

NTT IndyCar Series News Conference

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Graham Rahal Takuma Sato Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: Good afternoon, everyone. Welcome to the NTT INDYCAR SERIES video news conference. Today we are joined by Rahal Letterman Lanigan teammates Takuma Sato, 2020 Indianapolis 500 champion, and Graham Rahal, who finished second in the GMR Grand Prix in July on the road course.

Takuma, what has it been like being the defending Indy 500 champion? Are you excited to get back to IMS this May?

TAKUMA SATO: First of all, very exciting to come back IMS, particularly we have fans this year. As we kept saying, it's great thing Indiana government, IMS and everybody is working together to make it happen.

Yeah, we just had Baby Borg things in St. Pete. It was very exciting as well. We unveiled the (indiscernible) two. Very exciting. Everything coming up and up. It's a great atmosphere building up to situation coming up. That's what I feel. Very excited.

THE MODERATOR: Graham, last year GMR Grand Prix, finished second, then followed that up with two podium finishes after that. Talk about coming back to the road course this weekend and what we can expect.

GRAHAM RAHAL: Yeah, I'm excited. I think we've always been pretty strong in the road course here. Last year we were certainly on track to get the win. The yellow flag kind of hurt us at the very end there, which ruined our day a little bit. Still finishing second was strong.

Finished up front a lot here before, but never got the win. Hoping to be able to come back and get the Fifth Third Bank car up front.

We've had a real strong year, St. Pete being our only mishap on the 15 car so far. It's important we keep this month of May going with the momentum that we gained in

Texas.

We're excited for the weekend. It will be a big challenge ahead of us. Certainly a little bit different, if I'm thinking correctly, it's five extra laps compared to last year's July race. That makes the strategies change quite a bit, particularly the strategy that we went for in July, which was going to be the winner. It's going to be a little different this year.

We're excited for the challenge ahead.

THE MODERATOR: We'll go ahead and open it up to questions.

Q. Graham, how excited are you to go into the month of May off the momentum from Texas, but also equally how excited are you to have fans back in the stands this weekend?

GRAHAM RAHAL: As I just said, we've had a really strong I think opening to the year. Feel like at St. Pete even, that's our blip, but that shouldn't have been a blip if you look at the average finish. I think had that not been the case, you're well into the top five on your average, which would have been great. Should have, could have, would have. Didn't work out for us.

But we feel like we certainly have made some great gains, that we've been very competitive everywhere. We feel like we're going to be pretty strong this weekend, be able to race really well. Conditions look prime, if I'm seeing them right. 70, sunny, beautiful, perfect. We're excited about that.

It's awesome to have fans. Takuma obviously won last year, finished third, Dixie right there. We came across the line three-wide, had nothing to cheer for. That's just how it was. It is different.

The Indy 500 is the Indy 500 because of the fans, truthfully. Yes, it's tradition. Yes, it's the greatest race in the world, certainly in all of our opinion. The fans are what make it that. It's great to be able to see 140,000 of our best friends out there in a couple weeks' time.

I think also tip of the cap, yes. I think government helped

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sports

us get there. But tip of the cap to everybody at IMS, the vaccination drives, everything they did, that made a huge difference to get us where we're at today. The amount of Hoosiers that were vaccinated at the Speedway, just tremendous. All of us, everybody in INDYCAR was vaccinated at the Speedway or through AMR, INDYCAR. We're super thankful for that. Very excited to be back.

Q. Taku, you're going back to the Speedway as defending Indy 500 winner. What can you do to replicate this year, but also going into the Grand Prix as well?

TAKUMA SATO: Yeah, how can we replicate? I don't know (laughter). But just Graham mentioned that the team get good momentum. Finishes for Graham, which is quite encouraging to see. I was just very excited he had bit breaks. Also, St. Petersburg, the way I finished where it should have been.

