

# NTT IndyCar Series News Conference

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## Felix Rosenqvist

Chip Ganassi Racing

## Pato O'Ward

Arrow McLaren SP

## Alexander Rossi

Andretti Autosport

Press Conference

THE MODERATOR: We're joined by the third-place finisher in today's REV Group Grand Prix Presented by AMR, Alexander Rossi from Andretti Autosport. Alex finishes third today, his best finish of the season.

Alex, a tough start to the season for you. Third place has to feel good to end the weekend.

ALEXANDER ROSSI: Yeah, for sure. I mean, it's been a pretty nightmarish start for this whole team. The work ethic never wavered. The confidence, what we were capable of, never changed. It was just about going out there and having a smooth day. We were able to do that today.

Ultimately, we're not here to finish third. To kind of bounce back from the first three races, going into another doubleheader next weekend, it's positive to get at least a little bit of good momentum going in our direction.

THE MODERATOR: We'll go straight to questions for Alex.

**Q. Just elaborate a little bit. After yesterday you kind of wanted to get a turnaround. You had bad luck again yesterday. There still is time that you can get right back into this thing. How much of a relief is this to finally get a podium out of the way, go to Iowa, reassess it, go from there?**

ALEXANDER ROSSI: Yeah, I mean, we needed today. We kind of still suffered some mechanical issues yesterday. I made a mistake on Lap 1 that really put us back, kind of ended our race from the beginning.

But I think overall our race pace was OK. We knew we had something. It was just about trying to put together a whole 55 laps with no issues. Today we were able to do that. I think still we're missing some just overall pace.

Like I said, it's a good step in the right direction. This AutoNation NAPA Andretti Honda team has had to do a lot of long nights, disappointing weekends. To get this is just a huge confidence boost for the whole team.

Iowa is going to be a challenge for everyone. Another doubleheader. Rolling off and hopefully having no issues, having another race with no mistakes. We'll try to claw back what we've lost here in a couple days.

**Q. From a physical standpoint, how do you feel after two days in Road America, five more days you're going to have a doubleheader on a short oval, generally very tough?**

ALEXANDER ROSSI: Yeah, Iowa has kind of been the big one circled for everyone in terms of the heat and physicality, with the lack of ventilation we have with the Aeroscreen. To be quite honest, this weekend was not an issue, Road America was fine. I'll be pretty fresh going into Iowa. I think everyone is going to be dealing with the same thing.

We made a big improvement, INDYCAR allowed us to move the water bottle placements. Now we have at least cold water throughout the race. That's a huge plus for us, will be a big help in Iowa.

**Q. We saw at the start of today's race a lot of youth coming into INDYCAR. What do you feel about not only today's performance from some of the younger guys in the series, but the depth of the field from a youth perspective? What does that have to say about the future of INDYCAR?**

ALEXANDER ROSSI: It's great for the future of INDYCAR. Makes my life difficult. Every weekend you know you will have 12 to 15 very capable cars. That's why when you win an NTT INDYCAR Series race, it's such a special thing. You know you really had to put everything together and be on top of your game.

No surprise. I've seen firsthand how quick Colton has been

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as a teenager coming out of Indy Lights. The fact that Felix and Pato are up there, really no surprise to me.

**Q. Yours came at an interesting spot, winning your first race in the Indy 500 four years ago. From your experience, what does winning your first race do for your confidence, momentum, what you can do beyond?**

ALEXANDER ROSSI: It just gets the monkey off your back, kind of reassures you you can do it. Wins are few and far between, except for the 9 car it would seem. Good to kind of get it, remind yourself you're capable of doing it.

As much as finishing in the top five and on the podium is good, without winning races it's impossible not to question some things. Felix, it's been a long time coming for him. He's been fast. Obviously won Rookie of the Year last year. Again, no surprise he won today.

**Q. Did you have to dust yourself off and accept you're going to get bad luck over the season or did those first three races require some soul searching on your behalf and the team, questioning as a team or what you're doing as a driver, or do you accept sometimes these things happen?**

ALEXANDER ROSSI: A little bit of both. I think it's impossible not to be disappointed, discouraged. But I don't think it was ever a question of whether this team was capable of doing it. It just seemed to me everything that could go wrong went wrong. It was coming back each morning as a new day and trying to do your part, execute as best as you can.

I think we made the most of today. As I said in the beginning, I think we still need to find some overall pace, especially compared to the Ganassi cars. Ultimately I don't think we're bad. We're much better than the championship shows.

It's just about going to Iowa, as I said, with the momentum that we have. At least it's something. Hopefully we can just get our season rolling from here starting today.

