

NTT INDYCAR SERIES

News Conference

Saturday, May 13, 2023

Alex Palou

Pato O'Ward

Alexander Rossi

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: We are joined by our second- and third-place finishers, Pato O'Ward and Alexander Rossi.

Pato, just your thoughts about coming home second, another podium here in 2023?

PATO O'WARD: Super stoked for the team. We put three cars in the top five. Fricking hard to do in this series with how competitive it is. Just stoked for everybody in the organization, for our 5 crew.

We made our strategy really work, right? I just think today Palou and Ganassi were very, very strong, so we couldn't quite get them there in the end.

Historically this hasn't been the best of tracks for us. So this is awesome to see just the massive step forward we've taken here in race pace. Super happy to see that.

Rolling with some great momentum into our Super Bowl.

THE MODERATOR: Alexander, congratulations. Chomping at the bit waiting for a moment like this with the new team.

ALEXANDER ROSSI: Like Pato said, to get three cars in the top five is near on impossible these days. Arrow McLaren has done a phenomenal job all year. You can't talk about how challenging it is to add a car in the off-season. They've done it with relative apparent ease. There's a lot of work behind the scenes.

Really proud to get the first podium for the team, the first one as part of Team Chevy. It was a good day. We've had a really strong pace on Sundays, we just haven't gotten the results that we feel like we deserve. We're missing a little bit on Saturdays.

The pieces are coming together. I've got an awesome

team, awesome teammates around me.

THE MODERATOR: Questions, please.

Q. Pato, I think Palou is the only one of the top seven to started on reds.

ALEXANDER ROSSI: Yeah, I started 10th (smiling).

Q. Any second thoughts there on starting on the alternate?

PATO O'WARD: No, I was happy with my strategy. I just think right when we were I believe second-to-last stint, I just blew too much push to pass. I could have used some more to keep Palou behind us, which I think we might have been able to do.

Yeah, you got to pick your battles. I was like, You know what, at this point of the stage of the race. I think that was the defining moment of the race because a yellow never came out. If a yellow did come out, I would have been in very big trouble.

I just played it safe, yeah, chose my battles cautiously. Super happy, content with the solid points that we got today.

Q. When he wins by 13 seconds, is it like doesn't matter what strategy?

PATO O'WARD: Track position is so much here. I took longer to get by Lundgaard than what Alex did. I got stuck behind other guys a little bit longer than where he made up the time. When he got out of the pits, I was held up by some lappers. That all just adds up to the amount of time that you just keep losing, especially in those crucial in and out laps.

Yeah, I mean, obviously we're going to look into it and see what we could have done better. I think it was a job really well done, not just by our car but all three Arrow McLarens.

Q. Alex, for the next step, are you looking to extract more in qualifying?

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ALEXANDER ROSSI: Yeah, I mean, it's a very different car than I'm used to. I just haven't quite found my happy spot for like the ultimate lap. It's close. It seems like we're permanently qualifying 10th, 11th or 12th. It's not a disaster. We're certainly much better in race pace, or have been so far this year.

Yeah, I mean, it's not the end of the world. We'll get there. It's competitive, and you can't be missing a 10th of a second. Ultimately that's what we're missing.

We'll keep our heads down. A bit of a shift now for the next two weeks. Yeah, really looking forward to getting started on the oval.

Q. Can you address the confidence you come out of this with.

PATO O'WARD: I mean, I think confidence comes with -- what I'm getting at, it's a different beast, right? Indy is different. We're not really going to know what we've got up until we put all the fast bits on the car, we see where we stack up.

Obviously last year the Ganassis were the different benchmark. They're the ones that we're chasing. We've been putting so much hard work. I know the engineers have spent endless hours of just time in all the different ways that we can find lap time for Indy.

I'm just so excited to see what we can do. We've continuously put ourselves into good positions there past few years. I think I can do it again for all of us at the 5 stand. Hopefully we get that opportunity and go that one more step that we want to do.

ALEXANDER ROSSI: Man, this is a momentum game. We talk about it a lot. Performance here doesn't translate the other direction, but it's good mentally for everyone. You know you've got the ability to have the results across all three cars. When everyone is relaxed and just doing what they know how to do, the confidence in their abilities is when the performance comes.

Q. Is there a greater feeling of pride in that there's three Arrow McLaren cars in the top five or is the feeling more frustration that it's none of them in the top step of the podium?

ALEXANDER ROSSI: Yeah, I think it's hard to win these races. I think the 10 car was just stronger. A stronger car will really make any strategy look good. I don't think we would do anything different if we had to do it again.