Those other races, Barber, Texas, will be a little bit trapped by strategy, some of the unfortunate things. We had a little issue, mechanical issue.

It's motorsports. I don't blame that. Just a little we were frustrated for the first few races. If you look at the speed, just the pure speed, I think it's something very encouraging.

For IMS, honestly Indy 500 I don't know because now this year we will have updated aero kit, the barge board, the extension for the diffusers is available. Basically is more downforce.

Same idea as Texas. Specification is different. Conditions obviously will never be the same. The tire supposed to be the very similar performance, but we just don't know.

However, I think over the course of the winter, the team always try to make progress, same as everyone else. But I think we have very good baseline. I'm confident that we can do the competitive job. Santino joined the team. The last test in IMS was quite productive. I'm optimistic to be competitive. But how we can repeat, I don't know.

Q. Graham, you mentioned how strong of a start to this year you've had so far. Does this feel both in pace that you've had in the car and the results that you have put together, does this feel like the best start to a season you've had in a while? Do you sense that energy and momentum on the team?

GRAHAM RAHAL: I do. I just think everybody's done an excellent job. My boys have committed themselves a ton, Takuma's as well, through the off-season to get all the

different aspects right and get better.

The way that they're building race cars right now, the quality of cars coming out of our shop, there are none better. The car we showed up at the test in Indianapolis with, it was fast. I mean, it was fast right away. Everybody is just doing an excellent job.

I think the level of focus is extremely high, too. I think people are kind of sick and tired of not fulfilling -- I said this at the beginning of the year in the NBC interview. Our motto this year is just fulfilling potential. Last year we were there a lot. Just somehow things go wrong. St. Pete was that case a little bit. We were there, then we just kind of lost the opportunity. We need to try to stop and not have that. Every other race I think we maximized. We've done a really good job.

Yeah, I mean, it's a good start to the year. The boys have done an excellent job. Their commitment, their pit stops, pit stop at Texas made a massive difference for us going from sixth to third. Certainly we were able to pass on track. But getting that in the pits was tremendous. The engineering staff has done a great job.

I think there is, like I said, this heightened level of energy and focus within the organization that's helping. At the end of the day, too, internally for me I feel like there's a little bit of frustration in not having won in a while. Everybody wants to kind of get that off our back. Again, we've been so close so many times over the last few years, the bounces have not gone our way. Hopefully we're beyond that now and be able to get it done.

Don't know a better way to do it this weekend and build momentum for the 500. I think the 500, we have a great shot at it. We're excited for that one.

Q. You have some personnel that moved around in the off-season. Is there any part of that on the engineering side or otherwise that you feel like you --

THE MODERATOR: You've frozen.

GRAHAM RAHAL: I can answer it I think for the most part.

On our side we didn't really have a huge, huge shake-up. Our guys have stayed pretty consistent on the 15. Takuma, Eddie retired, but Eddie is still with us. Eddie is still doing some design work and stuff. I do think the core group is very similar.

What has really helped us move the needle is there's a competitive spirit in the organization, in a positive way. There's no butting heads within any of the teams. But in a

positive way the guys have been able to push each other to the next level.

Their pit stop competitions that they do at the end of the week every week, both the 30 car versus 15 car, then individually, right front guys, left front. We've seen a big change in moving the needle in the pit stops forward and things like that.

But I also think that we've just gotten a lot better at defining our resources and utilizing them better, getting more out of it, maximizing our test days, things like that. I think that's going to help us, as well.

Q. Takuma, defending Indy 500 champion. Graham mentions you missed out on that fan interaction that happened right after you won the race. What do you feel like you've missed most over these last couple months since August compared to when you won the race in 2017?

TAKUMA SATO: It was certainly very different. I was kind of pissed that I've done it in 2017 because obviously winning 500 shouldn't be any difference. Last year was also special moment. But all other things, without fans, like Graham said crossing in the Brickyard with checkered flag, that was nothing like it in '17. All the buzz, the atmosphere, the energy all the people makes. It's a huge difference.