**Q. Quite a good cross-section of tracks now as well. What kind of areas are you looking at? Is there one particular area you're struggling with the car at the moment or is it a selection of issues that are track specific?**

ALEXANDER ROSSI: I think our race pace has been pretty good. I think our single lap ultimate pace has been not what we'd expect. So, yeah, I mean, I think going to Iowa, there's definitely going to be a big focus on that,

making sure we can start in the top five at least, see where the day takes us from there.

**Q. You're not the only team that's had problems, errors, miscues. There were sloppy pit stops today, drivers making mistakes. Is it the jam-packed schedule, the layoff rust? Any reason why?**

ALEXANDER ROSSI: I think in previous years, I mean, you have three practice sessions to kind of work through issues. If you have mechanical problems, they probably would show themselves way before you get to Sunday afternoon. If you're going to make a mistake, throw it off the track, probably do that before Sunday afternoon as well.

People are finding limits. It's a condensed schedule. You're trying to get a lot done in a short period of time. Very rarely are you able to answer all your questions in practice, then it's straight into qualifying and the race.

It's definitely a challenge. It's something that I think everyone is trying to adapt to and get better at. But I think that's really the main reason why you see so much of it.

**Q. Yesterday, in qualifying, was that just mechanical stuff you were battling?**

ALEXANDER ROSSI: Yeah, yeah. I mean, we were having some issues all day through practice and qualifying. Some of it was a result of the race, but obviously I made a mistake on Lap 11a, so it's kind of irrelevant.

We changed a lot of things overnight. Seemingly this morning everything was good. The performance of the car was where we wanted it to be. I think we showed that in the race.

THE MODERATOR: Alex, thanks for your time. Congratulations on the podium finish. We'll see you next weekend in Iowa.

ALEXANDER ROSSI: Thank you.

THE MODERATOR: Pato O'Ward has joined us, driver of the No. 5 Arrow McLaren SP Chevrolet. Pato started on pole today, his first. Finishes second.

You led the race. I know when you say second place is a disappointment. You had a good day. How was your day in the car today?

PATO O'WARD: Yeah, I think today we executed and we asked everything we had in us to try to win that race. We knew we had the pace. But we kind of took a shot in the dark for the long stints. We made some changes hoping

that it would help. It hurt us in rear tire life.

Those Ganassi cars were so fast over the course of the stint, especially the last five laps. That's where we lost it. That is where we lost the race.

As everybody saw, he passed me and left me. It wasn't like I could keep up. I think on one-lap shots we were the fastest car today, but I think we missed on just being able to extend the life of the rear tires a little bit more.

I'm so thankful for the hard work that Arrow McLaren SP gave me, Team Chevy, all the sponsors, Arrow, Mission. It's not easy to compete in INDYCAR. I think today we showed we're contenders. I'm very much looking forward to Iowa.

THE MODERATOR: How much of the last few laps were Felix catching you, your tires going off, how much was on the lap traffic you encountered?

PATO O'WARD: I think it was a little bit of both. Being behind lap traffic is what hurt my tires. At least it hurt them to get to that tipping point probably a couple laps earlier than what they should have. That's probably why Felix really got me in the end.

I had nothing for him, absolutely nothing. I tried to conserve on the whole stint, but the dirty air really, really, really made us just scrub a lot of speed. That little extra 10th really gets you, especially when they're falling off. Yeah, I think it was a little bit of both.

THE MODERATOR: We'll take questions for Pato.

**Q. If you could have gone a lap longer on your previous stint, would you have had a little bit more fuel to play with and needing to put one lap less on the reds? Was that a discussion point at all?**

PATO O'WARD: I think ultimately we can look back now and say we could have done maybe this a little better, this a little better. We were trying to maintain up front. I was really struggling on blacks. The quicker we got off of those, the better we were going to be. As soon as I got on reds, I started taking care of them.

Honestly, that didn't really seem to help, at least whenever the stint was ending. It didn't really become much of a problem until, like, five laps to go where, I mean, I was all over the place.

I saw Felix was closing in like 8/10ths a lap. I knew his long stint pace was so strong, not just on the last stint but midway through the race whenever he got by Palou, he

was the one behind me, I was getting told he was slowly closing, closing, closing. I was trying to manage my tires as well as not losing too much time.

I think we did a great job on the pit stop sequences. Felix, I mean, he had more pace in the end. I think we just need to work on trying to find that little extra life that we need to extract everything out of every stint.

