

NTT INDYCAR SERIES

News Conference

Sunday, September 6, 2026

Kyle Kirkwood

Alexander Rossi

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: Starting now with our podium finishers from today's race. We're joined by Kyle Kirkwood and Alexander Rossi.

Kyle, congratulations. That was the goal, right, to finish second in the standings?

KYLE KIRKWOOD: Yeah, it was. Yeah, we played it a little bit safer than I might have hoped for the last race of the season, but we had to for the championship. We made all the decisions based on that.

Probably could have had a go at Scottie at the end on the first few laps on reds. The number one goal was to make the tires last. That's what we did. Came home with a second, which is something to be proud of.

THE MODERATOR: Overall it continues a trend of Andretti Global strong finishes.

KYLE KIRKWOOD: It's big, right? I hope people consider us as the second best team. We have a lot to build off of, right? We made a huge jump year over year. Now second in the championship.

Will and Marcus have come on very strong at the end of the year. We have a lot of momentum going into the off-season. We have a direction. Hopefully we can work on it and better ourselves for next year.

THE MODERATOR: Alex, I'm going to call this the home race. A great drive today.

ALEXANDER ROSSI: Yeah, thank you. It's no secret that this has been a pretty terrible year for myself and the whole ECR team with the litany of issue, some out of our control, some in our control.

Ultimately road courses have been something that have been a pretty big challenge for us in the second half of this year. Really ever since the Indy GP, there's been a huge

amount of emphasis and effort behind the scenes to kind of dig out of that hole. It's very difficult to do in this championship.

Just really proud of the whole organization and everyone involved for kind of staying true to the course and fighting through a lot of adversity.

This is a great result to kind of reward that effort, just rebuild the confidence in everyone that we're capable of doing this. It's a good boost going into what's going to be a long off-season, but an important one, to make sure we execute a lot better and clean up a lot of our issues that we can control in 2027.

THE MODERATOR: Questions.

Q. Alex, you just said terrible season, problems. Is there any particular area you can point your finger on that was very bad? Did you identify the problems?

ALEXANDER ROSSI: I mean, it was really everything. Anything that could go wrong really did go wrong from crashes to failures of gearboxes, hybrids, engines. Some struggles being on fire in pit lane. Some lack of performance at some events. Anything that you can think of has happened to us across both cars. Just a really trying year.

As I said before, like, no one lost motivation or commitment to the end goal and I'm just really proud of that.

Q. Alex, do you consider today an 'a-ha' moment or is it just we've been good all year, bad things happened?

ALEXANDER ROSSI: No, I think this was a step for us in performance, for sure, especially on the road courses. I think we had a test at Mid-Ohio where we started to uncover some shortcomings. The Mid-Ohio race we took a little bit of a step. Portland, a little bit of a step. Here was another decent step.

There's two issues, two challenges: you have to identify the problem, then you have to figure out how to fix it. We were able to do that to a certain extent. Like, there's still



more to come from what we know.

It's a huge step in the right direction. Now we have a lot of time to really understand. It's been a huge stretch for everyone in the series this past five weeks. To really analyze and understand how it can be better will be useful coming into March.

Q. Kyle, was the second in points just because you're a competitor? Is it bonus money? What made that so important?

KYLE KIRKWOOD: I mean, just the year that we've had. We've had a very successful year. So have obviously Palou, but also Lundgaard and Pato have had a very successful year. We want to consider ourselves as the second most successful car. That was the biggest moment.

We joked around. I don't think there's any money into finishing second. It's like, Hey, better luck next year sort of thing.

It's big, right? Every year we halved the points to the lead or position to the lead. Two years ago seventh, last year fourth, this year second. It's constantly improving. That was a big, big moment for us and the team to then now finish second.

Q. (No microphone.)

KYLE KIRKWOOD: It's more mental than anything, to prove that we are deserving of it, so...

Q. Kyle, obviously you are the closest guy to Alex on paper. Looking into next year, what do you need to do better to close that gap?

KYLE KIRKWOOD: Yeah, I mean, couple things, right? I think I'll look at myself, figure out which ones I need to be better at, whether it's just driving, performance, but also mistakes. Markham definitely didn't help our championship run whatsoever.