Yeah, I think it's all pride in the fact that it's three cars in

the top five. Obviously for Pato it's probably frustrating. I've been in that boat before. You just got to enjoy the seconds, because that's what counts at the end.

Q. Pato, do you enjoy the seconds?

PATO O'WARD: Man, I'm flowing. I know my wins will come. I'm chilling.

Q. Alex, it had been a tough couple years at the end of your stint with Andretti. Is this the type of day you were hoping for with a fresh start with a new team?

ALEXANDER ROSSI: I was actually talking to a friend about it this morning. Our frustration in the fact that we're qualifying 10th, that's a good sign. There's still so much potential. The whole group, not just my car.

There's things that we know that we need to improve. It's very clear objectives that we need to improve upon. When we unlock it all, it's going to be a really cool thing for three cars out there.

Q. The way this team has been able to add so many personnel at a full-time program, do something we have seen some teams struggle with, but I don't think anyone found their way to a podium as quick as you had in a brand-new program.

ALEXANDER ROSSI: Yeah, it's a testament to every single individual there, to management, to Gavin, to Brian, to all the engineers. It's a very hard task.

Some of the people on my car in particular had never seen an INDYCAR before. Just the improvement and development every single time I show up at the racetrack is very impressive.

We just got to keep pushing along, keep addressing our weakness. Like I said, it's going to be a cool ride for everyone.

Q. Pato, you're pretty comfortable with three second-place finishes in five races so far. At what point will it get frustrating if that win doesn't come along?

PATO O'WARD: It won't. I mean, honestly, if we're second for the rest of the season, we're chilling. Yeah, they will fall. Is it going to fall the next one, in two, three, four, five? Who knows. Is it going to fall until next year? You never know.

I sure know that what we've been doing, we've been knocking on the door every single weekend. Like, there



hasn't been one weekend where we're lost, no. There's been some weekends where we haven't started off that strong. We make changes and we're right there.

I'm just really enjoying it. We're growing massively as a team. We get to work with some pretty cool people. I mean, I know Zak is having a total fan moment right now over there. I know he's pumped to get to the 500. There's been so much going into not just that race but for all three cars, all four cars for the 500, but all three cars for a full season.

Yeah, we just got to keep doing what we're doing.

Q. Seems when Alex Palou has a good day, he can run away from the field, hard to do in this series. From what you know about him, what do you feel it is about him that when he's on, he can be almost impossible to beat?

PATO O'WARD: Impossible to beat? I don't agree. But he's strong. He's in one of the best teams, arguably the best in the past few years.

We're pushing. We're pushing. We're right there. We're not far off. I know we're going to find it. Not worried.

Q. Alex, I know you were a big believer in Brian Barnhart at the last team. What was it like to be able to get a performance like this now that you and Brian are with Arrow McLaren?

ALEXANDER ROSSI: Yeah, I mean, Brian, I can't say enough good things about what he does, the position that he's in now at the team in terms of a management role, not just being a strategy guy. He's instrumental in the success that this team has had to start the year. I'm very fortunate to have him on my car.

I was fortunate to have him last year. To be able to continue the relationship in new colors is a very good thing for both of us.

Q. Pato, you were able to get Alex during the off-season as a teammate. How quick did it take for the three of you to mesh, become a pretty good trio?

PATO O'WARD: Honestly, it didn't take much time. I mean, he can correct me if I'm wrong, but I think he needed a change. I think he's fit in very well. I think he's really embraced how we work as a team. I think it's extremely different to a lot of other teams on the grid.

Yeah, I mean, it's not just like Alex. I feel like with his team, I feel like all of us are working really hard to have the

best three cars on the grid.

THE MODERATOR: Joined by today's winner, as well, Alex Palou.

Your general thoughts? You've had a really nice season, and this validates all the hard work this team has done.

ALEX PALOU: Yeah, absolutely. We knew we had a fast car honestly since practice, since we were all off the trailers. The car was really, really good. I was comfortable. We missed a little bit on pole yesterday, but we knew we had a fast car.

Also in the warmup we found that we were struggling a little bit more than others on the alternate tires, so that's why we went on red, black, black, black at the end to try to get the best from what we had, and it worked. Perfect day for the 10 car.

THE MODERATOR: The opening lap made a statement, taking the lead. How big was that for you?

ALEX PALOU: We knew with the alternate tires, it was a lot easier to get temperature in. I knew it was only for the first couple of laps, otherwise it would have been tough to pass. Had to go for it, it worked, so happy.

THE MODERATOR: We'll continue with questions.

