

IndyCar Media Conference

Wednesday October 31, 2018

Marcus Ericsson

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: Welcome, everyone, to today's IndyCar media conference call.

On Tuesday Schmidt Peterson Motorsports announced that Sweden's Marcus Ericsson will drive the No. 7 Honda in the 2019 IndyCar Series season. We're pleased to be joined by Marcus.

Welcome to the call and welcome to IndyCar.

MARCUS ERICSSON: Thank you so much.

THE MODERATOR: Marcus is a veteran of Formula 1, driving the last five seasons. He started with the Caterham team, and he has driven the last four seasons with Sauber.

Marcus, making the switch over to the U.S. and IndyCar, what was so appealing about the IndyCar to you?

MARCUS ERICSSON: I think for me the fact that the racing is so good in IndyCar was the biggest factor, and the fact that also, you know, in IndyCar every driver and every team have a chance to win. I think that's some of the parts that I've been missing a lot in Formula 1 the last few years. I think that was the most appealing thing with IndyCar.

Also I think that the competition is super high. There's some really good drivers and teams in the series. Yeah, those were some of the biggest reasons why I was looking strong at IndyCar for next year.

THE MODERATOR: The rookie class for in connection year is shaping up to be a very strong class. All four announced drivers have backgrounds in Europe. Between Felix Rosenqvist, Colton Herta, Patricio O'Ward and yourself, what is it coming to America and IndyCar that is attracting so many drivers from a similar background as you?

MARCUS ERICSSON: I think IndyCar as a series is really on the up at the moment. It gets more and more attention also in Europe. I think more and more drivers is looking towards IndyCar because it seems from the outside like a great series where you can really show off your capabilities as a driver. I think that's what is very appealing for a lot of the drivers over in Europe, as well. I think that's, yeah, probably the biggest reason.

I think also when Fernando went over and did the Indy 500, I think that also opened some doors, sort of made more people think about IndyCar. Yeah, also you have seen guys like Alexander Rossi, okay he's an American, but he was racing a lot in Europe, he went over to IndyCar, has been doing extremely well.

I think all these things is some of the reasons.

THE MODERATOR: Obviously you're from Sweden. You had a relationship with a Swedish driver that won the Indy 500 in the IndyCar Series championship, Kenny Brack, as you came up the racing ladder. What role did Kenny play in your career? Will you talk to him at all as you prepare for 2019?

MARCUS ERICSSON: Yeah, Kenny was one of the guys that picked me up from go-karts and helped me make the steps through racing cars. I was working closely with Kenny for many, many years. We haven't worked together since I've been in F1. I haven't actually spoken to him yet after this announcement with IndyCar.

But, yeah, I mean, I learned a lot from Kenny. I have a lot to thank for what he's done for me in my career, especially in my early career. Obviously I was watching him race a lot in IndyCar when I was younger, yeah.

THE MODERATOR: What are your goals for 2019? I know you mentioned one of the appealing parts of IndyCar is every driver has a chance to win the race. What would you consider a success?

MARCUS ERICSSON: It's difficult to put like a specific goal. But I want to be winning races and scoring podiums, do well for the team. I know it's a massive challenge because everything will be new for me, new cars, new tracks, oval racing, new competitors. I'm very humble and I know it requires a lot of hard work from me to be successful.

But I have no doubt that with my experience and my abilities I can be up there and fight for wins and score wins, especially racing for such a great team as SPM. That will be my target for next year.

THE MODERATOR: Thanks, Marcus.

Let's open it up for media questions for Marcus

Ericsson.

Q. I was curious, with as much media attention as everything that you especially get in Formula 1 where every rumor becomes publicized, how were you able to keep your interest in coming to IndyCar such a secret?

MARCUS ERICSSON: I don't think I was keeping it such a secret. I was saying for quite a few weeks that IndyCar was something I was looking at. Obviously, yeah, I was still right up in the F1 season. Since Sauber announced the drivers for next year with Kimi Raikkonen and Antonio Giovinazzi, for me it was clear I wanted to move on and find a racing series to compete in.

For me, very early IndyCar was the most appealing series where I think was going to fit me the best. So, yeah, that's what I've been sort of focusing on and trying to find a seat in IndyCar. That's why, you know, I'm so happy that it will happen, that I found such a great team, as well, got picked by SPM is very, very special, feel very proud of that.

Q. I know that Sweden is not a very large country. There's another Swedish driver in the series next year for Chip Ganassi, Felix Rosenqvist. How much do you know about him and your teammate James Hinchcliffe?

MARCUS ERICSSON: Yeah, Felix, he's one year younger than me, so we raced actually go-karts when we were kids. After that we've never raced in the same series in cars.

But I know Felix, what I said, from when we were kids. I meet him every now and then. It will be great fun to race in the same series as him, spend some more time. We will hang out. It will be good fun.