We can also get better at some circuits, too, right? Indy 500 is probably the biggest circle on our calendar for everybody to get better at, but specifically for us because if we look at average finish across the team, that's our worst track. That's a big one for us. Maybe cleaning up some of the short oval stuff. Maybe even some of the road course stuff we can get better at.

Yeah, across the board we're solid. Getting better every season. It's just little things now that will make the difference in the championship.

Q. For the second half of the year, three cars competing competitively, where has that improvement come from the second half of the season?

KYLE KIRKWOOD: I think things are just starting to click, right? Will and Marcus started doing exceptionally well in the second part of the season, getting solid finishes everywhere except at Milwaukee, right? They're right there in the hunt.

You shine when you have all three cars up there. Our performance was starting to show as the second part of the season came around.

Q. Alex, you talked about the long off-season ahead. What does that look like from a driver perspective? How soon are you back in the shop?

ALEXANDER ROSSI: After Wednesday for me at least (smiling). I'm on track Wednesday. I think it's immediately, right? As soon as this is over, we'll kind of debrief today, try and understand it. Really this week, end of this week, we'll really focus on the last six weeks, the good parts, the bad parts. As time goes on, look at a bigger overall picture of the year.

I've said it often this year, that the team has done a lot of things better year over year from '25 to '26. Just unfortunately nothing really to show for it.

I think drastic changes aren't necessary. It's a continual evolution. Just like in a car setup, there's no magic bullet. It's the same thing in putting together a season: there's not one thing you have to do; you have to do everything a little better. There's no wholesale changes needed. It's just focusing on understanding our strengths and weaknesses and executing when we can.

Q. Kyle, talk about your season-long battle with Malukas.

KYLE KIRKWOOD: Yeah, I mean, I actually saw his dad, Henry, before the race. I said it's cool if you look back at when we were in karting together, we were on the same team in karting many years ago. It's pretty cool to look and be like, hey, we're fighting for positions in a championship, pretty high positions, in a championship in INDYCAR. It's cool to see if you look back at the history of it.

It's been fun competing against him. He's a phenomenal driver. He definitely does the things that I do poorly extremely well. I've learned a lot racing against him over the years. Proud to be part of the era he's in because he's an expectational driver. I think for many years to come

 . . . when all is said, we're done.®

he's going to be someone knocking on the door of a championship.

Q. How important is it for each of you individually to take a step back and have a mental reset?

KYLE KIRKWOOD: I don't think there's time for mental resets, to be honest. We're going to go straight into the off-season. He's going to be driving. I'll be driving here in a few weeks. You're already focused on the next season. I've got sports car stuff going on. I'm going to stay active.

In sport, if you need to take long breaks from something, it's probably beating you down too hard. Quite honestly, I think it's important to stay active.

Q. Is it important for you to jump back into the IR28 and do the oval testing?

ALEXANDER ROSSI: It's a great opportunity and a pretty big privilege to be the first guy to take it around, what is going to be our most important test of the car and understanding what it does on the Speedway.

It will be interesting. Like, it's exciting. It's a little bit nerve-wracking 'cause I'm sure it will be good, but who knows. It will be a very, very interesting day.

Again, just a huge honor and privilege to be chosen by Chevy to be the guy to kind of lead the charge on that with Alex.

Q. Alex, two years in now with Ted, a huge agent of change within the team, do you have a thought on that effect? What's different about this team that encourages you about where you can be in the future?

ALEXANDER ROSSI: I think the team just knows now that it has the ability. If we feel we need something, we can go get it, right? But the teams that we're trying to close the gap to have had that advantage on this organization at ECR for a decade.

Just because someone comes in and gives you the resources and tools to close that gap, the teams you're competing against don't stop developing either. You have to take bigger steps than they do. It's not a simple proposition.

This championship has so many great drivers and teams and personnel, you don't just do that overnight. Ted is an amazing partner in the organization, as you see with all of his activation, with commercials he's doing to help promote the series. It's pretty amazing what Java House and Splenda are doing outside of the competition side.

Inside the organization, everyone knows if we need something, we can go get it. It's a matter of, as I said before, continuing to develop and get better.

It will come. It's a process.

THE MODERATOR: Guys, congratulations on the strong finish to 2026.

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