

# NTT IndyCar Series News Conference

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Indianapolis, Indiana, USA

**Marco Andretti**

Andretti Autosport

**Scott Dixon**

Chip Ganassi Racing

**Takuma Sato**

Rahal Letterman Lanigan Racing

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: Good afternoon, everyone. Thanks for joining us for our front row press conference for next weekend's 104th running of the Indianapolis 500. Amazing Fast Nine session today.

We are currently joined by Scott Dixon, driver of the No. 9 PNC Bank Chip Ganassi Honda, who qualified second today with a blistering speed of 231.051 miles per hour.

Scott, tell us about your four-lap run.

SCOTT DIXON: Yeah, it was definitely pretty interesting. I think the hardest part with these qualifying days is you don't really practice beforehand because you don't want to heat the car up.

The last three days we've been pretty lucky because the conditions have stayed pretty similar. Today we had a big difference with the wind. Ambient and track temp was maybe lower than the previous days. Winds kind of 12 miles an hour and gusting to 20 or higher. That is something we haven't tried with the Aeroscreen or anything like that. I think that was probably the biggest upset that we thought could be out there.

It's hard. When you're watching other cars that go before you, then kind of having some rough runs, lifting, things like that, you have to kind of wipe out all these preconceived notions and run your own game.

We went pretty aggressive on trimming out. I thought the time was pretty decent. Unfortunately I think we came up less than a hundredth I think from the pole.

Yeah, super happy for Marco. They've been really good all week. He's such a great guy and a good friend for so many years. To see him get a pole position at Indianapolis, I know what that means to him and especially his family, as well.

THE MODERATOR: Did I hear correctly you couldn't watch Marco's lap, that you were a little nervous?

SCOTT DIXON: No, I was definitely watching. Sometimes you don't want to know the results, right? We knew they were going to be strong. Right from the get-go, I knew Hinch was going to be a good sort of benchmark, and the same with Rossi, because it looked like he was more trimmed out than the rest of them, a little more aggressive.

Yeah, unfortunately it was not quite enough. There's so many things I think through the run that you could definitely equate maybe to going that little bit faster. I'm sure they had similar issues on their side where they could have made it better, too.

PNC Bank No. 9 has been strong all week. The crew's done an amazing job I think to get us to this point.

THE MODERATOR: We'll open it up to the media for questions.

**Q. How much did it affect not having a teammate in the Fast Nine for you or was your car already maxed out for what it had?**

SCOTT DIXON: The thing with Andretti is they have four of them kind of with Hinch and Hunter-Reay, Rossi, all those guys. I'm sure they were relaying or at least seeing the car run.

The problem is you never really know how similar the cars are. Definitely the 10 and the 9 are pretty similar, but then the 8 and the 10 are quite different in some ways. It's hard to go off what you hear sometimes.

You kind of just got to stick to your own guns. Sometimes it can be useful whether it's track conditions and just general track grip. If you think it's up, you can try to trim a little bit more. Maybe that's what Marco and those guys did at the end.



Looked like Rossi was probably the most aggressive on their side. His run honestly didn't look very good, especially with the (indiscernible) throughout. Maybe they didn't trim out any more.

I think all information helps. We would have loved to have two Ganassi cars in the Fast Nine. Just wasn't the case. They'll be strong in the race, for sure.

**Q. How much did you learn yesterday from the extra three runs?**

SCOTT DIXON: I think we kind of learnt that we were just not aggressive enough on the first run. That's kind of all it was. We kind of rebalanced for run two. Run three we kind of trimmed out a little bit more.

It was one of those situations where each run, we decided because the track conditions were going to be a little bit different on Friday, that we only did I think two runs, maybe three. We typically gear up for six on a day like that. We felt like maybe yesterday afternoon was better for the Fast Nine situation.

I think it always helps whenever you can run. I think conditions were especially different today from what we've seen during the week.

**Q. You made a couple references to Marco being this nice guy, misunderstood, people overlook that. Why do you think he is misunderstood in that way?**

SCOTT DIXON: I don't know. I just know him as Marco my friend. He's a great person. Everybody included, his family, is.

I'm not sure why. I think it's hard when you drive for a team that's owned by your dad. Graham Rahal gets some flack sometimes. These are extremely talented guys.