**Q. You mentioned with five laps to go things started going all over the place. Is that in reference to the tires? Also, what kind of learning experience is this for you, to be as young as you are, have a lead, chasing your first victory?**

PATO O'WARD: I think today I learned that the further you qualify up front, the easier you make your life. It made a huge difference. That should be the goal every single weekend. We will be challengers challenging for wins and podiums. That's what we're here to do.

I'm really proud of what the team and I achieved today. A little bummer that we didn't get that win because we were a couple laps short. It is what it is. We have things to look forward to and to work on. I know we're going to execute and get those wins very soon.

**Q. To dominate a race like that, have a car as good as it was, but yet to be that close to a victory, your heart has to sink a little bit. How do you kind of describe the different emotions you're going through?**

PATO O'WARD: Yeah, I think in one side I'm ecstatic because it's my first INDYCAR podium, second place, I led almost whole thing. We were a few laps short of winning the race. We were just unlucky in the end. We couldn't make it happen.

But I'm proud of myself because I gave it absolutely everything I had. I made no mistakes. I think we executed well. We didn't have the pace that Felix had on the long tire stints. We need to work on it.

It's a mix of emotions. I'm a little disappointed because I started on pole. After leading everything, you want to win, man. I mean, you want to execute from where you started because we led the whole thing, we didn't make any mistakes in the pit stop, we didn't lose any positions, every restart was perfect.

I mean, it is what it is. I think we should be very proud of ourselves and what our group did today.

**Q. I know this off-season linking up at Arrow McLaren SP with Oliver Askew as a teammate, you both had a**



**lot of confidence in that team despite your young age. What do you feel like this collective young group of drivers that's coming into the series that put on a solid show this weekend, what do you feel like the future holds, the potential of you guys together?**

PATO O'WARD: I think we need to continue pushing. We need to be pushing our boundaries, pushing our knowledge to try and learn everything that we can every single lap, every single test, every single race. We need to find everything that we can to improve in every aspect that we can.

It's not easy to win an INDYCAR race. Everything has to go well. You have to execute perfectly every single thing in out laps, pit stops, you have to manage your tires, your 'push to pass'.

I think the younger generations, I think we're showing that the speed is there and we're starting to learn and we're giving the veterans a hard time now. We want to keep it up. We want to be mixing up with them up there. The only thing that is going to make us improve is just race knowledge, laps and laps and laps.

But I think the speed, we have proven it's there.

**Q. From today's race, Felix's second year in the series, Colton, Alex Palou, what do you feel like maybe today's race specifically says about what we could see the rest of this year?**

PATO O'WARD: I think we're showing that we're the most competitive racing championship in the world. Obviously Scott took the first three wins, but every top 10 and top five has been different. There is a huge mix of guys, especially when you see in qualifying that from first to 15th is 3/10ths. You don't see that anywhere in the world.

I'm really proud to be representing my team Arrow McLaren SP, my country Mexico, in such a cool championship. I think it's so special because we race in every single type of racecourse. We have to be strong every year in order for us to be competitive and be contenders in the championship. I think that's good.

THE MODERATOR: We will welcome in the race winner from today's race, the REV Group Grand Prix Presented by AMR, Felix Rosenqvist, driver of the No. 10 NTT Data for Chip Ganassi Racing. Felix finished second twice last year at Mid-Ohio and Portland.

Felix, talk about the battle with Pato there at the end. Made up a big gap and overcame the deficit to score the win.

FELIX ROSENQVIST: Yeah, it was one of those races like Mid-Ohio last year where we had to rely on pure pace. Yeah, we had a lot of free air. I think that was the plan from yesterday. Yesterday we were stuck in traffic most of the race. You can't really do much.

Today we said we'll try anything to stay out in the clear as much as possible. No matter what tires we have or who's around us, we'll try to do that because we know we have good pace, especially in the race.

Yeah, huge thanks to NTT Data. I would like to dedicate this win from John McCain from NTT Data who sadly passed in the beginning of this year. Proud to carry his name on my car for this first win. Also proud to be powered by HPD and Honda for this win.

Really good fun. Really good fun.

THE MODERATOR: We'll continue with questions.

**Q. I heard a lot about tires, tire saving towards the end of the race. I was under the understanding you might have also had to save some fuel. If so, is that what allowed Felix to catch up to you?**

PATO O'WARD: Yeah, I was trying to look at my rears because I was really burning them off throughout the whole race. I knew that was going to be the heavy hitter in case one of them fell off. It was really hard to judge when it was coming. At least it was with our car.

I knew Felix was so fast, especially like the last five laps of the stint. They could really just keep those tires alive. We couldn't quite get it. I was saving tires every single stint.

