

# NTT IndyCar Series News Conference

Friday May 24, 2019

*Freedom 100 Press Conference*

## Oliver Askew

Speaker1 Title

## J-F Thormann

Speaker2 Title

THE MODERATOR: Ladies and gentlemen, we're going to take the opportunity to introduce you to the winner of the 2019 Freedom 100, from Andretti Autosport, Oliver Askew. Fantastic final run. We've got the CEO of Andretti Autosport here with us, as well, Mr. J-F Thormann. Oliver, let's start with you. Let's start with the pure emotion of winning here. I think that's the key thing to start out with, just the pure emotion of being able to win at the Indianapolis Motor Speedway.

OLIVER ASKEW: Yeah, I can't really put words together to describe it. I woke up this morning, I felt good. I honestly, like this is the most calm I've ever been this week. I don't know what it is. But just -- it's still sinking in, the emotions of winning at such a historical track and with such a historical team, as well. Unbelievable. Like I was screaming on the radio after I won. But yeah, honestly, I was just in the right place at the right time. It could have been anybody's race, honestly, and I was just happy to take the opportunity really.

THE MODERATOR: Can you talk about how those kind of middle laps went because you guys all know the strategy of trying to get to a certain place in the last 10-lap run. The yellow kind of changed things. Did you have a strategy because it seemed pretty hectic out there. Could you employ a strategy?

OLIVER ASKEW: Yeah, my mindset was just to stay in the top three and to stay in clean air to save the tires. To be honest, I thought we were in a bit of trouble in the beginning of the race. I was having a really hard time in dirty air and the car came neutral and was performing better at the end.

Yeah, so my mindset was just to make sure I was like top 2, top 3 on the last lap and I just happened to be. I think I went -- I drove by three cars on the back straightaway when they were battling it out. If that opportunity didn't happen, I might have been stuck in fourth place. Yeah, just happy, so happy to be here. Like unbelievable. It was like two weeks before the season started, I didn't know what I was going to be doing, and now to be here leading the championship, winning the biggest race of the year, it's insane.



Hopefully next year I'll be in the top spot, top leagues.

THE MODERATOR: Can you give us some insight on your thoughts coming out of Turn 3? Ryan had a pretty decent gap going over to 4 and then of course you get the run on the straight away. Was there a point in your mind maybe you could get it done?

OLIVER ASKEW: Yeah, honestly, Turn 4 was the biggest trouble for me because I was getting such bad aero wash there, but Ryan anticipated I was going to go high but I decided to go low there and I had the clean air, and I didn't lift. That was key. If I had to lift in 4, he would have won the race. What was it, six hundredths?

THE MODERATOR: Thousandths.

OLIVER ASKEW: Thousandths. Yeah, that was important just to stay flat in 4 and then he was trying to break the draft and I just slingshotted by him. I didn't know when the finish line was going to come. I was just hoping it was going to be late enough for me to get back by him. Yeah, unbelievable, just big thanks to everybody involved and all my supporters who are here today, as well, and sitting next to J-F, as well. We're in a long conversation to get the season started, and I'm just glad that they gave me the opportunity to do this.

THE MODERATOR: J-F, let's talk about the driver factory that is Andretti Autosport. You guys just continue to bring good guys into your cars. You develop them, and we watch them just kind of shine midway through the season. Speak a little bit about Oliver and the time you've had with him thus far.

J-F THORMANN: It's been fantastic. I've been watching Oliver since his go-kart days, and sort of that's one of my jobs at Andretti Autosport, among other things, is to manage this Road to Indy, and typically we just -- obviously he was scoring a lot of wins in the small formulas, in go-karts, et cetera, so that attracts the attention first, but then we watched for how he behaves outside of the car, how he might be then with our corporate sponsors and representing the Andretti brand. So it's not all about just the speed.

And then Oliver and I just have been saying hi to each other in the paddock for years and years, and I told him, Someday you're going to drive for us. It was a tough road to get there, but he had some great

supporters, as we did, and Michael is very bullish on his talents, on all our guys, too, but Oliver is special to us, and so we think there's a bright future for him going forward.

**Q. How is it that Andretti Autosport seems to come up with drivers? They've won three out of five 500s. Their drivers are always right at the top. Who in the world finds all these guys?**

J-F THORMANN: It's a group effort, but obviously it starts with Michael. He's so passionate about the sport, and you guys know that. He was born into it, so he's 55 or something right now, so he's got a lot of experience and he believes in it. He believes in young talent and trying to develop it. He really -- it means a lot to him to have young Americans in particular come over here and we can show the world how good we have them. He's let me do a lot of the recruiting and searching, but with Rob Edwards and the whole team. It really is a team effort, and we try to build it with our Indy Lights and then go from there.

**Q. Oliver, you're a graduate of the Team USA scholarship program with Jeremy Shaw. Can you talk about how that program has been a big part of helping you get to here?**

OLIVER ASKEW: Yeah, sure. That really kick-started my car racing campaign. I mean, there's a bit of a gap between the two industries of kart racing and North American open wheel racing, and I was struggling to find the opportunity and the contacts especially, and one day someone told me to call Jeremy, and I did, and kind of introduced myself and sent him my resume and stuff like that. You know, I ended up winning a scholarship, and it's not just about the races in England that you win through the Team USA scholarship, it's just about the contacts and the experience that both Kyle Kirkwood and I learned in 2016 dealing with the media and, like J-F said, how to carry ourselves around the track and to attract sponsors and stuff like that.

That was massive, and that eventually gave me the opportunity to go do the USF 2000 Scholarship Shootout at Laguna Seca at the end of 2016 after the Team USA opportunity, and yeah, that just really kick-started my career into the Road to Indy, and to have John Doonan here and in the victory circle is really emotional because he's one of the guys who's put me at this point in my career now, and without the Mazda scholarships, I wouldn't be here today.