For me it was just really, one, hard because we didn't win the pole. If anybody out of that list, honestly Marco was the guy I was hoping for because I think he deserved it. That's a hard situation to go into, especially being last up and everything is on the line.

We threw up a decent number. It wasn't going to be easy to beat. That's definitely going to help Marco in a lot of ways throughout the season as well, maybe beyond. We just hope he doesn't get too confident for next weekend.

**Q. From a big picture perspective, the first time Andretti is on the pole here in 33 years. Only been one Andretti win in the Indy 500. Obviously you want to win. If Andretti were to win the Indy 500, what does it**

**sort of mean for the series?**

SCOTT DIXON: I don't know. I hope it's us winning the Indy 500. That's what we're thinking about. I don't know. I'm not even thinking about who I'd like to win the race. It's honestly all just thinking about us trying to win the race and be best prepared.

I'd love to see Chip add to his collection. As we've seen, the Penske group have been a little bit greedy in the past few years. We would definitely like to set that straight.

It's going to be a tough race. You know that group has been very strong. There's definitely a lot of them that have been very competitive. We'll just keep our head down and keep working on our program, and hopefully it's going to be strong enough.

**Q. Speaking of you winning the Indy 500, middle of row one, pretty good spot. Your car has been good every day so far. Looking ahead to next Sunday, what is your forecast?**

SCOTT DIXON: It's definitely the key. I think, as always, it's not just of the driver, but strategy is going to have to be on point. The pit stops, everything, is going to be extremely tight. I think we've seen how tight the field is. Gone are the days where if you finished on the lead lap, you could be in the top 10. There's probably 20 plus cars now on the lead lap.

It's never one thing. It's a multiple of many that gets you the victory. Plus you always want a little bit of luck on your side, too. That's what we'll try for.

But yeah, I think the car has felt comfortable, pretty good. We'll see how these last two practice sessions go today and with Carb Day coming up. It's been a fairly smooth month. Obviously we would have liked to have got the pole there. Came up a little short and hopefully we can correct that next weekend.

**Q. How much of a handful were the headwinds and tailwinds going 240 into turn one?**

SCOTT DIXON: It was weird. I was expecting it to be a little bit worse. The problem is, too, when you go slow on that out lap, that's normally the time you feel the wind a little bit more because the car is not planted as much with the downforce and the speeds and the loads in the corners.

It actually felt fine. It seemed like some of the other cars had some issues with falloff. I think the 27. We also saw maybe the 15, a couple others, have some pretty big lifts in

some big situations.

Honestly, it was one of the craziest runs I had throughout, got a little bit chaotic on the last lap. Could have kept up with the tools a little bit better, which maybe would have got us that pole position. I'm sure it was the same with Marco, too.

Honestly didn't think the conditions were that bad.

**Q. When you went out on the last run lap, did you think you kind of spooked the competition a little bit, served notice that I got this in my back pocket, too?**

SCOTT DIXON: Yeah, we were trying. Honestly we were not aggressive enough on the first run. We were just trying to find our way a little bit. I think we kind of misinterpreted the track and the grip level. That run definitely was pretty strong.

We knew the speeds would be down today just because of the winds. When the winds come, the cars are faster. Obviously the front straight today we saw some pretty big speeds because of the tailwind. You have to suffer down the back as well with the headwinds.

It was nice to have that run yesterday, but still Marco got us.

THE MODERATOR: We've now been joined by Marco Andretti, driver of the No. 98 U.S. Concrete Curb Honda and our P1 award winner.

Congrats, Marco. Tell us about your laps today.

MARCO ANDRETTI: Lap one was good. Lap two started giving me the hint that three and four were going to be tough. I was sliding definitely more than Scottie looked like he was sliding. Yeah, I had to work there, especially the last lap.

I knew it was going to be interesting. I knew it was going to be close, too, because I was watching the speeds, knew what he ran. The luxury of going last is you know the benchmark. Luckily we were just on the better end of that.

THE MODERATOR: We'll continue with questions.

**Q. Marco, you looked emotional when you first got out of the car, a little bit of tears in your eyes. What did it feel like? If you were emotional, why was that?**

MARCO ANDRETTI: I mean, I was emotional. It's funny because I was screaming after the run, so I don't have a voice. Everybody is thinking I'm crying but I just can't talk

right now.

