

# NTT IndyCar Series News Conference

Saturday, August 29, 2020

Indianapolis, Indiana, USA

**Scott Dixon**

Chip Ganassi Racing

**Pato O'Ward**

Arrow McLaren SP

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: We will bring in the driver of the No. 5 Arrow McLaren SP, and today's third-place finisher, Pato O'Ward.

Pato, can you describe the feeling of how the race went for you.

PATO O'WARD: Yeah, I think we had a very solid run today. We led some laps. We were out on front for basically like a good 70% of the race. Yeah, towards the end Dixie got us in the pits, in the pit sequence. We were trying to get him but we didn't have enough pace to get up to him and pass him. Sato with fresher tires behind us passed us and from there I was just kind of running on my own (indiscernible) what specifically Dixon did in the end because it was a pretty massive difference of pace that I just couldn't keep up.

We will analyze, check for tomorrow, hopefully be closer to the end of the race tomorrow.

THE MODERATOR: Questions for Pato. I apologize for any breakups we have because the Internet is not the best.

**Q. I was talking to Robert Wickens yesterday about what it's like to mentor the young drivers. How big a help has he been for you, a guy who is current with the INDYCAR Series to serve as a mentor, help you and Oliver out this season?**

PATO O'WARD: Yeah, it's a great guy to have on our side. We both went to the circuit in Indy Lights most of them, but not in the INDYCAR. It's nice to have someone to tell you kind of what little things caught him off guard so we're better prepared.

It's been a really enjoyable time as a person, as someone that knows what it feels like to be in our shoes. Ultimately

he basically drove this car, just without the Aeroscreen. A lot of the things he learned translate to us right now.

**Q. How cool is it getting to know him? He's got a little bit of a unique sense of humor.**

PATO O'WARD: Yeah, I like him. He's very honest, which I really like. He honestly is very technical. He finds a lot of little details that me or Oliver might miss sometimes. It's good to have him in our head, just keep improving the little things that ultimately make a race a win or a lose situation.

It's been great having him here. I really built a very strong relationship with him.

**Q. How close did Sato get to you when he passed you on the outside in turn one?**

PATO O'WARD: Honestly I thought we touched. I didn't think he was going to throw it outside, but he did. He didn't do anything wrong. I mean, I think that was racing. I'm sure fans would have loved it.

Yeah, just right when he was on the outside, I had to step on the brakes and back out. If I didn't do that, we were both going to be in the wall.

**Q. How much does it help that you seem to every week roll off quick, with limited practice? Is that a huge part of why you've been having success?**

PATO O'WARD: It's fantastic. I mean, this Arrow McLaren SP crew, both the 7 and the 5, along with Team Chevy, have given us very solid cars to roll out with. Everywhere we go, we've been right there on pace.

Obviously there will be some differences from year to year. But the car has always kind of been in the window. We really have had the chance and the tools to be able to run up front. Winning in this series isn't easy at all. But we're pushing, man. We've really improved. I think we get stronger and stronger. My engineer I feel like we keep building our relationship, what I like. He will continue to learn even more and more.

I think we've built something very strong, and I'm excited to see what the future has in store because I feel like there's a ton of potential, there's a lot of very smart people here

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doing the strategies, the performance, the engineering. So many people here that I truly feel like they have, every person has their own kind of task, and every task builds to success. I think so far we're all working very, very well together.

Everybody's hungry. We're all rolling towards the same side because we're hungry for wins. We want to be fighting for the championship. I mean, he's a tough guy to beat. He's been in the series for a long time. I've always looked up to him. He's a great driver. But I think the consistency is something that he really has mastered. It's pretty tough to beat him whenever his worst day is like a second.

THE MODERATOR: We have been joined by the winner of today's race, Scott Dixon. It's Scott's fourth win of the season and the 50th of his career. He's just the third driver to hit 50, joining A.J. Foyt and Mario Andretti at that milestone.

Scott, congratulations on the win. Talk about adding another win and another trophy.

SCOTT DIXON: Yeah, it was definitely a lot of fun. I think today we kind of just sat there and waited on strategy. Also the pit stops were amazing. Yeah, I think, I don't know, what first comes to mind, it would have been nice to get (indiscernible). But it is what it is.

