

# NTT INDYCAR SERIES

## News Conference

Friday, June 3, 2022

**Pato O'Ward**

**Helio Castroneves**

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: We have been joined by Pato O'Ward. You were second fastest in this practice. Tell us how the car is feeling today.

PATO O'WARD: Yeah, I think we rolled off the truck really strong. We can't read too much into I think practice right now because really messy session, big difference from first run to second runs on tires. I think some people's true pace wasn't shown. I think it will be a lot better than that. Maybe I'm completely wrong.

But, yeah, I'm happy with the car. I think we're definitely in the window. We just need to (indiscernible) her up a bit, see where the track evolves to. There's going to be a lot of different rubbers out there. I think it's going to be significant what the balance is going to be feeling like from qualifying and practicing, so forth.

**Q. Have you seen the design of the racetrack next year when it moves downtown?**

PATO O'WARD: I saw it a bit when I was watching on my screen, the Peacock, yes.

**Q. Do you think it will be cool? Are you going to miss Belle Isle?**

PATO O'WARD: I'm going to miss Belle Isle regardless. I love this place. Feel like it's a place that has a lot of character.

I always say it. If you were to describe INDYCAR SERIES, I think this track describes it the best. It's very old school, very raw. Lots of commitment has to be from the driver's side to extract a lap from this place.

Yeah, it's a really cool place. Sad to see it leave. But I know a lot of people are very excited for downtown Detroit. New tracks are always really cool. Looking forward to that.

**Q. Is it fair to say the track is a little more high grip**

**than it was last year?**

PATO O'WARD: Yeah, I think the track was quick today. It's warm, but it's not super hot. I don't think the track temp is as high as it was last year. Maybe I'm completely wrong.

THE MODERATOR: You're right. It was 90s last year, just in the air.

PATO O'WARD: It's quite a bit colder. You remember last year, practice one, we come the next day and we qualify in, like, 30 degrees colder. The times go down.

I think a lot to do with it was track temp. The weather's beautiful. I probably expect it to be the same tomorrow and Sunday. I haven't really had a look. It looks like it will be somewhere in the range.

Practice two will probably be the coldest that we do. I think today's probably represents the best for qualifying.

**Q. You've signed with McLaren through '25. Rossi is coming onboard next season. What is your outlook of the future?**

PATO O'WARD: I think it's great we're adding a third car. It's just going to be more data, more analyzing, more for us to dig into and kind of explore different paths, I think.

So, yeah, I think it's going to be good to have that extra car that's going to bring just more valuable data to us.

HELIO CASTRONEVES: So Felix staying?

PATO O'WARD: I really hope he stays.

HELIO CASTRONEVES: Okay. No hint in who's going to be the third car?

PATO O'WARD: No idea. I have no say.

THE MODERATOR: As you can see, we've been joined by Helio Castroneves, driver of the No. 06 AutoNation Sirius XM Honda. Tell us about your day.

HELIO CASTRONEVES: It was very good. Great to be back in Belle Isle. Man, this place is awesome. It's great



to see everyone. Great to see a place I got my first win ever in INDYCAR.

Super cool. A shame it's going to go away. But it is what it is. Great to see the people that I over the years became friends. It's a really nice place.

There is only one guy that is not happy to have him around all the time. Merrill Cain. He's a pain in the neck.

Joking aside, he's the reason actually this place became what it is also. Him, Bud Denker, everyone. Good job, my friend.

THE MODERATOR: We'll take questions.

**Q. Helio, I don't know that the fence even still exists from when you did Spiderman the first time. Is that a piece of this place you'd like to have as your own to put in the garage somewhere?**

HELIO CASTRONEVES: I'd love it to. Ask Merrill, he might know where is the fence. To be honest, it might be the same fence. We don't know that.

Absolutely. As I said, this place, it's been long time here. Everyone knows around. But things change. Things moving. I'm glad that at least I'm here for the last race.

**Q. Back at the Team Penske days, you almost felt an obligation you had to win this race because of Roger and Bud. How satisfying would it be to take the trophy away from Roger and Bud?**

HELIO CASTRONEVES: I still feel that obligation. As I mentioned before, I had so many friends here, through Roger Penske, through the Penske organization. It would be great to not disappoint my friends. I would love to win my first win here and win the last one, too.

**Q. (No microphone.)**

HELIO CASTRONEVES: For me, I been here with the sports car program obviously in 2020. However, it feels fine. I didn't feel any problem at all. It's great to be back on the concrete area, bumpy area, which I always feel sort of like comfortable.

Yeah, I didn't feel much of an issue in terms of the wind.

**Q. (No microphone.)**

HELIO CASTRONEVES: Yeah, we race in Long Beach like that. I think it's just going to make it better. You saw in Long Beach the track was about three seconds quicker.

There is a sealer there that helps obviously, even the sports car program. Here it seems to be going the same direction.

Tomorrow we're going to try obviously the red tires. But it did feel, and hearing comments from everyone, that the first session, even with IMSA Series, the track was cleaner. So everyone did an amazing job here to prep the track, to get ready for going 8:00 in the morning.

Good kudos to everyone. Everyone seem to be happy. Yeah, maybe I'm biased, but I always like this place.

**Q. (No microphone.)**

HELIO CASTRONEVES: No problem. No problem.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you, guys, for coming in. Good luck tomorrow in qualifying.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports