

IndyCar Media Conference

Friday June 23, 2017

Esteban Gutierrez

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: We'll get started with this afternoon's media availability. Pleased to be joined by Esteban Gutierrez, driver of the No. 18 Dale Coyne Racing Honda.

Esteban, welcome back. We saw you earlier this month for the doubleheader in Detroit. Give us your thoughts on returning to Dale Coyne Racing this weekend, then just the comfort of knowing that you'll be in the car for the rest of the season.

ESTEBAN GUTIERREZ: Yes, it's a great news. I'm very happy with it. Also very grateful. I mean, Detroit was a kind of a test to understand if I like the car, if I get well-adapted to it, if I have a good feeling.

Detroit, yeah, during the weekend, I really had a fantastic experience. I enjoyed a lot competing in IndyCar. And, therefore, we tried our best to continue for the rest of the season, and here we are. So I'm very, very happy.

I'm very excited to get to know the ovals, something completely new to me. And I think the rest of this season will be, you know, very nice to try to adapt to the car, to the series, and obviously to the tracks.

THE MODERATOR: Before we talk about that, this track in particular is one that's familiar to you. You've raced on it before. Do you feel like at least, even if you're still adjusting to the series, you have that back knowledge to help you out?

ESTEBAN GUTIERREZ: Yes. And it's a track that I enjoy a lot. It's one of my favorite tracks. I have great memories from 2007 when I was racing Formula BMW USA. I was actually fighting my way from the back of the field in one of the races. I got up to second. We finished with a very small margin at the start/finish line. It was a very enjoyable moment, a great race that I have very close in my memory.

Coming back quite many years after, 10 years after, I'm very, you know, excited to get into an IndyCar. Very powerful, very grippy, really nice racing car. You know, it's really a nice experience to do every lap in this track.

THE MODERATOR: So a couple weeks from now you'll be racing at Iowa Speedway, which is obviously an oval. What are your thoughts on adjusting to that experience and learning a different type of race craft?

ESTEBAN GUTIERREZ: Yes, I'm aware that it's completely different. Fortunately I will have a test on Tuesday to prepare, to get to know the reality of an oval, because you can review a lot of data, you can prepare on the theory, but always, you know, when you get to the reality of driving, it's a complete different story.

I'm really looking forward to Tuesday. I'm very sure that I will enjoy it, that I will enjoy that kind of racing. So, yeah, I'm excited to get to know -- to expand my racing knowledge and to know how to race in ovals.

THE MODERATOR: Questions for Esteban.

Q. What is the biggest challenge when you made the move from Formula One to IndyCar? Is there anything what you can take an advantage from the Formula One business to the IndyCar business?

ESTEBAN GUTIERREZ: Well, here the cars are quite standard. But in the same way, you have a lot of flexibility on changing the setup around. And as a driver, you have much more influence on the setup of the car, together with the engineers, in order to as a team achieve the right direction of the setup of the car during the weekend.

That's something that in Formula One is quite, let's say, fixed. Once the car is developed, you kind of fine tune around it. But in IndyCar, you really have a very big window of opportunities to work with the setup.

Also working around the conditions of the track, you have many categories racing, many different tire rubbers in the track. That's quite a challenge for me, not knowing the car completely. It's something I'm working very hard to get up to speed with that.

Q. How different is it to come in mid-season? What are the challenges of that rather than starting from the start?

ESTEBAN GUTIERREZ: Well, is obviously a challenge. You have many competitive teams and many competitive drivers at IndyCar, many with a lot of experience, many, many years. And obviously coming in the middle of the season just like this, it's obviously a challenge.

But I am a racer. I like to compete. This is my passion. I'm ready for this challenge.

Q. You have a teammate who only has a half year more experience than you. What can you take from Ed?

ESTEBAN GUTIERREZ: Quite a lot. And also from Sebastien. I've been in contact with him. Been in contact with few drivers to try to get some tips, to get a feeling of what are their thoughts, their experiences, to help me, you know, get quicker into the knowledge of the car, in general, and the series, and the competition here.

Q. How nice was it to have a test day here last week, whereas at Detroit it was the first time in the car, a bumpy street course there?

ESTEBAN GUTIERREZ: It was fantastic. Obviously to throw myself into Detroit was quite a challenge, one of the most difficult tracks in the calendar, with no testing, straight in the weekend. I think it was a very interesting experience.