No, obviously I was emotional. We put so much into it. This place means so much to us as a family. We've just been through so many ups and downs at this place. Obviously my cousin John is riding with me, my grandfather from home. We know family is pulling for us. We live and breathe this sport, this race in particular.

I think coming off of how bad last year was for me in the race, it made this so much better. That's what this place is all about, highs and lows, and it brings that out of you.

**Q. Can you tell us more about your grandfather telling you this morning the wind will scare you but it won't hurt you.**

MARCO ANDRETTI: Wind will scare you but it won't crash you. He was right today. I don't know if he's right totally. We were able to keep it going the right way today.

**Q. That's something he said to you all your life?**

MARCO ANDRETTI: Yeah, he has a lot of quotes in-house. As soon as I came out of the motorhome today, we were expecting winds. That's when I kind of had a laugh, too.

**Q. Scott, what are you expecting going into the race for next weekend? How are you going to be able to fine-tune the car?**

SCOTT DIXON: I expect it to be tough. It's always going to be tough. As I said earlier, it's more about executing on every level, that strategy, pit stops, obviously on track staying near the front. We'll see how that goes. We'll keep working on the final practice today, obviously Carb Day.

I think there's a lot of competitive cars. We're definitely trying to get that a little bit more. We'll always try and take a little bit of Lady Luck on next Sunday, as well.

THE MODERATOR: Thanks so much, Scott.

SCOTT DIXON: Congrats, Marco. Good job, man.

THE MODERATOR: We'll continue with questions for Marco Andretti.

**Q. You said last year wasn't ideal for you. Things have turned around massively so far. How long have you been working on this 500? Did it start from last year's? Normal kind of year in terms of the preparation?**

MARCO ANDRETTI: I think it's a collective effort honestly. I think it's the guys rubbing on the cars in the shop all the way through the off-season. We put an emphasis on this race, like a lot of people do. Yeah, I mean, Honda brought it. I mean, horsepower makes life so much better here at the Speedway. Everywhere, but especially here.

Just so thrilled for them, as well.

**Q. You get asked about this a lot. You get some flack on social media sometimes and criticism. How nice are the events like today where you score this big result? How nice it to do that to the people who criticize you, people you can't address individually?**

MARCO ANDRETTI: I definitely do not wake up and think about what people say about me. That's for sure. It's days like today that helps those cases, I suppose. I could look you straight in the eye and say it doesn't affect me one bit.

THE MODERATOR: We have been joined by Takuma Sato, driver of the No. 30 Panasonic Peopleready Honda.

Tell us about your run today.

TAKUMA SATO: Well, it's great run. Needless to say team and Honda did tremendous job. No. 30 Panasonic Peopleready Honda car worked really well, but that's because we tried third attempt yesterday for the qualify with a very hot condition that I wanted to simulate worst condition for preparing for today.

Obviously yesterday we were very fortunate to draw the early part of the conditions that everybody can see that we were just been lucky. We wanted to prove not only that, but we wanted to be competitive.

This morning, too, only Graham and I practice. That's because we just wanted to make the most of it and optimize the car for the conditions, which we did. A big credit for the engineers. The boys did a tremendous job. I'm very happy.

THE MODERATOR: We'll continue with questions.

**Q. Marco, looked like the last two laps you maybe altered your line a little bit to help with the sliding of the tires. Is that true? A little more shallow entry?**

MARCO ANDRETTI: Yeah, shallow entry, exactly. That was just because there was no rear tire left on lap four. Lap two kind of told me three and four were going to be pretty interesting.

Just really lucky to be able to hold it flat because of how

close it was in the end.

**Q. Is that something that you only learn by being here 11, 12 times?**

MARCO ANDRETTI: Yeah, I mean. That was my 15th official qual run. I don't know how many qual sims I've done around here. Definitely paid off for me in the last couple laps, knowing where to go in my tools to be able to help hold it flat.

**Q. You've been there now with the 98 with the Agajanian family. Pretty cool.**

MARCO ANDRETTI: It's awesome, man.

**Q. Marco, we talked about the expectation you've borne having that last name. If it hadn't been for Sam Hornish, might have been answered a long time ago. How tough has it been to sort of live up to those expectations? Does that add to the glee of today?**

MARCO ANDRETTI: I mean, when you struggle, it makes is all worth it when you're able to have days like today. Yeah, I mean, it's been brutal. I'm a competitor. I don't want to not win races, not be on the podiums.