Both of us are rookies in the series, so that will be fun fighting it out with him on track as well, of course. Yeah, I'm going to enjoy that a lot. I think it will be a lot of attention from back home in Sweden, as well, on IndyCar because of it. That's really, really fun.

Yeah, James, I don't know personally. I haven't met him. I have heard a lot of good things about him. He seems to be a great driver but also a great person. I'm sure we're going to work really well together and, you know, do the best for the team together.

Q. I saw some clips from IndyCar that you have already tested your new car. How can you compare your 2019 car with Formula 1? Is your deal with Indy a long-term basis or a one-year deal?

MARCUS ERICSSON: Yeah, I have not tested the car yet. I did a seat fit yesterday and today. Yeah, I can't wait to get a chance to test the car. I think it will be a lot of fun.

I spoke to some drivers that have been driving this year, and they say the cars are really, really fun to drive, lots of power. Yeah, it requires a lot of work. Obviously it will be a bit different for me as well coming driving from power steering to no power steering. I'm sure it will be a little bit different.

I've only heard good things about IndyCar. I can't wait to get a test. We're working on it now. Hopefully we can get me in a car and drive before Christmas. That's, yeah, what we trying to do.

Then for the step to IndyCar for me, I see myself being here for many years. I want to come over here and do well, you know, make myself a career over here.

But with that said, I don't close any doors. I don't know what happens in the future. As I see it now, I see it as a long-term project. I want to be here and do well and be successful.

Q. Did Schmidt Peterson reach out to you first, did you reach out to them? About how long has the discussion period, if you will, gone on before you agreed to sign with them?

MARCUS ERICSSON: Yeah, I actually reached out to Sam Schmidt myself. I gave him a call. I had some contacts in Europe. I was trying to look out at IndyCar. Yeah, I reached out to Sam, gave him a call. We had a really good chat. From then on, yeah, I put him in touch with my management. It went on from there.

Yeah, we were also speaking to some other teams in the series, in different series, as well, to see what options there was out there. But for me, straightaway after that first initial talk with Sam, it really felt like right for me. I was pushing from that moment, which was, yeah, a couple weeks after Sauber announced their driver lineup. From that moment, I was pushing really hard with my management, as well, that I wanted to go to IndyCar and with SPM because I felt like that was the best, yeah, team and best environment for me to do well.

That's how we sort of came along. Yeah, it went from there. Yeah, now we're here, contract is signed, and I'm super excited for next year.

Q. Did you talk either with Fernando Alonso or Alexander Rossi, since you raced against both of them at some point, what their thoughts were about the IndyCar Series as a whole, how it might be a good fit for you?

MARCUS ERICSSON: Yeah, I actually spoke to both of them. I know Alex quite well. He's a good friend of mine. I spoke to Alex about it. He actually came and visited me at COTA in F1 a few weeks ago. Yeah, he's only saying good things about it.

He's been really telling me he if you get the chance, you have to come over, the racing is great, the

atmosphere between the drivers and the fans is just really, really good. That's also the sort of feeling you get from the outside, as well, looking at IndyCar. It looks like such a fun series to be part of. Like I said, the racing looks really good, as well. All these things is what Alex has been telling me, as well.

Then I also spoke a bit with Fernando about it. The same there. Fernando said it was just an amazing experience doing the Indy 500, that he had so much fun. So he, as well, was saying only positive things, that it's really a fun series.

That's the thing for me. I've been speaking around with them, too, but also other people in the business, drivers and other people that's been around. And everyone I speak to, they only have good things to say about IndyCar and the racing over here. So that for me made it even more clear that this is the right thing for me to do for my future.

Q. Because you have almost 100 Formula 1 starts under your belt, does that put additional pressure on you because you know that people are expecting you to be pretty quick straightaway, even though there's a totally unfamiliar series? You have served a long time in Formula 1. They're going to have high expectations of you right from the word 'go'. Do you feel that pressure?

MARCUS ERICSSON: Yeah, I think definitely there will be high expectations on me. I would expect nothing else. Like you say, I come from almost 100 races in F1, five years there. I've built up a big experience which I think will benefit me making this step.

So, yeah, I definitely feel that, you know, there will be high expectations on me, which is, you know, something that I think is right. And I think that comes with pressure, as well, but that's something that I'm used to that. Being in F1 for five years, you always have that big pressure on your shoulder to deliver, so that's nothing new.

I mean, I come over here, expect myself to be up there on fights, getting to it quickly. But like I say, I also know it's going to be requiring a lot of hard work from me because everything will be new. The competition in IndyCar is extremely tough, as well. It's very important to not underestimate it. It's going to require a lot of hard work.

But I'm sure, you know, that I will do all that homework and be able to be successful.

THE MODERATOR: Seeing as we have no further questions at this time, we will thank Marcus for his time this morning and wrap up today's call.