Now that I come to Elkhart Lake with a test behind my belt before the weekend, it's great. I'm really enjoying a lot. I'm very happy of where I am today, with the challenge I have ahead, with the future ahead.

I would like to explore more that feeling of enjoyment here in IndyCar. I'm just going to go through it. I'm going to live every moment. I'm going to focus on the present and see what we can do in the future.

Q. Adrian Fernandez, somebody who raced in IndyCar for a number of years, the fans in Mexico revered him. How much influence has he had or how much has he helped you up to this point?

ESTEBAN GUTIERREZ: Well, he's a good friend for many years in the past. I watched his racing as a fan. Then I watched his racing and got in contact with him when I became a racing driver.

We've been sharing experiences since the beginning of my career. He has a lot of knowledge of IndyCar, Champ Car, and racing itself in many different categories. So, yeah, that connection to IndyCar from him always kept me very curious about, you know, racing in America.

So by the time there was this opportunity, I obviously contacted him. I asked for his opinion. He was very positive about it. So it was great, you know, to share something with a Mexican, a friend that I have that has a lot of experience so I can get up to speed as quick as possible.

Q. Would you like to see an IndyCar race in Mexico? What do you think the prospects are for that?

ESTEBAN GUTIERREZ: Obviously, it would be the ideal situation. I enjoy racing in my home country. And why not? I mean, I think the sporting side is the most important. Today is where I can really do a lot, is where I can focus. Together with, you know, this

involvement, my involvement in IndyCar, I'm sure that the possibilities in the future for a Mexican race will increase.

Q. What can you tell us about the contract issues that kind of crept up after you did Detroit? What was that process like, making sure everything was tidied up to where you can run IndyCar for the rest of the year?

ESTEBAN GUTIERREZ: I saw that from the driver's perspective, from the sporting side, there was no contract issues. Simply a conversation, you know, that I wanted to explore IndyCar. And here we are. There's really nothing to talk about from there.

I really enjoyed a lot Formula E, the races I did there. It's a great championship. It has a great future ahead. Very innovative concept.

But, yes, when this opportunity came up, I wanted to explore it. We did the test in Detroit, and it was quite a good and enjoyable moment. So we came here and we are going forward.

THE MODERATOR: I want to go back to a tweet that you put out yesterday after your announcement that not only were you excited for the opportunity, but excited to represent your home country. When you talk about the possibility of racing there, you sound very excited. What has the response been from Mexican fans, Mexican media on your participation in the series, without another Mexican full-time driver in the series?

ESTEBAN GUTIERREZ: It has been huge. A lot of Mexicans are very happy that I am in IndyCar. I feel honored to be in this position representing Mexico in IndyCar. It has a lot of -- as you all know, Mexico has a big history behind in racing in America, in IndyCar itself. And I'm, you know, looking forward to continue that history.

Q. You mentioned you had a chance to talk to Sebastien. What are some suggestions he's given you overall for the season, and then also specifically here?

ESTEBAN GUTIERREZ: Well, a lot of conversations with him were related to the technical side of the car, in order for me to understand how the car is working, how the car is evolving through a weekend. It helped me a lot in Detroit. It's helping me a lot here. Obviously we had the test which allowed us as a team to prepare better.

Yeah, race by race, it will be clearer and clearer. But Sebastien is always there involved kind of following all the meetings, following the practice sessions, the qualifying. Yeah, is great to be in touch. Sebastien is a great driver. I really been following him from the past. So, yeah, we're here and trying to do my best to adapt quickly to the racing here.

Q. Back to Ed, your relationship with him. When you get thrown into a situation like this, how do you sort of acclimate yourself to a new teammate, learn what he likes, what your similarities and differences are? How do you build that relationship?

ESTEBAN GUTIERREZ: It's all about sharing information after each session. Is about contributing. Obviously he has more experience than me in IndyCar, and he has proven to be quite good here. So Ed, you know, we've been always together in the meetings. Obviously me trying to understand what is his way of working through the weekend with the setup of the car.

In my case, I'm very open, because obviously I have no experience in IndyCar. So been always with a very open approach, trying to get as much information as I can, absorb everything, and learn as much as possible.

I have a great team of engineers, which give me a lot of confidence. I think the work that we are doing together, it's very good and very enjoyable.

THE MODERATOR: Esteban, thank you very much. Good luck this weekend.

ESTEBAN GUTIERREZ: Thank you. Thank you, guys.