Super proud of the team. The whole PNC Bank No. 9 crew were phenomenal and that's definitely what made it a little bit easier for me. It was definitely quite hard to pass on track. We were kind of cruising a little bit there until we saw Sato coming, had to get going. Obviously started to catch the back of the pack there.

Yeah, 50 is huge. Never in my wildest dreams did I think I'd ever get 50 INDYCAR wins, and hopefully we keep adding to that.

THE MODERATOR: We'll take questions for Pato and Scott.

**Q. Pato, if you look back at the start of this season, could you honestly think halfway through you would be running third in the championship, behind only Scott and one Penske? Do you find that quite extraordinary that you're third in the championship?**

PATO O'WARD: I do. I do, man. I was not expecting. Obviously when you go into a season, you kind of put expectations towards the side, you kind of go day-to-day to maximize your opportunities.

We're in the fight. We're in the fight, at least for second (laughter). I think it's been a long time coming. The guys have been working very hard. I truly feel like they deserve the strong results we've had these past couple weekends. We've left a lot of points on the table, as well. But I think as a team we're just getting better and better.

We are running in a very cool position to be in in my first year in INDYCAR with such a competitive field, such talented drivers honestly. I'm very happy.

**Q. Pato, you've come close a couple times this season for your first career win. The number of laps you've led, down-to-the-wire positions you put yourself in, do you have a sense of how this race and Road America have helped you grow from a confidence standpoint or just being able to put yourself in better situations?**

PATO O'WARD: I truly feel like those were kind of the last little push we needed to really be there every single weekend. You have to do it first in order for yourself and your team to, like, 100% believe you can actually achieve it.

There's so many little things that go into an INDYCAR race to finish like in the top five. You're in and out laps have to be very strong. Your pit stops have to be very strong. Consistency, tire management, a lot of factors that go into it. Whenever you are learning to master that, you're getting results within the top five, top three, it's like, Okay, we can do this.

We just have to keep chipping away. I'm sure a win will fall soon. I sure hope it does. But, yeah, it's been a good ride so far. I'm still learning a lot when I'm driving behind these guys that have been in the series for so long. You can definitely learn something from them.

I'm trying to gather up as much as I can this year.

**Q. Scott, as close as you came last week, the consistency that you've been able to have this year, we've heard you talk about your team, do you have any sense what has been particularly special this year that is helping you almost always be a contender to the last stint of the race?**

SCOTT DIXON: I think it just shows the depth of the team. The race at Road America, when we weren't having a great day, Felix was able to pull off a win. I think we definitely went through a lot of changes in the off-season. Just the process, we definitely tried to learn from a lot of our mistakes that we had, not just last year but years previous to that, as well.

The depth of the team I think got a lot stronger with consuming a lot of the Ford GT program, which was good. We were just running really thin. Now it's nice to have that to lean on, not just myself but sort of Felix and Marcus, as well.

It's tough competition. These teams are the best in the business. The drivers right now are so tight and so close, you got to try and maximize on everything. That's what it really came down to for us, is trying first of all to do the obvious things right, eliminate the silly stuff, which we still fell into a little bit at Road America, race two, running out of fuel. That's where you have to be careful because you can lose a lot of points.

The year started great. We've had great finishes. Four wins in a season, a few seconds. I think Road America is the only one we finished out of the top five, which is tough to do in this championship right now. We just have to keep our head down and working as hard as the start of the season.

**Q. You mentioned the fun you've had dueling with Sato. He's been in the series with you for nearly 10 years now. What have you enjoyed most about these last two weeks?**

SCOTT DIXON: Yeah, definitely didn't enjoy last week. The situation definitely called for a red flag. I didn't think they were going to make it on fuel. Kind of a tough one to swallow I think in both scenarios. That's Indianapolis. Finished second I think four or five times there now. Man, a lot of times I think you'd just rather finish third or fourth or fifth.

Sato did a great job. They maximized what they could. I think they knew they couldn't make it, they had to go with that scenario. It played out well for them.

Today he was super fast, man. It was crazy to kind of listen to the radio. They were giving me the times. I could see on my steering wheel the splits closing pretty quickly. They did a great job of trying to use the overcut, some clean air, try and jump a lot of people.

Looks like maybe he didn't have a clean last stop. If he had a clean last stop, it was definitely going to be a very tight race for the win.

It's huge. These races are so tough. Sato is definitely one of the most fierce competitors I think when you get into a situation like that. He takes his chances, and he makes that quite apparent.

