

# NTT INDYCAR SERIES

## News Conference

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Indianapolis, Indiana, USA

**Felix Rosenqvist**

**Pato O'Ward**

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: Good afternoon, everyone, and welcome to another NTT INDYCAR SERIES videoconference. Today we are joined by two drivers from Arrow McLaren SP, Pato O'Ward, driver of the No. 5 Chevy, and Felix Rosenqvist, driver of the No. 7 Chevy. Both raced in Detroit in '19.

Obviously we weren't there last year, so gentlemen, I'll just start with a quick one. How excited are you to get back to the Streets of Belle Isle this weekend? Pato, why don't you go first.

PATO O'WARD: I'm super excited. I think Detroit has a lot of character. It's a track that I've honestly really enjoyed going to in the past. I've raced there in prototypes, I raced there in INDYCAR in 2019. I'm looking forward to going back. I think -- honestly it's one of the weeks that I was pretty bummed about missing last year. I know it's very big for team Chevy, so hopefully we can get them a couple wins there. That would be great.

FELIX ROSENQVIST: Yeah, I agree. I really enjoy Detroit. I think street tracks in general is always a favorite for me, so yeah, coming back will be fun. It's complete opposite from Indy. It's way more bumpy. Yeah, it's very different from everything, to be honest. Yeah, I think we have a good shot to swing around the season a little bit after a tough start with a double-header if we have some good momentum on the first day. Hopefully we can get on a bit of a roll there.

THE MODERATOR: We'll go to Road America after that, so three races in about eight days. Last year at Road America in the second race you guys had a great battle. Felix, you ended up getting your first win in the INDYCAR Series. Talk about go to Road America next week.

FELIX ROSENQVIST: Yeah, that'll be fun. There's been a lot of talk about that race since me and Pato became teammates. Same there, I think it's just a lovely track. It's

probably one of the coolest tracks in the world. It's beautiful scenery. It's a great track for racing. There's always good races there, and personally it's probably the track I've been most successful in INDYCAR every time I've been there. So yeah, that will be great. Hopefully we'll have the same showdown as last year with me and Pato.

**Q. Obviously we're going to Detroit for the first time with the aeroscreen. What sort of effect do you think that's going to have on the performance of the car given the fact that the track is so bumpy?**

PATO O'WARD: It's probably going to plow more than what it used to, plowing meaning just a bunch of understeer. Historically the track just keeps getting bumpier and bumpier and bumpier every year, so I feel like this year will be more of a change than what we have felt from year to year in the past because there's been two winters on it already from the last time we were there.

I think it'll be interesting. Not quite sure what to expect based on aeroscreen stuff. Like I said, I just think it'll probably tend to go a little bit more to understeer. It'll definitely work the front axle a lot harder. Yeah, I just think that's something we have to work around with the team and try to really maximize.

FELIX ROSENQVIST: I think tracks like this have been less affected by the aeroscreen. When we came to St. Pete for the first time, it seemed like we were going pretty quick still. It seems like the faster the track and the higher speed corners are really affected worse by aeroscreen than like the long corners, and on a street track you generally just have 90-degree corners and you don't really load up the car very long anywhere. I don't think it's going to be a massive difference to be honest. I think it's going to be pretty good.

**Q. Pato, I think I understand what Juan Pablo said about the problems with -- not the problems, the setup on the car, about it's a little hard to pick up speed and handle in this kind of track, in the conditions you already told us. What do you think we can expect from you this weekend?**

PATO O'WARD: Yeah, yeah, our car, it's tended to be very quick in certain places. In other places we got



destroyed, not just the No. 5 car but I think we were all just very slow in certain tracks. There's definitely been just a lot of analysis to try and really see what went wrong because we've been strong some places but we've been very out of consistency in others, and we need to fix that. It's such a competitive series where you just can't have any more of those very tough weekends.

You know, hopefully we'll expect a good couple races this weekend. I think we all enjoy going to Detroit. It's a fun track. I think the car has been strong there in the past. I've never driven our specific car there, but we have a relatively hard car to drive, not just in qualifying to extract a time but during the races and everything. So I think it's just up to us to try and maximize what we have and try to make it as consistent as we can. We know what we were missing in St. Pete, which is a street course, so hopefully we have made improvements to be stronger here.