But obviously last year was a challenging time. Still it is. It was a tragic time for all of us. We all understand the situation. So it's okay. Off-season events also cut probably 60, 70% was not possible because all the physical event was being canceled.

In Japan still was as busy as it was. There were some events, too, that was really appreciated. To get online this year was not exciting obviously as '17, of course not. But today with technology, SMS, people buzzing around immediately with online, that was also another side of that exciting, too.

We have to change our lifestyle. We kind of have to. The great things that we will have fan back in this Indy 500 this year. It will be definitely a good thing and positive thing.

Of course last year, yeah, it's different, but that's okay. We move on. I'm certainly looking forward to be back to the IMS as defending champion. This is just a incredible feeling. Even that was the shortest time in history, shall we say, it's okay. Just be an exciting moment.

Q. Doug Boles has mentioned something special for you on Indy 500 race day, not necessarily a celebratory lap that a winner would traditionally get with the fans,

but whatever that turns out to be, what are you most looking forward to as far as being able to celebrate in some form with the fans nine months later?

TAKUMA SATO: I don't know. I haven't heard anything actually, so I really don't know. Whatever it comes up, I'm really appreciate if that's happen. I just looking forward to sharing a great, happy moment with the fans physically there. That's the most important thing, just to get atmosphere back in IMS. Whether it's before the race or doing event, I don't know.

It will be nice to have just little bit warmup for the fans, filling the 40% seat that will be empty, but I think the people's energy will cover like 300,000 people. I believe that's what's happening.

We as a race car drivers and teams are really excited. Of course, by that time we'll be all concentrate for 2021 Indy 500, not last year. It will be good to give the team credit, especially for the 30 boys to have a great hand clapping with the fans. I think it will be good for the boys definitely.

Q. Takuma, you're kind of leading the charge of the Japanese athletes of late who have had a lot of success in American sports. Do you know any of them personally? You've tweeted about a couple of them. If not, what kind of meaning does it have to you to see everyone come here?

TAKUMA SATO: Sure, just the pure personal point of view I love to see all the Japanese athlete performing on the worldwide level. That's always have been.

2017 was a big thing for Japan, too. I mean, since then, Shohei Ohtani still is doing incredible job. I was able to meet him a few years ago as a part of Indy 500 celebration for the first pitch, his first actually home run the game. That was great to see him. As well as we were a little bit connected with the personal sponsor with Descente. Not only that, being in the U.S., performing all together in front of covering in the media, that was incredible for Japanese fans, too. That was great.

Kei Nishikori for the tennis player, we've been keeping really close, good friends.

All other athletes, too. Unfortunately I haven't seen Mr. Matsuyama yet in person, but hopefully sometime we can meet together.

I think all athlete have been connected somehow, not even physically meeting yet, as this pandemic situation, it's difficult to make it happen. But I'm certainly really looking forward to it. Yeah, looking forward to the next generation

that always comes up. It's a great motivation for all of us.

Q. After you went home in the off-season, are you recognized? Are you the kind of guy when you're back home signing autographs, taking pictures? What is your level of celebrity?

TAKUMA SATO: Let's put this way. If you go to the racing venue, appearance for example at Suzuka, obviously no way I can walking outside. It's impossible. That's only happening in the racing context.

I can go to restaurant, I can go to convenience store, gas station by myself. Daily stuff I can, no problem. Yes, some people recognize, cheering me. Certainly not the movie star that have been problem for the life, no. Not that way.

But it's good. It's always good. It's always positive energy that have been cheer for by the fans. Since for the Indy 500 has been recognized in Japan more and more, particularly since 2017, it's even more. Then last year made huge impact, too.

Yes, in motor racing in Japan, it is popular, but it is kind of isolated because it's a small island in the east. How can I say? It's not as big as in Europe or North America. However, after incredible achievement in '17 and last year, people know what the Indy 500 is. I have great support from the loyal fans in Japan.

