

NTT INDYCAR SERIES

News Conference

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David Malukas

Takuma Sato

Marcus Ericsson

Pato O'Ward

Alexander Rossi

Press Conference



I'm glad that we got a solid four laps in just to see where the balance was going, so I think we have a good idea of what to go in with in qualifying tomorrow.

THE MODERATOR: Marcus, give us your thoughts on the afternoon.

MARCUS ERICSSON: The afternoon was pretty uneventful for me. I'm still wearing my suit, so I was ready to go. But no, I think we have a fast car. We've been fast all week.

Like the other two guys said, the wind conditions and the heat has made today a bit unrepresentative for tomorrow, and we didn't want to go out too much and risk things. We know we have a good car, we have a good setup, so can't wait for tomorrow.

Q. Do you go to bed tonight confident for tomorrow or do you still feel like you have more to learn?

MARCUS ERICSSON: I'm pretty happy with where I am with the car and my confidence level. Obviously first things first to get in the Fast 12 tomorrow is going to be the target, and to be there for Sunday. But yeah, I'm feeling confident.

PATO O'WARD: I'm happy where we're at. It's hard to say. If tomorrow is going to be like today I think it would be a bit of a different approach.

But since it's going to be so different, it's just -- just like everybody else, we didn't really see any gains on tuning for a track like this today, and it being so different tomorrow.

Q. Alex, you said last year Fast Friday, you said who had the advantage between Chevy and Honda, you said Honda with a capital H. Do you still feel that way?

ALEXANDER ROSSI: I honestly don't know. I did a lap today, so I can't answer that unfortunately. No, the rest of us did a lap, so I don't know. Hopefully.

THE MODERATOR: Joined by Takuma Sato, driver of the No. 51 Nurtec ODT Honda for Dale Coyne Racing, with RWR, and David Malukas, driver of the HMD Machine for

THE MODERATOR: Wrapping up Fast Friday at the world famous Indianapolis Motor Speedway. Again, we have five drivers coming up, three of which are already here, including Alexander Rossi, 2016 Indianapolis 500 winner; Pato O'Ward, driver of the No. 5 Arrow McLaren SP Chevrolet; and driver of the No. 8 Huski Chocolate Honda in Marcus Ericsson.

Let's start with Alexander, second quick on the no tow. What did you learn today that you might be able to use tomorrow and more importantly on Sunday.

ALEXANDER ROSSI: We learned how to cool the engine down efficiently, so that was good. That's about it. It was a pretty tough day just to sit around and watch, but I think the car has been good all month and we had a pretty good understanding of what we have and what we need to do tomorrow in much different conditions.

Didn't learn a lot whole, unfortunately. But yeah, it was pretty wild out there for sure.

THE MODERATOR: Pato, third quick, no toe, windy conditions, what did you think today?

PATO O'WARD: Yeah, today was tough. I think what made it the hardest was just with a one end of the track to the other end of the track the balance shift was really big. I'd say probably because of the fact.

Track temp wasn't helping, either. I think tomorrow getting moved up one hour, I think track temp is going to be like 50 degrees cooler and it's just going to make a massive difference.



Dale Coyne as well.

Bot you guys, teammates, you both have been quick and atop the speed charts all week. What do you expect to happen this weekend?

TAKUMA SATO: Well, tomorrow morning it's going to be still gusty wind but I think cooling down the temperature. We'll help for the consistency. But particularly for my 51 car needs to work on the laps 3 and 4.

But as a good contrast, David did a fantastic average for four laps, and I think it's the best group. If we combine together, I think we can see the -- not sacrifice speed, but we can maintain a good lap.

DAVID MALUKAS: Yeah, adding on to it, we started off the day very strong right off the bat and kind of needed to work with the car to make it last those four laps.

At the end of those last two runs I did, the four-lap average was very good and the car felt very safe, I still had a lot of cools, so it's looking very good constant and very good, so very happy to far.

Q. Pato, you said earlier that the balance, you never felt it change so much over the course of a single lap. Can any of the rest of you remember a time in a race car where you've had such a significant change in balance from one part of the track to another, any course?

PATO O'WARD: Probably not, no.

MARCUS ERICSSON: I don't know. Obviously the wind was very extreme today and created two very different parts of the track. That was a big challenge, yeah.

TAKUMA SATO: Yeah, I think obviously the oval you do the 360 so you still wind 90 degrees all the time, so I think this is a track you can feel most different in lap 1 -- in one lap of the wind direction.

I think 217 qualifying was similar level with the gust wind, but it was cross-wind so it's very difficult on the exit time, too, which I pressed twice in my four laps, so I didn't complete it, but that was very challenging.

Q. Marcus, the oval last year wasn't necessarily your strongest suit. How much more confident do you feel ahead of qualifying and then ahead of the race next Sunday based on how you've done so far this month?

