

# IndyCar Media Days

Wednesday January 18, 2017

## Alexander Rossi

Media Day Presser



**Q. Alex, we've been having drivers just kind of recap last season and then transition into this season, so if you could go into that for us.**

ALEXANDER ROSSI: Yes. So '16 was a lot of things. Most of it was a learning experience, from not only learning a new team, new car, new tracks, but a completely new organization in the Verizon IndyCar Series, and it was a very positive experience for most of that.

With that being said, the year aside from the month of May was pretty difficult, and we weren't very happy with how it went in any way as a four-car effort.

Going into 2017 we have a lot higher expectations, and we've made a big push this off-season to rectify a lot of the things that didn't go well. And so, you know, obviously I'm looking forward to going back to Indianapolis in May, but by the same token, I'm just as excited about all the other races because I feel like we have a pretty big point to prove, and road and street courses, which were supposed to be my strong suit coming into IndyCar, they were not, and ovals were.

You know, I personally feel that I have a lot to prove on road and street tracks and look forward to getting started.

**Q. Talk about the team announcement that was made this morning.**

ALEXANDER ROSSI: Yes, welcoming NAPA Auto Parts back to the No. 98 is an amazing thing for us, for the series, for the team, and it's great to have such an iconic American auto brand be involved in the championship, and it just shows the growing strength of the Verizon IndyCar Series, and it was a very special relationship, obviously, that was formed pretty quickly between myself and Andretti Autosport and NAPA, and the fact that we're able to continue that is very special, and we have a lot of work to do to ensure that we get good results.

**Q. Just talk about the confidence and returning to the Indy 500 after winning it last year.**

ALEXANDER ROSSI: I don't know if confidence is the right word, just a better understanding of it. I don't think confidence was ever something that was lacking there. But just now understanding how the month goes and appreciating kind of everything that goes into it I think is the thing that I'm mostly looking forward to

because a lot of the event was over my head, just from a lack of knowledge standpoint, and I was relying a lot on the people around me, which obviously I will still continue to do, but hopefully there won't be as many questions I guess is the easiest way to put it so we can just focus on solely developing the car and being at the front for those whole two weeks.

**Q. I know one of the big hopes at Indy was to -- when you signed NAPA was to get them to stay on for more races. It kind of took maybe a little bit longer to convince them of that. How important is that going to be, and once again, you've got to feel like you've got the best-looking car on the grid.**

ALEXANDER ROSSI: I absolutely do, yes. It's a beautiful race car, and I don't know if you saw the press release, but it's a little bit different than the 500 livery, as well. It's great, and it's nothing but a positive thing.

You know, things like this when you're dealing with corporations of that magnitude, obviously things take time, and the off-season coincides with the holidays a lot. We've always felt confident about it, but in racing and business, whatever, you're never fully sure, so it's great to get the announcement out and have them on board for seven races, and hopefully we can continue to develop that for the future.

**Q. As an Indy 500 winner, are you getting your share of recognition from the fans, or do you have to go on the Dancing With the Stars for that?**

ALEXANDER ROSSI: I think Dancing With the Stars helps for sure. But yeah, I mean, I think the motorsport fan base, yes, my audience has undoubtedly grown, but the target for us, for all the drivers in the series, the series itself, is to grow the audience outside of motorsport fans, and I think Dancing With the Stars is a great thing for the series, and James is an awesome representation of that, and hopefully that's a benefit for all of us.

**Q. After having this time off since the end of the season, have you had a chance to kind of sit back and realize what you accomplished and let it all kind of sink in so you don't have to look forward to the next race and the next race and the next race?**

ALEXANDER ROSSI: No, because I've had to look forward to the next event and the next thing and the next obligation and everything, which is all super

positive, but this off-season has not really been an off-season in any way. In some ways, that's good, because I haven't been sitting on the couch at home itching to get back into a race car because I haven't frankly thought about it. It's been all about kind of the next thing, but it's been off track related.

You know, parts of it have sunk in more than others, but I don't think the full magnitude of it has yet, and I don't think it will until I stop moving for a couple weeks.

**Q. There was one point when a few years ago you said I didn't really want to do ovals, I wasn't interested in ovals. What do you think it is about ovals or about your driving style that actually is suited to them very well?**

ALEXANDER ROSSI: I don't know if it's necessarily me. I think just as a team we were strong on them. I think all four cars were way stronger than ovals than we were on road and street tracks. I don't want to say it's me. I just think that the Honda package combined with the effort that Andretti put into the 500 specifically in the off-season showed through, and all five of us were pretty much in the top 10 for the whole month. I think that's more a team result than it is a personal driver result.

**Q. The key to -- you were disappointed because you wanted to win the championship last year. The key to a championship, how important is a fast start to the season going to be?**

ALEXANDER ROSSI: Oh, very important. Racing is momentum and confidence, and all of the adjectives that relate to those things. If you are on the back foot from day one, you're always playing catch-up. We saw it a little bit with Will last year. He obviously is more than capable of winning championships but was always playing catch-up from St. Pete. It's very important to come out of the box strong. Do you have to win, no, but I mean, you need to be fighting for the win at least and show that you're competitive.

**Q. And how do you feel about Brian moving over to work with Marco? Now you're going to have a different voice in your ear?**

ALEXANDER ROSSI: The replacement voice, if I'm going to have someone replace Brian, this is just as good. I'm not worried about it at all. Brian is still very involved in the No. 98 car and someone that I can call any day, and I still do, and talk to him and rely on him. It's not too much of a change.