Q. Tony Stewart is going to attend this year's Indy 500 as a guest of his hero, A.J. Foyt. If you could have any racing legend, hero of yours in your pit box be a guest, who would that person be and why?

GRAHAM RAHAL: Taku, fire.

TAKUMA SATO: Well, yeah, I just read the Tony thing. I think it's great thing, superstar, obviously connected with A.J., has been A.J.'s driver in the past, make me smile. Yes, it's nice to have that kind of stars appearing in Indy 500.

I don't know if anybody that really I want to be in the pit stand because it makes me nervous (laughter). Lucky enough to be Jimmy Vasser, Michael Andretti, A.J. Foyt, today Bobby Rahal. It's great for all the racers in the past, the Indy 500.

Yeah, no, I want to continue to make some fun from other people coming celebrating. I want to concentrate on my pit box, very quiet, under the radar, but we do all the job.

GRAHAM RAHAL: I mean, for me, I would probably say -- the thing is, when I grew up, the people I admired most

were like my dad, truthfully. Guys like Dan Gurney. I would say if I could have spent more time around anybody or had somebody around more, I would have liked it to have been Dan. Mark Donohue would have been another guy I would have loved to have the opportunity to meet, spend more time with.

Truthfully I love A.J. I think A.J. is the best to ever do it. Some say Mario. To me, the amount of time that A.J. raced, the amount of things that he won, types of circuits and everything else. I don't know there's anybody better than A.J. Foyt, and Dan Gurney, I suppose. Those would have been the guys I would have liked the opportunity.

I see and talk to A.J. a lot. The guys I would have enjoyed the opportunity to be around more maybe, unfortunately some of those guys have passed on, so you won't have that chance.

As far as anybody in the modern day, over the last 20 years, I can't say there's anybody that really kind of stands out. Some of those older guys definitely, would have loved to have spent time with.

Q. Takuma, how would you evaluate your season so far to date?

TAKUMA SATO: It's a good season, competitive season to start with. As I said at the beginning of this interview, we've been a little bit unfortunate with the situation with the strategy, small mechanical failures drive us not to be in the front pack.

But I think Graham and I are working extremely together as we do always. I think the car performance is very similar on track.

Graham finishes where he should be. Hopefully we will the same situation, but it's not. It's only 20% of the race in the season so far. The important thing is, as Graham said, we have very strong engineering. The boys doing great job now. I have new engineer, Matt Greasley over Eddie Jones from last year, which takes some time to understand each other together, but the relationship is really good. He understand me. I understand him. Just matter of we talking about thousandths of seconds in this competitive world. Needs to be everything perfectly. It's coming better for that.

For now I think really comfortable and optimistic, feel very exciting. It's going to be hard, tight race in next few months, too. I think we be ready to be very competitive race. Yeah, I feel very positive.

Q. What do you feel the team needs to focus on once

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we get past Indianapolis to be even stronger?

TAKUMA SATO: Like Graham mentioned, just consistency is important for the championship. That's where you see most of the guys winning. For example, Dixie, he is winning multiple times every single year. He finish in the top five every single year. That's what it takes. We all know that. Very simple calculation. The question is how we do that.

Sometimes racing is difficult because being forced from other forces, parties and stuff like that. But be able to grab it when you really need it, that's important. I guess it's just head down, do our job, try to make car fast, try to make stronger all the time, just minimize mistake. That's the thing.

Nothing will be change whether it was before the 500 or after the 500. Certainly after 500 will be different mentality for all of us. Although every single race shouldn't be ignored, should be treated exactly the same as 500, reality is 500 is top of that. We always concentrate 500 before the May. After we simply go into our best job possible.

Q. Graham, when you look at your history at Indianapolis, it seems the track has bit you a bunch with only a couple strong runs. What is it going to take to change fortunes this year and possibly win the Indianapolis 500?