Towards the end I didn't think I would have to save fuel until they told me the number. Oh, my God. I started saving fuel. I didn't lose too much time. When I did a few laps behind Conor, I think that sent my tires over the tipping end. Yeah, from there, I mean, Felix closed like three seconds in one lap. He passed me and he left me.

I think at the end of the day we did everything we could have. I gave absolutely everything I had. I gave it everything that I could have done. I think we gave a good show to the fans with two laps to go. I think we both gave each other a lot of room. I think it was very exciting. I'm really happy for Felix on the pace that he has. He definitely earned that one. Congrats to you, man.

Yeah, that's go to Iowa.

THE MODERATOR: Pato, thanks for your time. Congratulations on P2. See you next weekend in Iowa.





PATO O'WARD: Thank you.

THE MODERATOR: We'll go back to questions for Felix Rosenqvist.

**Q. Take us through the last few laps. At what point did you sense that Pato was vulnerable, that you had a legitimate shot at passing him? Also, what it means to have y'all's racing team still be undefeated this season?**

FELIX ROSENQVIST: Yes, you never really know how the tire is going to work out. We were really good on the reds. When they said Pato was on the used reds, initially I thought that was a good thing with us being on blacks. He seemed to keep the gap pretty well.

At some point it went away. We started catching him more and more and more. At the same time we had lap traffic, which this time actually worked in my favor, having been one that always complains about that. That was good (smiling).

I think in that whole sequence, Pato, when he caught the lap traffic, it just tipped over for him, and we started gaining so much with the blacks. At that point I was just focused on getting the win.

Having the start we had to the season, I had to get this one. We had the pace. We had the 'push to pass' left. I kind of blew it all in one go there to get Pato. That was second-to-the-last lap.

Real good fight with him. I haven't seen the replay, but I'm sure everyone loved that. Yeah, good fun. Good fun.

**Q. Afterwards on the radio you thanked your crew. You obviously were missing your normal engineer this weekend. That crew worked really hard to put you where you are.**

FELIX ROSENQVIST: On the 10 car, it's been a while since we've had that win, not only with me but previous as well. I think Kanaan was the last one to win a race. I'm not sure when. It was a long time ago.

These guys are doing just as good of a job as Dixon's guys and now Marcus' guys. I think especially in Texas, Indy GP, they did a phenomenal job in the pits. All the sequences of the race, they've been exceptional. In this blistering heat we've had in the last couple of races, standing there with masks, sweating. You can see they're hungry for every race, as hungry as I am.

It's just been unfortunate the first couple of races. I did a bit of a (indiscernible) in Texas there in the last couple laps. Indy GP was just not working for us. Yesterday we had a technical issue. Today everything just came together.

It's so nice to take four out of four for the team, with Dixon starting off the way he did, now continuing. It just shows how good we are especially in the races. Just need to work on quallie a bit. Phenomenal weekend.

THE MODERATOR: Felix, it's been 18 years since a Swedish car won an INDYCAR race, that was Kenny Brack. What will this win mean for your fans in Sweden?

FELIX ROSENQVIST: Yeah, I mean, we have a good crowd back home supporting us in INDYCAR now, me and Marcus. It's growing and growing. With the INDYCAR season having started a bit earlier than F1 this year, I think it's tipped over to INDYCAR being the biggest interest in Sweden with two Swedes, two and a half with Oliver Askew.

It's fun when you can bring something home to the country. Hopefully it creates some interest for the young kids even in this tough times that we have right now. Hopefully that can make a difference for someone.

Yeah, proud to be taking it home for Sweden for sure.

**Q. I believe you said a week or two ago you could feel that first victory was coming. What was it about the confidence level that you could get it here or Indianapolis last week?**

FELIX ROSENQVIST: I mean, it's always a mix of confidence, being aggressive, but still... It showed in Texas. When it's a little bit too hot, it's so easy to throw it away. As Pato said before, everyone is as good. It's just about who gets it right in the day. We're operating within hundredths of each other. You're never really too confident.

When I saw the gap to Pato decrease the last four or five laps, I only had one thing in my mind. I think my crew only had one thing in their mind. That was winning the race.

Car was just phenomenal. Really good in the race. That just gives you the confidence to go for it in a final lap when the others are dropping off a little bit more than yourself.

**Q. Marcus was fourth. That has to be something that adds to the excitement of the day.**

FELIX ROSENQVIST: Yeah, I mean, definitely good day for us Swedes. Obviously for the team, as well. I'm not sure where Dixon ended, but he had some issue he told me

after the race.

