

IndyCar Media Conference

Tuesday December 19, 2017

Carlos Munoz

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: Welcome, everyone, to today's IndyCar media teleconference. Monday Andretti Autosport announced it would field a sixth Verizon IndyCar Series entry for the 102nd Indianapolis 500 with veteran driver Carlos Munoz returning to the team as driver of the No. 29 Honda.

We're pleased to be joined this morning by Carlos Munoz. Thanks for taking the time to join us, Carlos.

CARLOS MUNOZ: Thank you, everyone, for being here. Really, really happy. Happy holidays to everyone.

THE MODERATOR: Carlos, congratulations on the Indy 500 announcement. I heard this really all began not too long ago when you attended the wedding of your teammate Marco Andretti.

CARLOS MUNOZ: Yeah, funny story because Marco invited me to his wedding. I went to the wedding. I start talking to J-F (Thormann) and Michael (Andretti) about what they're going to do next year. They said they're going to do six cars in the Indy 500, all in-house. I say, 'Whoa, that was interesting.'

So we started talking after the wedding to see what was going on. Just a few days ago, I think last week, we finalized all the little details. But we knew we (were) going to race with them for a long time. So, you know, I've been with them for five years, so we know each other really well. Everything was pretty easy. Even if the contract was not signed yet, we knew is going to work out in the end.

So really happy to join the team again for the Indy 500 that I've been so close to win it twice. So hopefully next year I have, you know, the car to be fighting again for the win.

THE MODERATOR: You mentioned your history with Andretti Autosport. Two second places at the Indy 500 with the team. You also got your first win in the Verizon IndyCar Series at Detroit with the team in 2015.

Knowing the team as well as you do, knowing how well the team performs at Indianapolis, how confident does it make you about your chances when you get in the car in May?

CARLOS MUNOZ: You know, really the same car as last year, I would say the chances is high, right? I can

be competitive. Next year with the new car, all the teams starting from zero, it's going to be completely different car, you know. The driving style, as well. Mechanical setup is going to be completely different. Now is a question mark how competitive all the teams is going to be, who is going to be the fastest, you know.

But I'm really confident that Andretti is going to be right away really quick. They show that with the DW12, they show that with this car, they going to show for sure the new car. It's six drivers, a lot of good engineers there. Means we have six really good engineers for the 500.

The good thing is it's a new car. We have so many teammates that everybody can go to a different direction, right? The majority of us have a lot of experience there. I think it's going to be really beneficial as a team to have six cars, a lot of good drivers experience the whole completely different setup between each other. Then, in the end of the day, go to only one setup.

THE MODERATOR: Thanks, Carlos.

We'll open it up for questions for Carlos Munoz.

Q. Carlos, you've done I think 10 500-mile races, finished all but one of them, had really good results in all of them. What suits you about the long 500-mile races?

CARLOS MUNOZ: Yeah, I think I've been pretty good there, yeah. The one you say, I was fighting for places, then I got a drive-through penalty. If it wasn't for that, I would be in top 10 for all of my finishes.

I don't know, ever since my first time, my first year in Indianapolis I finished second, because of a yellow. The last lap was a yellow. When I was overtaking the first guy, it was a crash. So I think that place owes me a little bit for sure a victory. I've been so close a lot of times for winning it.

In ovals, you know, I've been really good. I think I show also last year I did some good results at Pocono. I was driving well at Texas.

But I don't know, since the first moment I always said, when you have a good teammates around, when you have a good type of engineers, some people, it makes your life much easier when you have the confidence in the car, in everything you do.

So really excited to go back, you know, to a competitive car for the 500 next year. So, yeah, looking forward to it.

The thing I want to fight for the win, that's for sure. It's always easy to say, Let's go for the win. But it takes more than that. Just go step by step, day by day. In the day of the race, we'll see if we're in position to fight for the win.

Q. Carlos, you've had a chance to work with most of your teammates before. What is it going to be like for you to get to work with Zach, since you two were teammates in Indy Lights, you'll be teammates with him at the IndyCar level on the same team?

CARLOS MUNOZ: I think it's going to be good. I think we work really well when we were teammates in Indy Lights. Then in the 500, we couldn't work really well together, you know, as I would like to. Was a little bit different mentality there.

But I think is going to be really good. I think he's a really good guy, he's a really good driver. He's going to be more or less like a rookie again this year, so he's going to have a lot of teammates with a lot of experience. Also we're going to have (indiscernible) that I think is going to profit to have good teammates, experienced teammates there.

But I think Zach is going to be quick right away with a good car. You know, we will work a little bit in the 500. I think he did a really good job as my teammate there. So we'll see what happen really.

Just really excited to work again with all my teammates, with Alex, with Marco, and with Ryan. Even though we were not together last year as a teammate, I think we come even closer together than when I was with them as a teammate.

Q. Carlos, it just strikes me that there are all kinds of new challenges with this Indy 500, being with Andretti Autosport, being the sixth car, having a new car altogether. Can you give us some insights as it relates to your understanding about the new platform, what effects it might have having five other teammates vying for information and advantage.