But I'm going into it knowing that we can make some really good stuff happen.

**Q. Just looking at the extended weather forecast for Saturday, Sunday, looks like upper 80s, sunny. Anything you guys can do beforehand to prepare for two races in conditions like that? What can you do Saturday night to recover as quickly as possible?**

PATO O'WARD: Probably an ice bath on Saturday. I'm assuming the team is taking our ice baths, so for me that's usually kind of the little extra bit of help that --

**Q. Does that just bring your core body temperature down?**

PATO O'WARD: Man, it helps you -- it kind of like neutralizes your fatigue, and it kind of like brings your muscles back to life a little bit. So yeah, that's what I do in double-header weekends.

FELIX ROSENQVIST: You need to focus on your nutrition just to not have two long breaks between eating and sleeping, drinking a lot. As Pato said, an ice bath is a pretty good way to recover the body. Tried it in St. Pete for the first time and it was surprising effective actually after warmup. Yeah, at some point it's going to suck for everyone. It's going to be warm and tough, as it always is, even on a single race weekend.

But yeah, it's cool to have a challenge, I think. St. Pete was very tough for a lot of drivers, I think, and this will probably be maybe a little bit worse, I don't know.

I think a lot of people have played around with different cooling solutions now, as well. There's some guys that are

using cooling suits and you have like this scoop you can put on top of the aeroscreen. Yeah, there's some different solutions out there now, so we'll see what people do.

**Q. Pato, last year I know Dixon kind of ran away with things but you were still in a championship fight towards the end. Is there anything you learned from that experience last year now that we're pretty much coming up to the midway point of the season that can help you this year?**

PATO O'WARD: Yeah, what I learned was that you have to beat the master of consistency at his own game in order to win the championship. I think that's the best way to put it. We just need to outscore him as much as we can every weekend. I think that's the best thing we can do in order to have a shot at the championship at Long Beach.

Man, it's so tight this year that I feel like the field is stacked. It's full of many very talented drivers. I don't think it's ever been harder. I don't think it's ever been this competitive from a driver's standpoint. This is a true driver's championship. I don't think there's anything harder in the world.

Whoever is most consistent and most consistently in the podiums and in the top 5s is going to take it at the end of the year.

**Q. It seems like right now you've got the two Ganassi guys in front of you and that's it, and you've got a teammate there that was driving that same car last year and teammates with Scott. Is there anything, Felix, you can help Pato, any inside info you can give him? And Pato, do you lean on Felix as we get towards the end of the year now, a little bit of insight inside the Ganassi camp?**

PATO O'WARD: I feel like every year is a little bit different. Obviously we can't plan a championship, but I mean, I feel like Felix and I both know that to win a championship in INDYCAR is just consistency. I don't think it's something that's mysterious or hidden. I don't know if Felix has any input to it, but I think it's just about maximizing what you have and trying to maximize points every single weekend and not having crappy weekends. We've already had two.

The Ganassi camp has been strong at every single racetrack. They're bound to have at least one bad weekend, so we need to make sure we capitalize on that.

**Q. That's got to be more like driving style, knowing what Scott likes, knowing where he likes to run, knowing where he doesn't like to run. Is there anything Felix can help if you're battling with Scott,**

**anything of that nature? Felix, is there anything you learned from him last year that you can help Pato out with?**

FELIX ROSENQVIST: Well, I felt with Scott the thing is pretty much what Pato said. There's nothing magic. He's just very good everywhere, and he has a lot of weekends where he finished like seventh or eighth and there's not really a lot of talk about it. But he will have a problem in the beginning of the race, maybe it'll be like a lap down or something, and then he'll end up finishing top 10. I think that's his strength.

When you have weekends when you win, that's easy. But those weekends are the important ones for the championship.

I think also he's good at making a car for himself that is very consistent, and maybe not the fastest car, like he's not so often on the pole, but he will always have a car that kind of works everywhere. He has a good way of just making it good enough to be up there every weekend.

I think that's one of his big strengths, as well.