GRAHAM RAHAL: Yeah, I mean, I don't know if that's accurate. We finished in the top three a couple of times. Certainly had a great run in 2019, I think finished in the top five a couple times before that. We've kind of been there.

Yeah, early in my career it bit me. But I kind of bit myself frankly in that stage of my career. It was more self-induced.

Yeah, 2014 literally the engine kept shutting off. Had to park it, couldn't race. We've had some times that were pretty frustrating. But at the same time I think over the last handful of years, maybe Takuma aside, you'd be hard-pressed to find somebody that has been in the top five or top three more.

2019 we were right there, if you recall. We were in the hunt to win when we had our accident. We were passing Bourdais I think for third. I don't think Simon was going to make it on fuel. It was going to be Rossi or me. Again, pretty solid. Just didn't quite work out.

We haven't maybe had the final balances that we would have liked. But I think we've been good. I think we just got to keep our heads down. I think last year in the latter part

of the race, we were probably the best car, second to last stint we got a little too loose, went for a high stagger set of tires, but it was too much. Still strong, but not as strong.

We need to think concisely and clearly through the entire race, put ourselves in the best spot, I think we'll be perfectly fine. Our boys have done a great job. The car seems super fast at the test. We feel like we should be right there. We're excited for the opportunity.

Q. Graham, 30-year anniversary for the team, running some throwbacks, you get Buddy's, Takuma gets your dad's livery. Your dad got rings for everybody, building a new shop. What is the feeling at the team this year with this anniversary?

GRAHAM RAHAL: I think everybody's excited. It's been fun. We've done a couple throwbacks here or there. I think this year, it definitely is a little bit of a different vibe within the organization. I think a lot of that comes from the stability that we have from our partners. United Rentals has been tremendous for us, obviously Total had a tough last year, but they've stuck with us. Fifth Third Bank, the list goes on. We have had great new partners, like Hy-Vee. They've come on in a huge way. I think that's only going to increase for the future. That gives the owners confidence, the teams confidence that we're going to be able to go forward and improve. We're extremely thankful for them.

The shop certainly is biting off a lot. I mean, it is. For us to have the resources that a lot of these other teams do in one place, we don't have the space currently to be able to do that. It's kind of necessary that we put ourselves in a position.

We're also running as a split operation. We have the shop in Ohio, there's a shop here. That's a lot of moving parts to be a successful championship-winning team. To be able to get everybody together will certainly help us.

We're excited for the Buddy Rice scheme. It's definitely cool. It's great again to have sponsors like United Rentals who let us do these things, let us have fun with this, do something unique. I hope it's a charm.

It's 30 years of the team. I'm in chassis 30. A lot of races that I won I won Daytona 30 years after my dad, Mid-Ohio 30 years after my dad. I hope 30, Takuma can let me borrow the number, it will be my lucky number this year, be able to get it done. It certainly is cool for us to be able to do some of these things. The Miller Lite scheme the rest of the year is based on dad's last ride car.

Q. How come you didn't get the Bobby Rahal paint



scheme?

GRAHAM RAHAL: I don't know. I guess I got it every other race. I think for PeopleReady with Takuma, it looks great. The colors are slightly different. It's blue, not black. The scheme looks great. It's just cool.

Again, as I said, the partners kind of let us do these things, let us have some fun with it. We're seeing others kind of follow along, too, other retro schemes, kind of fun to see other guys throw it back, as well. It's good.

Q. It's 50 years since Dave Letterman debuted as a pit reporter at the Indianapolis 500. Is he the example if you work hard your dreams can come true, you can come back as a winning team owner of the Indy 500?

GRAHAM RAHAL: I have to make sure he knows it's been 50 years. I'm sure he's not going to be too pleased with that number.

