

NTT INDYCAR SERIES

News Conference

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Dennis Hauger

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: We are joined by the 2026 NTT INDYCAR SERIES Rookie of the Year in Dennis Hauger. Ironically a DNF today, but still enough to get it done. Couple races led this season at Phoenix, Milwaukee, two top 10s, best qualifying position of third in the season opener in St. Petersburg. Finishes with a 15-point advantage over Mick Schumacher to win the award.

Your thoughts on being the Rookie of the Year.

DENNIS HAUGER: Yeah, thanks. It's obviously been a bit of a roller coaster this year as a rookie. Yeah, to become the Rookie of the Year and get that title is pretty special to me. It can only happen once. To be able to get it, yeah, it's pretty special.

Just want to say a big thanks to Team Honda, everyone supporting me this year. It's been, as I said, a bit of a roller coaster. Even with a DNF, we still got the title. Super happy and grateful.

THE MODERATOR: What did you make of your first season in the series?

DENNIS HAUGER: First of all, a lot of new experiences as a rookie, trying to learn something every weekend. I feel like I've done that. That's been one of my key points. Just trying to get better and better.

Obviously we had a really good start to the year with that P3 qualifying. It's been going up and down as I kind of would expect. Overall pretty happy. I feel like I've shown what I can do at times. Obviously wish I could do it more often sometimes. That's part of the game.

But yeah, just been an incredible experience being an INDYCAR driver for the first time, first year.

THE MODERATOR: Quick ascension. Last year INDY NXT champion, now Rookie of the Year. It's happened quickly, hasn't it?

DENNIS HAUGER: Yeah, definitely. Being a rookie last

year in INDY NXT, too, coming from a series where I kind of had more experience, as well. Still just learning every track for the first time. Obviously the car as well. New people. Moving to a new country. Yeah, a lot of new stuff at once (smiling).

Kind of the same thing this year obviously being an INDYCAR driver and a rookie, new tracks, a lot of stuff on the technical side that's new to me.

Yeah, it's been a busy couple of years, but I've been super happy and lucky to race here, as well. It's just been such a fun ride.

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

Q. What do you think you had today if you hadn't been involved in the accident?

DENNIS HAUGER: I mean, that's always going to be a question mark, I guess. Honestly, we've been struggling quite a bit all week. We've been getting a little bit better here and there. Qualifying was still pretty tough for both me and Romain. We were able to keep the tires going for a while compared to a lot of other guys. I was kind of looking forward to today, try and gain some spots. Obviously I didn't get that opportunity, getting taken out on lap one. Yeah, I got to watch the whole race from the pit wall. That was also interesting and nerve-wracking, for sure.

Q. What were some of the biggest challenges you faced this year that you didn't expect?

DENNIS HAUGER: I feel like we've had some different phases of the year, to be honest. Some parts have been kind of struggling in qualifying, been pretty good in the race. Other parts we've suddenly been decent in qualifying, struggling in the race.

It's kind of been a confusing year I would say at times. Just for me, I think myself, keep working with the team, never giving up, always trying to build from what we've done in the previous weekend.



So just always trying to get more knowledge and experience together as a team to move forward. I think that's been a big thing for me.

Q. There's nothing at this point saying you're going to return to the series next year. How confident are you you're going to find a seat in 2027?

DENNIS HAUGER: I don't really know exactly what the future brings yet for me. I know I have the capabilities to do something good. I feel like I've gained a lot of knowledge this year.

I mean, just starting off again next year in St. Pete with, yeah, all the experience I have now, I feel like it will take me a big step forward already there. That would be pretty cool to get that opportunity.

Q. What were, in your opinion, some of the biggest surprises this year?

DENNIS HAUGER: I don't know. Getting a P4 in qualifying Milwaukee was a big surprise. Did not think that would happen.

But, I mean, overall there's been some good moments. I wouldn't say there's been like any super big surprises, but there's definitely been some good moments and bad moments to take with me from this season.

I feel like there was still a lot of points left at the table at times, which is probably one of the things if I went again next year, that would be a big thing to have a look at and think about.

Coming from P24 to P8 in the Indy road course was a pretty good moment. That was kind of a surprising moment. Yeah, again, just trying to make the most of every situation we end up in. We've definitely had a few that I guess saved our rookie title in the end.

Q. What's the biggest thing you think you're going to take with you from this whole experience?

DENNIS HAUGER: I mean, I think the main thing taken from this year is just how to work with the team, how to work on the technical side with the car, as well, knowing a bit more what I want and need for the future.

Also I think teamwork, team ethic as a group is super important, especially when we have such a long season with 18 weekends, 18 rounds. It takes a toll on everyone.

To have a good atmosphere, to work well together, yeah, to have an all-around good year is super important I think.

Q. What are you most proud of out of this rookie season?

DENNIS HAUGER: I don't know if there's one particular one. I think the first race of the year, my first-ever qualifying, to finish P3 there, just a couple hundredths from pole, was a special moment. Also getting my first top 10 in the same weekend. I think that was pretty much one of the biggest highlights.

Again, coming from Indy road course, getting the biggest mover from P24 to P8 was a good one. Long Beach, coming from P19 to P11. There's quite a few that I'm proud of. We worked hard to get there.

Yeah, overall just as a season I think we can be proud of what we've done.

Q. When you wreck out that early, how do you keep yourself composed watching the race?

DENNIS HAUGER: Bit of frustration at the beginning, I would guess. Yeah, it's obviously always annoying when you're fighting for something and you can't really do anything about it. You just have to sit and watch.

But yeah, I just went back to the pit wall with the team and looked at where everyone was at. Just hoped for a miracle, to be honest. Hoped for the best. Luckily we had a buffer going into this weekend that helped us a lot.

Yeah, it's definitely a frustrating moment. You're in the position you're in and that's all you can do in the end.

Q. Who this season have you been able to lean on the most for help to get adjusted to INDYCAR?

DENNIS HAUGER: I think the whole team, to be honest. Just working with everyone, trying to build something good. Obviously been a bit of a mix with engineers throughout the year. That's not been the easiest. To get more consistency as well at some part of the season was good.

Me and my teammate, Romain, we've been good together. He obviously comes with a lot of experience. To understand more of the technical side as well in that perspective has been good for me.

Yeah, there's a lot of people to thank, a lot of people to thank for helping me along the way this year, for sure.

THE MODERATOR: Dennis, a tremendous run in INDYCAR. We hope it continues next year. Congratulations.



DENNIS HAUGER: Thank you.

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