As a team, we've just been strong every race. I don't see why we won't get stronger. We're still learning a lot of things about this new concept of a car with the Aeroscreen mainly. I think if we can improve our qualifying a little bit, we'll be really hard to beat for the rest of the season.

**Q. What are the physical demands going to be like now going to a doubleheader on a short oval that's physically straining?**

FELIX ROSENQVIST: It is. I think this weekend was OK because it's not really a tough track physically. It's a bit cooler here as well. I think Iowa is probably going to be the peak of test for us drivers. Really, really hot. You never get a break in Iowa. It's just going on and on and on. Yeah, that's why we spent this past eight months training every day, hopefully get some payback.

Honestly, these races with the Aeroscreen, how hot it is, as much as it is a normal race, it's also a physical race in the car mentally to try to keep strong, keep focused with all the heat and all the physical strain.

**Q. Being Scott's teammate, the run that he's been on, has that helped you at all? You have access to his data. You've seen the level he's performing at. What kind of level is Scott performing at at the moment? Has that helped you out in terms of getting up to speed this season at all?**

FELIX ROSENQVIST: Yeah, the thing with Scott, he's very different from any driver I've been with. I think his lowest level is extremely high. Doesn't matter. Actually yesterday in practice one, he said he had no good feeling for the car, he was P15 or something in practice. You can never count him off.

Even if he's 15 in practice, and you only have one practice, somehow he makes it into the top five in qualifying, then another step for the race. That's where he really shines. In and out laps, being fast when he needs to be fast, making the moves committed, without hesitation. He's rarely involved in any crashes or anything. It's pretty impressive to see that he never does anything wrong.

I wouldn't say everyone is fast now. He's not on pole every race. He just do what he needs to do. It's very inspiring to watch.

**Q. As we look at the top seven from the race, we have six guys that are either in their first year in the series or their second. From your experience, what is it about this series that allowed guys to start off so strong, to**

**really ramp up and start challenging some of these older drivers in the INDYCAR Series?**

FELIX ROSENQVIST: As I said before, I think in INDYCAR right now the concept, it's just so tight. You look at qualifying. You have the top 15 in 3, 4/10ths. That's a difference of making a really good lap and an exceptional lap. It's so little difference. I think that's just the thing.

You're on the right side of that, you have a good chance to win that day. If you're on the wrong side, you start 15th. Maybe you need a strategy to turn it around. Always seems to be a good strategy or two out there, it's always very open. The formula of the series allows anyone to fight for the win if you have the pace, if you do a good strategy.

Yeah, you can't really count anyone off. You just have to be there when you need to. Yeah, just never give up in the car. I think that's why you see so many different results, so many different guys up in the front all the time.

You kind of find a flow, just do the same every week. You always have to recharge, work hard, try new things every session. Yeah, hard work being in INDYCAR.

**Q. The same four or five drivers seem to be at the top. As this next wave of younger INDYCAR drivers comes through, is it fun to be one of those guys that's on the brink of this next strong wave of talent that could be around in the series for quite some time?**

FELIX ROSENQVIST: Yeah, I mean, the difficulty of the series definitely it's hard to come in as a rookie and win races straightaway. I think Wickens really showed. I had a good season last year, but it was still very up and down. I had a couple of podiums, one pole position. Still every weekend was a big swing.

I think you need experience. You need to learn the facts, you need to learn how the weekends go, try to find a flow, ups and downs. It probably takes a couple of years, too, before you can master it yourself without being guided by your crew.

I think that's what Dixon does really well, being consistent. He takes a lot of decisions on his own in the car. He can sort of call the race a little bit inside a helmet. Yeah, that's something the young guns need to learn.

**Q. How different was it for you to have Chris Simmons engineering you this weekend instead of Julian? I also wanted to ask, did you sustain no damage when you smacked into Graham Rahal on the exit of turn three?**

FELIX ROSENQVIST: About Chris and Julian, I wouldn't



say there's really any difference. We are very worked-in as a team. Everyone is so tight. Anyone can sort of do anyone's job. I wouldn't say that really felt different in the car or anything. Obviously everyone works a bit differently.

On Rahal there, he actually bumped in. He touched with wasn't Power, then kind of ping-ponged into me. Hit my front left really hard. That left some damage.

Ultimately getting off the wheel in the pit stop was really hard for the guys. That was why we lost time in the pit stops, three or four seconds in the pit stops. That's why we had a hard time catching Pato at the time. That just shows even more what a good race we had.

THE MODERATOR: Felix, we appreciate your time. We will be back at Iowa on Friday night after the race. Thanks, everyone, for joining us.

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