**Q. Felix, you were talking about switching teams, how difficult it was to get used to McLaren there. We got some good tracks for you coming up. You won your first race at Road America, almost won your first race at Mid-Ohio. You go back to Indy again on a road course. Is this a stretch you feel like you guys can get used to each other, put it all together and push forward from this point forward?**

FELIX ROSENQVIST: Well, I definitely hope so. It's been a funny year because since I started at INDYCAR my weakness has been the ovals, and this year even if the results hasn't been there on the ovals, we've been so fast and competitive on every oval. Both Texas races we were pretty much in condition tension for the win in both of those, and even in Indy we were -- I don't really think -- maybe we had a top 3 car for sure. Yeah, that's not enough. Obviously you need the results.

But it's been interesting how the ovals have actually become like my strong suit now, and we still need to find more consistency, more -- find the car more to my liking on the road courses. But I think as you say it's good to come back to places you're more familiar with, Road America, Mid-Ohio, all those places, and hopefully it can kind of click there and you can end up the season with being strong on both road courses and ovals. That would be a great way to sort of end up the last half of the season.

**Q. I wonder if you felt the same issues that Pato had at**

**St. Pete or if there's a common understanding across the team of what the problem was there or were you feeling something maybe a bit different.**

FELIX ROSENQVIST: I think we had a similar feedback. I think Pato was able to get some more speed out of the car in qualifying, and I got a little bit more out of it than the race, but we both struggled with the same stuff. I think we had a lot of deg, we had a lot of understeer in the race. It just wasn't really fast to be honest. There wasn't really any point in that race, even in the GP, it was kind of a different story at Indy GP, but it was the same, we weren't really having like super bad races but we still ended up nowhere because we didn't have the pace.

Yeah, I think our feedback is -- what we -- I think Pato is more -- he's able to drive around a loose car very well, but what we actually feel in the car and what we want from the car is kind of similar, to be honest. The feedback is very similar.

**Q. How do you kind of reflect on your first part of the season here because I guess we can look back and say that there's been a few missed opportunities and maybe some bad luck and maybe some guys who probably could have finished a few places higher but you're third in the championship. How do you reflect on that? Is that a missed opportunity that you're not higher or is it lucky you're not further down?**

PATO O'WARD: Yeah, good point. I feel like we missed an opportunity in Barber. I actually feel that we should have won that race. We had all the pace. I don't think anybody was faster than us. We just were on the wrong strategy.

I think we saved what we could in terms of what we went with strategy-wise and tire and everything.

But man, we had two road course races where we absolutely got destroyed, and we've honestly already used up our kind of jail-free cards of the season of having a bad weekend, and we can't afford to have any more of those because that really takes a toll in the championship.

If we would have had like solid top 7, top 6 finishes in St. Pete and Indy road course, we should have been in the lead in the championship, but we haven't capitalized on that, and that is something that -- I don't want to look back at the end of the year and look at those two races and say, oh, this cost us a championship. We just need to work a little bit harder to be extra consistent from now on.

But we've had some great races. We had great superspeedway races in both Texas and Indy. We've been



strong. But we have been weak at road courses, specifically street courses, and we need to find a way to maximize what we have there because that will really hurt us in the end.

**Q. I don't know if you've had talks with Sam or Zak about a contract extension for 2022?**

PATO O'WARD: So my -- I'm actually locked in until 2022. Not sure about Felix.

FELIX ROSENQVIST: I have another year.

**Q. The media has compared you with Helio Castroneves. What is your feeling about racing next to him during the Indianapolis 500?**

PATO O'WARD: Yeah, many people have told me. Man, it's very humbling, honestly. Helio is a driver that I really admire. I'm a big fan of Helio. What he has accomplished in his career is -- it's in the history books. It's very special.

I was really, really happy for him to get his fourth win.

**Q. You are currently in third place. What do you have to do to make it to the championship?**

PATO O'WARD: I need to win more races and be as consistent as I can.

**Q. As you might know, back in the days, F1 and INDYCAR used to run on the downtown streets of Detroit. I don't know if you guys are familiar with that track or have seen old footage of it. If you are, do you guys think, man, I really would have liked to have given that track a go, or are you happy to run on Belle Isle these days?**

PATO O'WARD: I did hear that we had, back in the day, downtown Detroit. Honestly, for me I think both is really cool. I haven't really had a chance to see the circuit layout of downtown Detroit, but I think Belle Isle is cool.