CARLOS MUNOZ: Yeah, you know, first off, like I say, when I talk to Marco, to Jeff, Michael, at the wedding, they say all of the six cars, they're going to go in-house made with their own people, with no other teams in the middle. I was really interesting, you know, because I thought maybe the sixth car would be with another team in the middle and wouldn't be the same. Andretti has shown, like, doesn't matter if they put four or five cars, they always been quick, all of them, like in the get-go. They do a really good job of being really quick, all of them.

When they say all the cars are in-house made, I say there is no doubt, doesn't matter if it's six or ten cars, if it's in-house, for sure they going to do a really good job. So I think all the cars going to be really similar from each other.

Like I said before, the new car is a big question mark. We don't know how is going to play out mechanically, driving style. I think what I read most, in the road courses, you have much less downforce, a little bit more loose in the rear, and also in the ovals I think I've been reading, people saying it's pretty loose.

It's a car that I like. I like loose cars to drive in the ovals. I think my driving style will suit really well the road courses. As of right now, I'm just doing the 500.

All the time when you have a new car, you know, and the teammates with the most (indiscernible) you have, it means you can have completely different setup between each car. Each car can take one direction differently, then at the end of the day take the best direction of the fastest guy from my teammates. We been doing that. We just take different directions, and the end of the day we always come back together the same. And it's good, you know.

I think we are the only team with six cars. I think most of the other teams have only two cars. So I think that's going to be really, really good for us to work because one week goes by really quick of testing. So one week we can test different stuff, roll centers, wheel base, different dampers. A lot of things we can change in six cars makes that much easier. I think is going to be really positive for us.

You know, I just have to meet the guys I'm going to work with, my engineer, stuff like that. But looking forward to start. Also, I would like to go in the car before the 500, for sure. You know, it is what it is. It's a new car for everyone. Hopefully I adapt really good with it.

Q. It's good to know you'll be racing in the Indy 500 with a competitive team. How will be your preparation having a new car, getting back into Andretti, and how will this affect or maybe improve your chances to get a full-time seat for this season, and if your focus is on IndyCar or if you're considering a different series for the rest of the season?

CARLOS MUNOZ: You know, as for right now, I really wanted to have something signed. I could not wait in what to do. Next year, I wanted to be with Andretti. That was my number one priority. If it was full season, or 500, I know I have a car to win it. Those were my two priorities. If is not full season, let's try the 500. After we sign the 500 with the best team, then we start working to see if we can do other races or other championships.

As of right now, my main focus is going to be the 500. I think it's going to be a little bit challenging personally, because I've been racing the full season since I was eight years old in go-karts, in formula. I think it's going to be a little bit challenging for me because it's a first time I'm going to do that. So that mean I have to stay really in shape, go to the gym a lot, doing a lot of go-kart, for sure.

I'm going to have the team to put me in the simulator as many days as I can. I think on the simulator, it's really good. I'm going to have to be all the days in the simulator.

It's really important to keep in shape because I think it's really hard to be six months out of the car and then go to the car. Is going to be a little bit tricky for me, like I say, as a first-timer.

We will see. As of right now, the 500, I'm the main focus on that, then we going to start working to try to do other races. But as right now, I'm happy to be in the 500 with the best team, like you said, with a competitive team to win it.

I'm going to do my best. I think all the team, my manager and everything, we're going to work really hard to keep more races. I want to keep my focus in IndyCar. As right now, I still young. I'm still 25 years old. I want to keep my options in IndyCar still. I feel that I have not done anything I can. I have some work to do, like to win the 500, to win more races, to be fighting, for sure. So right now my main focus is the IndyCar. So we'll see what happen next year.

Q. Carlos, you were with Andretti for your entire career up until this past season. Did you have a chance being with A.J. Foyt, being in a more featured role, as the main guy, to learn a lot more about yourself? And what might that be?

CARLOS MUNOZ: First off, I'm thankful to have the opportunity that A.J. gave me to race with him. Unfortunately stuff didn't work out, you know, as we planned. But I think things happen for a reason. Right now being in the Indy 500 with Andretti, that's pretty good, you know.

But I think even though last year was a tough year, I think it helped me a lot, a lot, a lot. I think I'm twice better driver than I was one year ago because having a different role as a driver, to be more involved with the team, with the technical, I learn so much engineering-wise last year than ever because in Andretti they have so good team that, you know, you just focus on driving, and the driver is good. When you are 100% just focused on driving, being better and quicker.

Last year, I was thinking not only driving but talking to the engineers to make the car even better and to see what we can do, trying to take the team together. So I think is going to be nice to go back a little bit, focus on

driving 100%.

I think I'm twice a better driver, I'm a much mature person as a driver and as a person, as well. It help me, you know. Just thankful for the opportunity. Now I have another chance to be in a good car for the 500. I think I'm going to put what I learn last year this year to the team, to Michael, to see that I have to really grow up on that part of me that I think I lack a little bit in the past, this engineering part, this part of me being a little bit more mature on these kind of part. So I want Michael and all the team to see it, you know, what I learn last year.

I always be thankful to A.J. for the opportunity, but I just can't wait to race at the Indy 500 this year.

THE MODERATOR: Seeing as we have no more questions, we will wrap-up today's IndyCar media teleconference. Thank you, Carlos, for your time. We wish you the best for the holiday season. Happy New Year, Merry Christmas, and we'll see you in May at Indianapolis.

CARLOS MUNOZ: Thank you very much, everyone, for being here. We'll see you in Indianapolis hopefully soon.