He is. The other guy that really is is Mike. Last year to see the elation in Mike, every part of Mike, was spectacular. A guy that grew up selling cranes right down the street, dreaming someday he'd be involved. A self-made man, right? Same with Dave, self-made. But to get himself into a position where he could win the Indy 500 was great to see. It's super cool.

David won the 500 before obviously. It's super cool.

Q. Before Indy you got to get through this weekend, the Grand Prix. What is this weekend going to be like? What do you both expect out of this weekend?

TAKUMA SATO: Well, I guess we keep pushing honestly. I think in the Barber we've seen the road course performance is top five. It's possible. Like Graham said, it's been a good record for our team at Indianapolis road course.

I think if anything we grab the chance, we will. It's important to make everything in tight, just to minimize the small issue and the mistake. We will be competing at the front pack. That's certainly what we are looking for.

GRAHAM RAHAL: Same for me. I think we've done a good job I think changing our setups a little bit this year, getting a little closer at a place like Barber. We didn't qualify as well, but then on race day we were very strong. But I think we identified why. It was really Saturday night of Barber when we started to make these adjustments so we were much better on Sunday, led warmup, very good in the race.

I think we're doing the right things. I mean, we've been strong here before. I feel like we can keep this momentum going. I feel like we're close, too. On the 15, like I said, it's been a couple years since we won. I feel like we're there all the time now. We just got to keep pushing a little bit and get over that final little hurdle, be pretty strong.

Q. Graham, did you ever have a conversation with Jack Harvey? I saw Michael Shank said they're not going to be pushed around yesterday.

GRAHAM RAHAL: I don't care what they say. They can talk big all they want. I got a lot of respect for Mike Shank. Jack Harvey came to me and apologized. 'Guys like Graham still think I'm a part-timer.' That's a complete lie. Mike Shank is part of Andretti. The engineering staff is Andretti. We know they're a serious contender week in and week out.

They can come off and try to be tough if they want. They're a great competitor. What my issue with Jack, it wasn't the block. The initial block is okay. When you're next to a guy, you don't need to keep going. At that point maybe you recognize, okay, he's there, let's just not push him into the apron. Jack agreed.

The initial movement, he moved right away. I had no problem with that. Once I'm next to you, give me the space and the respect. He acknowledged that. He was fine.

I didn't see Shank's comments. I love Mike Shank, both Columbus, Ohio, boys. But no one is trying to push him around. That's not what this is about. This is about the consistency of officiating, doing the right things, not killing anybody. Blocking like that is one thing when you do it like I did to Dixon at Long Beach, it's a different thing when you do at 230 in Texas. It just is. For me that was the conversation. It was just, Hey, you know, we can't be doing that. He agreed. Jack is a good dude. Standup guy, so is Mike.

Nobody is trying to push him around, trying to say they're part-time. That's long gone. We know they're serious contenders. They're backed by Andretti, have the engineering core of Andretti. We know they're going to be there. We know they're going to be fast this month. Jack is always great at Indy Grand Prix. We fully expect them to be good. I don't think those comments are necessarily valid.

Q. Takuma, you're 44 years old, but yet you're still very fast. What is your secret to keeping fit and the reflexes up so you can still compete with the young guys? You have a certain regimen that you follow?

TAKUMA SATO: No. It's been myself. It's been me. I don't have any preference comparison for that, let's say. But I do love the food. Usually eat all sorts of stuff, but also Japanese. Whether that's related, I don't know. But the fast car needs a good fuel. I think it just apply to the healthy, good food. It's long-term the key that makes the body more efficient and keep it.

I don't necessarily young, but just try to stop any degradation, shall we say, in terms of body. Obviously nowadays INDYCAR is very fast, too. Not as fast as later season of the CART days, the power we don't have. Pulling good G Force. Every single corner on the Indy 500 is 4.5 Gs. Let's say, Barber, 4 Gs in high-speed corners, which is incredible to have a think about it. You have to train. All the drivers in the paddock, you can see they're fit, athletic. Different than century ago. Today everyone has to train really hard. I am the same case, too.