I think honestly any street -- kind of like any street characteristic type track is really cool. So yeah, I don't really have a preference whether it's there or Belle Isle.

I'm assuming they're doing it in Belle Isle because of traffic.

FELIX ROSENQVIST: Yeah, I remember my manager actually raced there in F1. I don't think he raced in INDYCAR -- I've seen it on TV, and it's definitely more smooth, more round corners. Belle Isle is very sharp and edgy. Everything. It's like a very rough track. That one looked way more smoother.

But I think the one we race on is really cool. It's very unique, and it's probably the most bumpy track that anyone races on at the moment. I think there were some worse ones back in the day like Baltimore or something like that, with railroad tracks and stuff. But yeah, I think it's cool. I think that's what makes INDYCAR what it is, that you have the 500, which is super smooth, and then the next weekend you race, and yeah, you spend more time in the air than on the ground.

**Q. Is the team searching for some answers or some clues in order to find a better way to correct the function on your car to find a way to challenge Ganassi?**

FELIX ROSENQVIST: Yeah, I mean, obviously when I came over there was a lot of questions what they were doing technically and things like that. I think it's a dangerous route, though. Obviously we looked at things, and we always tried to improve, and anything you can get from a competitor, it's obviously a good thing. But the problem is if you copy what someone else is doing, the problem then is that they are going to take a leap. Every year people are getting better and better, so if we would do the same that Ganassi did last year on Detroit or St. Pete or whatever, you're never going to beat them because they're going to be better.

I think we have very different philosophies, but I truly believe that our team is super capable. It's a very good organization, a lot of smart people. INDYCAR is tough because you don't really have any testing. That's the big thing. We have a whole season, we have like two, three days of testing, and it's very hard to actually try anything without guessing.

So pretty much every time you show up to a race weekend you pretty much have to guess and try something, and if it works, you stay with it, and then maybe you have time for one more change and then you're going into qualifying or the race and then the weekend is over, and then you have to do it the next year.

If you have like a bad track where you have a bad trend going on, it takes a lot of time to turn it around if you don't have the balls to really make a big swing, but normally the big swings never work because it's more guessing than actually working from what you come up with as a team.

Yeah, I'm sure as Pato will say, we know these issues, but we should also be very pleased with the pace we had on all the ovals so far. We were super fast in Barber. I think the fastest car by far. And we had two tough weekends, but that happens. I'm sure we'll turn it around soon.



**Q. Felix, I saw you were at raceway park earlier in the kart. I actually do go-karting and that's where I race. How did that go in the rain?**

FELIX ROSENQVIST: Yeah, that's correct. I'm actually here still right now.

**Q. Wait, where are you there?**

FELIX ROSENQVIST: There's a bunch of go-karts here. I just took a break. I'm driving here. It's fun. It's quite different to be out driving a go-kart in the wet. I think it's a good way to kind of shake off the oval a little bit before Detroit, and yeah, just back to the roots of it a little bit. It's always fun to do go-karting and be in the place where you used to be when I was your age.

**Q. For both of you, with only getting one practice for the Detroit race, Belle Isle, how do you go about into re-learning a track like Belle Isle? Do you get into the sim seat a lot, just still remember it every once in a while?**

FELIX ROSENQVIST: Yeah, that's pretty much the only way we can practice. We do the simulator. I did it last week and Pato, as well. We probably spent a day there each, just do laps and try things. It's not the most accurate thing, but you do what you can do, and it's kind of enough to get you in the rhythm a little bit of that track.

But for the rest you just have to use the time you have on track really efficiently. You have to make every lap count. You can't really afford to have any bad runs or mistakes or things like that. You need the practice as much that weekend as qualifying and the race because it's so limited.

So yeah, we just have to be -- we have to nail it when we get there.

PATO O'WARD: Yeah, same from my side. I feel like knowing the track is probably the easiest part, I think what we're really leaning on is that we have to arrive and we have to be good out of the gates. Whoever is strongest off of the truck is going to be probably in the best position to qualify well and then race well.

Hopefully everything that we have done pre-event will pay off, and yeah, we'll see. It's a track that we enjoy, and we've been there before, so I don't think that not being there in two years is going to be much of an issue. I just think if we roll off well, we should be in good shape.

THE MODERATOR: Thanks for joining us today. We appreciate you being here.