2000. That's what makes it so much fun, with the awkward braking, the acceleration isn't like a current Cup car.

It's a blast again. We're just having fun with the gang. If we come back, it would be fantastic. Could be a one-and-done. I see more and more street races happening with F1 now, Vegas, Miami a little bit. The city centers are seeing more of an opportunity because there's more of a population in this area.

Hopefully everyone enjoys it on the fan side. Getting in and getting out is not too bad.

Q. Where does it rank for you guys? You were at Le Mans earlier this year. On the same level of epic-ness?

KURT BUSCH: I've been getting a lot of bucket list items this year. Very blessed, spoiled. These are two of my old winning cars. Makes it great to go drive around and feel the old girlfriend that I raced back in '03. My Monster Energy car that I took to Le Mans is from 2020. It just has been a blast.

Q. When you guys were running IROC, team owners, sponsors, they felt a little bit more open to letting you jump into different series, testing yourselves against other disciplines. Today driver schedules, corporate partnerships, tighter than ever. From where you guys sit today, how hard would it be to navigate those logistics and let today's stars have a true cross-discipline All-Star Race that IROC pretty much was?

JEFF GORDON: I mean, I go back pretty far in the series. There were challenges. There really were.

We loved having the INDYCAR guys, sports car guys, a couple F1 guys come. But we were running ovals, Daytona, Talladega. Al Jr. was doing it. We weren't on road courses. It felt almost more like a NASCAR event.

For us, it was like cool cars, they're all packed together, they put on a hell of a race. Get to hang out with these guys, other great drivers.

But I wish that at that time it could have been a little more spread out, like it started. It started on road courses. I wish it could have been road courses and the big ovals, really had the different disciplines, street courses. I think that would have been amazing.

Who knows. I think it's more of an historic-type race now. You saw the crowd today. You see the excitement around



these cars. I think it still has a huge potential to be a series of some sort. I think running the cars on these types of tracks are the only way that that happens.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you.

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