I don't know, we're just wired to not quit, man. I love this sport. I'm going to keep doing whatever you can do for it and to try to be successful at it.

**Q. What is it like to have the fastest car at Indianapolis Motor Speedway? What does that feel like?**

MARCO ANDRETTI: I was joking with dad. I'm like, This is probably like my third legitimate shot as far as just outright pace in 15 years. When I lost the 500 in 2006, you saw me mad because I knew that it is possible that 15 years later I'm talking to you guys and I haven't won one yet. That's why I was so mad.

It's a tough place. Last year I had the worst race of my career. Here we are, we can win it. We're going to take it one race at a time. The INDYCAR Series is so competitive. Drivers and the teams, everybody is so close. It's easy to go from last to first if you just find that little bit.

**Q. Marco, before the season started you revealed a new tribute helmet for your late uncle John. Losing him late last year, does this pole win today mean anything more to you and your family?**

MARCO ANDRETTI: Absolutely. I mean, that guy, close second to my grandfather Mario as far as passion for the sport. He's one that you can sit there and talk to for hours



on end anything racing related. His passion for it is just awesome.

He was riding with me for sure.

**Q. Marco, once the race gets started next Sunday, would you rather be up front in clean air or would you prefer to be back in second or third place saving fuel?**

MARCO ANDRETTI: It's 500 miles. It's 500 miles. I mean, it's hard to say. We're going to have to find out today and on Carb Day if we're going to want to lead, if we're going to be able to keep the lead, if we're going to be going out front.

I don't know if I really have an answer for that one right yet. Yeah, it's always better for fuel mileage running second. I don't want to get yelled at by my grandfather again.

**Q. If the conditions next weekend are like what we went through this past weekend, do you think it will be difficult to get passes done? Will the racing be as exciting if the track was hot?**

MARCO ANDRETTI: The temps have slowly crept up. I'm checking it every day for race day. It started like 78, 79. Now it's up to 83, 84. The hotter you get, like you say, the cars will be sliding around more. More of an emphasis to get it right. Makes it easier to get it wrong.

Yeah, I think that might cause more passing, for sure.

**Q. Taku, you were the first one to go out and were able to maintain the front row. How were you able to do that? What was the speed like out there being the first car out?**

TAKUMA SATO: It's all be preparation. That is why I really strongly wanted to do the practice this morning as well as yesterday on my solo attempt, which was in late afternoon, which is a lot hotter condition.

I think I wanted to see the conditions to optimize the car for that. That was extremely important since we didn't particularly have a big speed. As you can see, my four laps was very consistent. That's because I prepare for it because we didn't have a big speed.

The Fast Nine was fantastic, and the whole team did a fantastic preparation, but we were definitely helped by condition yesterday for earlier part of the drawing. Today will be a real challenge to prove our speed and competitiveness.

I'm very happy to manage the four laps in the very, very,

let's say, consistent run. That's put me on the front row. At that time I didn't really expect. I know my qualify was pretty good. We know other competitors has very, very fast car. We weren't sure.

As you see, the conditions, everybody struggle with the gusty wind compared to yesterday. It's getting more realistic now, second row, first row. Unbelievable feeling.

THE MODERATOR: Takuma, I'm going to let you go.

TAKUMA SATO: Thank you.

THE MODERATOR: We'll take two more for Marco.

**Q. How much influenced were you by the different setups that the other teammates in the Fast Nine were going for?**

MARCO ANDRETTI: Yeah, I mean, I always find I do better just focusing on what my entry and my car needs. We kept it really close to home. My grandfather, good advice yesterday, let them beat you, don't dial yourself out. You already know what you have, do it again. Let them try to dial themselves out chasing, right? Good advice.

We kept it close to home. I knew it was going to be tougher today with the wins.

**Q. Have you spoken with your grandfather since you won the pole? What was his reaction? Can you imagine what this place would have been like if it was filled? Across the street in the gravel lot they were going bananas.**

MARCO ANDRETTI: It would have been awesome. I can't complain. I'm lucky to be driving racecars during these times. Yeah, that would have been amazing.

There's time to celebrate. I think we got to focus on the task at hand. I'm definitely switching my mind into race mode already. I haven't talked to my grandfather yet. I've been talking to you guys.

THE MODERATOR: Thanks, Marco, for joining us. Congratulations.

MARCO ANDRETTI: Thank you very much.

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