**Q. I hear you said you need to improve your final stint,**

**your pace in the end of the race. Do you think it's more about the setup on the car or is most the little adjustments you have to make after this final stops?**

PATO O'WARD: I think it's a little mix of everything, to be honest. I felt like we were stronger than what we appeared in the end. When Dixon was behind me, he was kind of saving fuel and hanging out. I knew he had a bit more pace in him.

Sato came out of the blue. Whenever I overtook him when he came out of the pits, I didn't think he had that much more pace than us. He really did. I couldn't catch Scott. He cut me. Honestly from there it was just a race by myself. I guess we'll have to see why.

But, yeah, I don't have an answer for you. I truly don't know.

**Q. Scott, I see at the point when you lose the position in the pit stop with Pato, you have to think about what you need to do better for the next step? How do you prepare this?**

SCOTT DIXON: I think for us, I think Pato did a fantastic job. We definitely had a little more pace than them. They were quite quick for the first five or 10 laps of the stints, then we were just sitting in the leanest mixture, trying to kind of make fuel sitting in behind there. That's always going to help in the stop, whether it's a full caution yellow pit stop where everybody is bunched up or if it's a green flag one.

Didn't quite work on the first one. It was very tight. Then the second one we had a phenomenal stop and were able to jump and get out just in front of him, which enabled us to really get some clear track and kind of pull away.

As Pato knows, all the drivers, you're constantly trying to manage the situation, trying to understand. We can't pass on track right now, he's quite quick in that scenario. You got to try to think of different ways you can pull it off.

I'm very fortunate and lucky to work with the best team in the business. They definitely showed it on the pit stops today.

**Q. Scott, you turned 40 back on July 22nd. You get your 50th win today. In many ways is 40 the new 50 for you?**

SCOTT DIXON: Yeah, I guess the last couple weeks it's been some of the older guys. What is Sato, 45 now? Power is turning 40. A few of us lingering around that age group.

I don't know, man. I don't feel any different to when I was 20. I think the hangovers get a little worse, which is one big difference. I try to stay clear of those a little more these days.

No, again, I'm so lucky to work with the team that I do. They inspire me every day, their competitiveness. Chip, Mike, everybody involved at this team, they never lift, they never want to stop. That's what keeps me going, keeps me driving as hard as I can.

**Q. How huge was it beating Pato out of the pits on the final pit stop?**

SCOTT DIXON: Yeah, I think it was pretty big. It enabled us to get some clear track. We did catch the back markers. The 1 car was kind of off strategy. We were lucky, where they all short pitted earlier in the race, same with the 12, we were able to put them a lap down when this caution came out, which definitely killed their afternoon. I think they were trying to undercut. It just didn't work out.

I was kind of thinking there wasn't much competition once we made that pass because I could see in the mirror that Pato couldn't stay very close. We were kind of just cruising. I didn't know that Sato wasn't on an overcut scenario, how close that was going to be.

The team came on saying, Hey, you got to push, you got to push. Obviously maybe he had a bit of a bad stop on that last one, which definitely helped us in that scenario. But he was super quick.

This is the tough part of INDYCAR, you have people overcutting, undercutting. A lot of it depends on track position on the track. You have people like Sato that had crazy pace as well.

**Q. You have 51 in you for tomorrow?**

SCOTT DIXON: Yeah, that would be pretty cool. Nice to get a couple more wins before the season is out. As always, man, every race we go into, we're trying to win it.

**Q. Blair Julian, your crew chief, when he puts together that wolf pack team, for you as a driver, how much confidence does that give you knowing you've got a guy like that behind you?**

SCOTT DIXON: Yeah, it's been a long story with Blair and I. He was the first person kind of that I met when I came to Indianapolis back in 1999. Been to the States previous to race, and see races, but he was working on Stefan Johansson's team at the time. We were the two that hung

out with him and Anton, his brother.

It's always been big to have that kind of relationship, especially with somebody that's kind of moved through different teams with me, whether it was with Westpac, Stefan's, then PacWest, then here to Chip Ganassi Racing.

He's a super hard worker, very thorough, very loyal. In this industry, that's what it requires. That's why he fits into the Ganassi kind of situation so well because everybody is like that.

It's nice to have him there. On off weekends, someone to chill with obviously that's from New Zealand. We get a lot of time together, so it's good to see Blair, obviously to see what he's been able to achieve through his career and personal life, his family. It's pretty special.