MARCUS ERICSSON: Yeah, it's been a focus area for me, and I thought last year our race in the 500 we were

looking pretty good and were unlucky there at the caution at the wrong time. Yeah, wrong time for us.

But the Texas result really gives me a lot of confidence going into this year's Indy 500, and like I said, I've had a really good week here, feeling really happy with the car and the whole Ganassi group.

I think we are very, very strong. So yeah, really looking forward to getting qualifying going tomorrow and then the race next weekend.

Q. For either of you guys, just when the wind is like what it was today, what adjustments does that leave you having to make compared to perfect conditions?

TAKUMA SATO: A lot, actually. Fundamentally when you have a wind from behind the car gets understeer. When you have a headwind it's more neutral to oversteer. And then cross-wind is between those two.

In other words, I could tell one is probably the relatively easiest corner. Also you have the effect of this steering section, lowering the wind speed. But in terms of traffic Turn 2 and in terms of the cars taking off and then arriving Turn 3 is the fastest ever we achieved I think almost in recent years, and then making really tough and then Turn 4 (indiscernible) the nose.

So according to the corner by corner we will adjust the weight check as well as two of us to fit on the balance for that.

DAVID MALUKAS: To add on to it, I don't know if Takuma struggles with it because he's a veteran; he's used to it; but for me the struggle is you get this setup and whatever you have once you go out, and you hit the wind, one lap in there might not be any wind, the next lap there is, and then you kind of have to guess, well was that the setup dropping off, was that the tire dropping off, or was it just a gust of wind.

So the hard part is trying to guess going into the next corner how the car is going to react. That's to me what I've been struggling with this wind here.

Q. Do you get any sense of confidence from having done this? Like okay, now you've dealt with tough winds so you're prepared for it?

TAKUMA SATO: Yeah, that's why we tried to attempt a couple times. The confidence is something that you experience and then you build up. Nothing just somebody tells you and you get confidence. We never had that kind of thing.

Yeah, David had to go out a couple times. I had to go out twice actually to get reasonably comfortable level, and then I'm doing four laps.

Yeah, so my laps 3 and 4 wasn't great. The car was starting too sketchy and then taking off, you know, give up the tires.

But David's run was very impressive in terms of the consistency, so looking forward to looking at data and obviously great to have a teammate like David. Very precise, very fast, and in fact, his the first trying lap was very impressive, you know, get to 231 straight in. That was impressive.

THE MODERATOR: David, second quickest on the four-lap average today. The last rookie to win pole position for the Indy 500, you've got to go back to 1983 when Teo Fabi did it. So no pressure. I'm just throwing it out there.

DAVID MALUKAS: There's also some curse on the 18 car that it hasn't won the Indy 500 recently. And so yeah, I don't know. There's a lot of -- it's going to be really tough to beat this guy over here. This is the biggest competition.

THE MODERATOR: They always say to beat your teammate, good things are probably happening, so especially so in this case.

DAVID MALUKAS: Yeah. I mean, overall though it was very, very good, and I don't think I would be in the position I would be if I didn't have Takuma, the tips he gave me, all the data.

I mean, he gave me so many tips going into qualifying today, which I experienced every single one as soon as I went out, and if he didn't give me those tips I definitely would have been freaking out and probably would not have the confidence to push the car any more for the whole day.

Q. David, I know you've lost some track time this week, which is obviously not ideal for a rookie, but also the event has basically pretty much thrown everything it could do at you this week with the rain and the wind and everything. Do you feel like it's actually been kind of a net win for you to have all of these experiences to go through in your first 500?

DAVID MALUKAS: Yeah, I mean, definitely been very tough conditions, but at the same time, I'm honestly very grateful for it because we survived all these tough conditions, so the confidence can only go up from here.

Tomorrow the conditions are going to be very similar, so

I'm actually really happy that today was very windy and to deal with all these gusts, because I would almost be more nervous if today was a beautiful, perfect day and then tomorrow we go out and it's gusty and windy.

No, I'm very happy with how everything has turned out, and the team has given me a very good car so I can have the confidence to go through these rough, rough parts.

Q. Takuma, I guess Dale, one of the reasons he wanted to bring you to the team was for how good you've been at the 500 in the past. What's your impressions been of the team and have you had any surprise coming into the team, how good they are and how good they've been with you so far?

TAKUMA SATO: I'm just happy. Somewhat expected in terms of just the pure load speed. We always know, observed Dale's car was very fast and competitive in the load speed in qualifying, but car in some cases might be just a little knife edge car.

So we just tried to massage and to bring some of my old experience from all the houses that as American system car I had experienced.

Just to combine a little bit spice and the massage, and then here we are. We made the car really fast, so it's the entire team's great preparation over the course of the winter. It was very, very impressive, and good supplies, as well, but I'm very, very happy.