Relatively I'm younger, I'm 44. I don't honestly don't know the answer. The most important thing is I feel mentally, physically the best is coming yet. I feel like every time jump in the car I learn something. Physically, yes, there is some certain part, like let's say the flexibility or healing speed is not as good as 20, for example. But that's fine. You can work out together. I feel very motivated for that.

Hopefully I don't lose any speed for the coming months and years. Hopefully I can keep continue the competitiveness. If I don't feel any good of that in myself, then that's the time reaching for something else. For now I don't feel anything on that.

Q. Graham, you're a family man now. Does it feel any different as far as racing and having a child? Does it make you think about taking those risks any differently or that doesn't come into your mind?

GRAHAM RAHAL: Well, I mean, you always had to think about the risk. I think I've been around this a long time now, as you know. I've seen a lot. Certainly have lost friends in this sport. You always have to think about it. Certainly being prepared in case something does happen is critical. But it's been great. I think Harlan, even on the toughest days when you go back to the bus, you see her, it puts life into perspective, all this competitiveness, the craziness on social media, all the other crap in this world, it brings it right back into perspective. What really matters is her, Courtney, the family. It's been special for me.

If anything, honestly for me it just motivates me to be even better. I think getting married did that, too. It's not necessarily just about me. You're a reflection of those around you. You want to be at your best, perform at your best. No greater gift for us than to be able to win Indy this

year, have Harlan there with Courtney and I, the whole family. It would be pretty special. Just hope it's our opportunity. We'll see.

Q. You mentioned the aero changes that were made in the off-season. You had a chance to run them now. Do you feel it's going to make the racing better, easier to pass? What do you feel is different now, if anything?

GRAHAM RAHAL: It's different. At the test it was different. Yeah, I mean, if you were leading at the test, leading the pack, you were in trouble because it was just very easy, the drag, very easy to tow up, go sailing on by.

I do think it was easier to follow a little bit. I think INDYCAR made the right moves. The undertray is so powerful that I think it's an effective solution. The barge boards, we know some guys love the barge boards, some guys hated them. It's not necessarily a solution for everybody, it's just a solution for some. Some people may not want to touch those for race day. Ultimately that's why I think they didn't run them at Texas, because it was so torn. We'll see how they perform here.

I think INDYCAR has made some good changes. It will be interesting to see what we have come race day. Like Taku said, the weather is a huge part of this. You get a nice, cool day, you're not going to need barge boards and stuff. It will be interesting to see how it all plays out.

Q. Takuma, last year you were able to have a comeback, won the Indy 500 for the second time. Now there are so many young, talented drivers in the series, do you think the INDYCAR SERIES is a good series that caters to both young drivers and veteran drivers like yourself?

TAKUMA SATO: For sure, definitely. It's certainly the most attractive single-seat car series I would say just variety of the tracks. Not only for the drivers, but just look at the street course, road course, short ovals, superspeedway. It's very attractive. Then the cars we call (indiscernible), bits and pieces allowed to have by yourself. Certainly compared to some of the other big series, we were quite restrict. That's why I think every driver, every team has an opportunity to win that race.

We can see recently the new generations, the up-and-coming start winning. That's great to see. It's just the nature of the sport. However, when you talk about Indianapolis Motor Speedway, 500, certainly comes to some experience and preparation. Not just pure speed. That's a good thing. I think it's very attractive. It's a little bit unpredictable who is going to win because I think

qualification is one part, but not necessarily guaranteed. Last year the young guys were fast, Santino came, Graham and myself have been very competitive over the week. Also Dixie was the guy to beat entire month.

I think this year will be similar sort of feeling, but I think a lot of the teams is caught up, too. It will be more exciting, more tight. I think every single driver have opportunity to win. That's a great thing for the INDYCAR.

THE MODERATOR: Thanks, everyone, for joining us today.

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