

NTT IndyCar Series News Conference

Saturday, August 29, 2020
Indianapolis, Indiana, USA



Takuma Sato

Rahal Letterman Lanigan Racing
Press Conference

THE MODERATOR: Welcome, everyone, to our post race press conference. We're joined by the runner-up in today's race, for Rahal Letterman Lanigan Racing, Takuma Sato.

Takuma, looked like you had a big run on Scott there in the last laps after the final pit stop. Came up just a little bit short. Still a great race for your first race after the Indy 500.

TAKUMA SATO: I hope the fans enjoy that. Huge congrats to the Chip Ganassi Racing and Scott. Hell of a run.

Our race was strong. It was just not quite there for the last few laps. But I think still my No. 30 Honda worked extremely well. The boys did a phenomenal job. Big congrats to the team.

THE MODERATOR: Takuma, talk about the final pit stop. I know it looked like there was an issue on the right rear tire. Things like that happen. Do you feel like that cost you a chance to challenge Scott?

TAKUMA SATO: It's happen. It's happen in race. It's no argue. Obviously we did (indiscernible) down and save the fuel as much as I could. We were able to stretch longer than anybody else. In fact, I think it's four or five laps longer than Dixie. That could have certainly ahead of them if that's a normal circumstance.

But we had a situation in the pit, which sometime happen. It happen, it happen. It's okay. The boys did a great job. Still we came back and raced second.

Yeah, it was a good day.

THE MODERATOR: Pretty good starting spot for tomorrow, on pole. Your thoughts on the race tomorrow after 200 laps today?

TAKUMA SATO: Yeah, definitely I think will help

tomorrow. Sometimes I boxed in, lost too many places that I really need. My car wasn't necessarily working good at the very beginning of stint, the car was just sliding all over the place.

Hopefully tomorrow we can sort it out. Just once again, make no mistake and hopefully we have a strong race tomorrow.

THE MODERATOR: We'll take questions for Takuma.

Q. Just wondered about the move with Pato. Obviously an aggressive move. Was it one that you enjoyed? Talk us through the risk versus reward.

TAKUMA SATO: I think that's the name of racing, isn't it? Nothing risky at all. Pato, he's such a great driver, such a talented driver. He always give us space. Very committed driver.

We were just able to have a better go because obviously Dixie will be run away. Had to make most of it while the tire still fresh. Once again, I feel fresher tire definitely helped.

After the race, he came to me, hugged me. He really enjoyed it. I know he went sideways. I gave him room for that. If I put too much room, I put myself in the gray, never come back.

It was tight. But that's podium fighting in racing, shall we say. I certainly, yeah, enjoyed it. Hopefully the fans enjoyed it is really most important.

Q. What kind of impact did the week after the 500 have on your performance this weekend?

TAKUMA SATO: I think it's been hectic and crazy busy, as you can imagine. Not physically. Obviously we had tighter restrictions. We couldn't do obviously the winning tour. Still the people knows we not traveling. Instead of using travel time, they are coming up in the Zoom all the time. I had no place to hide.

Yeah, it was zero chance of really have a free time. I think the last night was the first time I had probably seven, eight hours of sleep.

ASAP . . . when all is said, we're done.®
sports

But it's all good. I think obviously happiest moment for the team. Celebration maybe next month when we have a little bit more time. I think the guys are really focused back to the shop, rebuild the car for this weekend. They did a phenomenal job.

I think we have to minimize the risk of injury because guys working too hard possibly. Yeah, the guys need a good sleep night, and tomorrow we need to come back as strong as today.

Q. Towards the end of the race, looks like you got the down to .04. At what point towards the last four laps did he have an insurmountable edge?

TAKUMA SATO: Yeah, it's always tough. I just simply couldn't make job done. I had a couple of close call. Had a couple sideways, as well, went too close to Dixie. Try every day, every different line, going into the shallow entry, to the over entry. None of that really able to overtake him.

Once again, big congrats to Ganassi. They did a great job.

No, we were not there. Unfortunately today was Dixon. I think the problem was, like, being too much at the front, I don't know, too demand for the winning. Possibly that's why I was a little bit too disappointed.

If I think about it again, I think realistically what an amazing two weeks in a row from Rahal Letterman Lanigan Racing.

Q. Also moving up in the points, how important would it be to get the best points finish of your career?

TAKUMA SATO: It's extremely important. Mathematically I think it's still possible. It really don't matter. I think Scott is on the way to win. I think it's very unrealistic if I win a championship. Obviously nothing is impossible, but I don't think so.

Still we achieved a big win. Finish second and third in championship with Graham, Graham is in a very good position, yeah, that's a phenomenal realistic target. We're doing everything we could.

Q. How much confidence does that give you going into the race tomorrow, going forward later into the season?

TAKUMA SATO: I mean, today was a great indication. My No. 30 car work well during the race (indiscernible) condition. I think when it start the race, we struggled. That was not hidden. We need to look again, see what we can do really.

My side, too, if I can do anything differently for tomorrow's start, I will. Certainly front-row start is big advantage. Hopefully we have no mistake and finish as high as possible. That's our aim.

Q. At the midpoint in the race you were farther back, 10th or 12th. Did you think at that point you would be fighting for the win at the end?

TAKUMA SATO: Look, I think this is the beauty of INDYCAR. This is the beauty of the oval. You can't predict until really the last two stint. Yes, you are right. I struggled, to be honest. Got passed by a lot of guys, as low as 10th.

I had a consistent feeling. At the same time I saved the fuel. Almost, you know, no point in taking too much risk to overtake the guys in front. Even 10th place, very difficult.

I think, yeah, I mean, stretch the stint, overcut for the race, it worked extremely well for us. I was a bit hope towards the end of the race. When we had safety car, everything shuffle back to where we were. I think P6 or something on the restart definitely helped. In the end we were strong again.

Q. Second time in six days you've had a close duel with Scott Dixon. What do you enjoy most not only this last week but in general about racing down to the wire with him?

TAKUMA SATO: Well, I'm enjoying definitely. There's no hide that I have full of energy, full of hunger to win more than ever, just over and over. Particularly Scott is the guy to beat today. I mean, just in general, as well. He's just extremely competitive guy, competitive team. We were just challenging for the big moment.

I feel really confident. I feel really, how can I say, so hungry for the win, so desperate -- not desperate. How can I say? So much energy in the team. The boys just so excited. It's nice to be in top contender every single weekend.

I wish we had same thing for earlier part of the season. Certainly nothing we can change in the past. In the future, which is coming rest of the season, hopefully we can keep this competitiveness and hopefully we can challenge for another hard race.

THE MODERATOR: Takuma, thanks for your time. See you tomorrow.

TAKUMA SATO: Thank you.