Q. What level of confidence have you got just based on the fact that you've been quick in every kind of type of practice we've done this week? I know it's very difficult you don't know what the other teams are doing and what kind of programs they're running as well, but what level of confidence have you gleaned from this week so far?

TAKUMA SATO: It's just I think building up, but it's not fully confident yet. Like I said repeatedly, yes we showed a big lap at the end of the day, but I didn't really complete -- I wasn't able to complete lap 3 and 4, so it's still somewhat this gray zone, and I really need to figure out how we do it.

That's the overnight job of the engineers and boys and us as a driver. We have a debrief and then let's figure it out. Once we complete it tomorrow, then on Sunday we should be fully confident to do what we need to.

Q. David, was the plan to do that many sketchy qualifying runs in bad conditions?

DAVID MALUKAS: Well, no, it definitely wasn't according



to plan. But tough conditions or not, we knew we needed to get the runs done, and we looked at the weather for the next day and we knew that the conditions were going to be tough, so we just kind of put our heads down and said, you know what, we have to deal with it, so let's get a car that's confident in these tough conditions.

At the end there we managed to do it for a four-lap average. We went and did it twice. We even trimmed down on the second one. It was a bit slower, but having issues in other ways. But overall we're very happy and looking forward to tomorrow.

It's not going to be as gusty, but like I said, the Dale Coyne cars survived the toughest conditions, so if it's going to be easier from here on, then it should just be better.

Q. Did Dale give you any advice before you went out on each run?

DAVID MALUKAS: Yeah, Dale has been giving me advice here and there. Dale is great. He's awesome. But yeah, overall everybody from the team, Dale, Takuma, spotters, Pancho, Larry, everybody has been giving me many pieces of advice.

Q. David, you've been on top of the speed charts all week. Is this what you expected coming in here? Are you exceeding expectations or are you still wishing you had more?

DAVID MALUKAS: Yeah, I mean, definitely wasn't expecting it to be this well, but as soon as I got into the car for the first time and saw how quick it was, then my expectations started to go up.

It all just comes down to the team. They've prepped it so well, and as soon as we went off I did some bad laps and they were like, well, it's still very good; it's still high on the charts.

It's kind of been like that throughout the whole week, and it's just given me a lot of confidence to try different things and build my way up to it nice and slow, and now we're still there.

Yeah, overall I'm just very happy.

Q. I think it was '17, another Coyne driver won that year, kind of flew under the radar in Fernando Alonso. Do you kind of feel like you're flying under the radar with the Jimmie and Romain storyline this month, and do you embrace it or do you wish you got a little more attention?

DAVID MALUKAS: Yeah, I think a little bit under the radar. I don't think people were expecting a result like this. I mean, I wasn't really expecting anything like this.

Whatever way it goes, I'm just happy. I have Takuma Sato as my teammate and I'm driving an INDYCAR at the Indianapolis Motor Speedway, and at the same time we're quick. If you were to tell me this when I was a kid I would just think you were lying or I'd be pinching myself to wake up.

Q. Takuma, I don't believe there's ever been a three-time winner that's won it for three different teams. You have an opportunity to do that. That would have to say an awful lot about your driving ability.

TAKUMA SATO: Well, it's too early to say about race weekend, but we had two days' practice session. In both cases that the car really reacting well, and we were kind of happy with it. So yeah, I think it's a great feeling.

But Dale put everything on the right press, on the right person, the right timing. The entire team did a fantastic job to prepare for this.

Q. Traditionally the Saturday morning practice has seven cars go out, but Scott Dixon and everybody else up and down pit lane this evening said it's going to be very busy tomorrow because a lot of guys didn't get a chance to run. How busy do you think it'll be?

TAKUMA SATO: Honestly, I don't know. Traditionally a lot of teams don't take part of the Saturday morning practice because once you heat up the whole car it just sacrifices some of the performance. We weren't going to plan to do any running in the morning session, but after the debrief tonight, things just never know. Things can pop up that we need to try before qualifying that we might need to learn. So we'll see.

Q. Besides the wind today, were there any additional sketchy feelings out on track from the fact that we had rain last night that washed away all the rubber from yesterday?

TAKUMA SATO: Not necessarily. All day long and the week actually the Turn 3 was the one I felt it's a bit different from last year. It felt quite nervous and again on the nose. In fact with any direction of the wind. Today is the exception because you have basically following wind and cross wind to Turn 3 so I had a massive understeer.

But until yesterday it was both David and I were scratching heads in how we're going to make it good -- big support on

the -- again, through Turn 3.

But other than that, I think track is very consistent even after torrential rain last night, so I think it was good.

DAVID MALUKAS: Just to add on to that, for me the one kind of counter thing that also caught me off guard was the boost because that was my first time experiencing it, and at the end of the day, it's just a lot of fun. As soon as the boost kicked in, it was great.

THE MODERATOR: Great job today. We'll see you tomorrow.

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