**Q. Your in elite company now with number 50. Talk about what that means to you.**

SCOTT DIXON: Yeah, it's amazing. As I said kind of earlier, I never thought this was ever possible. I was very lucky and very fortunate to race in a lot of junior categories, made it to INDYCAR. The first win came in a strange way at Nazareth, Pennsylvania, in a fuel race. That he was definitely a shock. Then obviously the milestone that we reached today is huge.

Not for just me, it's amazing what this team has been able to achieve with championships, Indy 500s. As always, I feel very fortunate to be able to work with this group of people. They're the ones that make it possible.

Today I think speed-wise it was going to be a tough race, tough to pass. What we were able to do in the pits, pull that off, was big.

Yeah, 50 is a great number. I'd like to think there's 50 more, but that might be pretty tough (laughter). We'll keep our head down and we'd love to definitely get a lot more wins here in the next few years. Yeah, we're in the business of winning, so that's what we got to do.

It means a lot for me, means a lot for my family a lot for all the people that enabled me to get here, all the investors from New Zealand that made this possible many moons ago. This is what it's all about.

**Q. How excited are you in terms of the momentum from today going into tomorrow's race? What can you learn from this race going into tomorrow, and the rest of the races for the rest of the season?**

SCOTT DIXON: It's definitely a hard format. You don't



really get much track time. It's interesting, too, because I think we now have a rookie session and first-timers session, which is quite an interesting combination. They get an extra 30 minutes, extra sets of tires, which definitely when you're in a scenario like that is a lot of information, especially if it's one person out of a big team like Andretti. It's a quick way to spread some information.

Whenever you have this practice, then you have a night to think about it, you go into qualifying, which you haven't been on track that day, the track conditions are totally different, you have to smash out two laps that are going to be race one and race two.

It's definitely a difficult format, for sure. You can't even change the car from qualifying to race. Even we had a bit of an issue in Iowa in that scenario. It's definitely fun if it works out. Otherwise you can have a pretty miserable day.

Yeah, tonight we'll definitely try and figure out a couple things that we can make a little bit better on the car, try to get to the pace that Sato had at the end. Again, you get no time to test it, you go straight into the race. Looking forward to tomorrow.

We're not starting as well. Lap two in qualifying I tried to go five or 10 miles an hour faster into turn one, the car wouldn't take it. Had big understeer. That's how we definitely lost a lot of pace on that second lap to what I thought we could have.

Yeah, man, it's a tough season. The best thing is that we're racing. We're so thankful to be racing and putting on a show. Great to have fans here in St. Louis, even though it's all restricted. Man, I'm just glad that we're racing so I should stop complaining.

**Q. The pace at the end of the stint, how much effort goes into that before the race weekend, how much of it is you targeting that in practice? Is that something you guys are constantly working towards and factor in or just a benefit of having a good car?**

SCOTT DIXON: I think it's definitely always a combination of things, right? Trust me, you're always trying to be as fast as possible in qualifying, you want to have no deg in the race. That combination never really works out.

I think this year we struggled a bit more in qualifying than we personally like, especially on road courses. Between all three of us, it seems hard for us to get our car in the window for the ultimate lap time. We know how competitive the NTT INDYCAR Series is. Even the likes of Indianapolis road course, if my two laps combined in Q2 was quickest. I struggled to piece them together with just

how the tire came in. Yet Road America deg was pretty good and better than others.

We're still trying to work out why we struggle a little bit on peak performance for qualifying across the board. In the past we've had really good deg. Today I think we were kind of in that boat compared to maybe the Schmidt cars. If you look at Sato, I have to go through the data, they pitted pretty late, so he had pretty fresh tires near the end.

We do try to cover it all, but it's very tough. When you have no practice or testing or anything like that, it's really hard. A lot of the testing we went through yesterday, we went through three or four sets of tires. You're not doing anything that you're going to do in a race, where you are putting over 50 laps on a set. You are doing 30 or 40 at the most, and those are kind of broken up.

A bit of a guessing game at the moment to be honest. We just try to make the best guess of it and try to understand the most, learn from the mistakes throughout the season and last year as well.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you, Scott, for your time. Wish you the best of luck tomorrow.

SCOTT DIXON: Thanks, everyone. Have a great night.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you, everyone.

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