Q. Pato, you have an Indy 500 winner on your team, add another one to the lineup on Tuesday. What does that do for the team dynamic? How much is having somebody with that much experience going to mean to you guys?

PATO O'WARD: I mean, obviously there's so much that you can tap into, chat with them in certain scenarios, right?

Indy is a different beast in its own where I feel in my experience I've always been on my island. We know we've had Montoya, Alonzo. Everybody usually just goes with what they're comfortable with. If you keep chasing something that maybe your teammate likes, you need to find what works for you. When you find what works for you, that's how you are going to put yourself in positions to win the race.

You're not going to get there by trying to chase someone else's setup and hope you can drive it the same way. Everybody drives differently. So I think it's all about maximizing what you need from your car, trying to help the whole team while you're doing that, right?

A lot of the times my car, my teammates never liked my

car. Montoya was on the other stratosphere of setups. Yeah, it doesn't mean one's better than the other. We just drive very differently.

When you're going 230, 240 miles an hour, you need something that you're comfortable with.

Q. Pato, Arrow McLaren was knocking on the door with you for the last few years. Since you expanded this team, it feels like it's on the threshold of breaking that glass ceiling. What is it about Gavin coming in?

PATO O'WARD: I think his approach. He has a very humored approach to everything. I can say he's not only helped the team, but I have improved outside of the race car because of Gavin, just kind of having a different set of eyes that looks at things in a different way.

At the end of the day this is all a human sport. None of us are robots. We're all the ones that are putting in the work. That's what it takes.

Sometimes it's important to know that we all need some rest and recharge sometimes. You can't always go full on. What you need is you need to make sure you're in the position to do it when it counts, right?

Just hats off to everybody that worked so hard in the off-season. There's countless guys and gals in the team that spend many hours in the off-season to find more lap time.

THE MODERATOR: Heck of the way to start the month for Arrow McLaren. Alexander Rossi, Pato O'Ward, we'll cut you loose and continue our questions for Alex Palou.

Q. How special is it to win in Indianapolis? Does it feel any different today compared to the previous four tracks you won at?

ALEX PALOU: Yeah, every win is special, honestly. We've been close here. We had little bit of bad luck. I know in '21 we had a failure when we were going for the fight for the win at the end. It was the first race that everything came perfectly, the strategy, the tires, the speed of the car, myself obviously.

Super proud. It's a special place. You can feel that in the car just with the fans that we had already since practice one. There's something about this place obviously. Even if it's not the big one, it's still special.

So super proud of the first win of the season, first win with the American Legion, as well, and first win at the IMS. Couldn't be better.

Q. The opening lap, the charge at the start, knowing that Lundgaard was quick all week, how vital was it to get the lead quick?

ALEX PALOU: We knew starting on the alternates we needed to go hard and try and get the lead as fast as possible. I think the alternates had two, three laps that they were a lot better. Afterwards, you kind of got stuck behind.

I tried in turn one. He went really aggressive. It was right, it was perfect what he did, but yeah, I wanted it to be something easier (smiling). We were able to get it on the last corner. That was good.

Q. Did you have new blacks at the end or used ones?

ALEX PALOU: I did new alternates, new blacks, used blacks, new blacks.

Q. What was the main benefit of having the new ones at the end?

ALEX PALOU: Just in case there was, like, a yellow, everybody would start to go aggressive. I think already if you're on blacks, you're already in danger. If you're on used blacks, you're done. That was why I knew we had those for clean air on the third run. That's why it was a good time to put the used blacks on, which worked really well. We were able to overtake Pato. We were able to overtake Lundgaard and get like a five-second lead.

The last five laps I was losing a lot of pace compared to the other guys. Yeah, everything worked out.

Q. Any added momentum that you feel given you have the points lead going to the 500?

ALEX PALOU: Yeah, that's great. I've always said that we had a good season so far, but we didn't really have a clean day. Today was the first clean day. The speed was amazing, strategy, pit stops, everything went really smooth.

Yeah, we're not going to stop here. We're going to try and keep the championship lead until the end of the championship, and hopefully get the second one.

Yeah, thinking about today only, then when it comes to Monday, we'll start thinking about the big one.

Q. Are you going to celebrate tonight with chicken? Where will you go?

ALEX PALOU: Yeah, absolutely. I don't know yet. I have



to talk. I have some family here. We'll see where we go, what we do, but for sure we're going to celebrate.

THE MODERATOR: Still the only driver this season that's finished every lap in 2023.

ALEX PALOU: Great. Perfect. Do we get a bonus for that?

THE MODERATOR: Fried chicken maybe.

Q. We haven't seen too many drivers manage runaway wins in this last season or two. You've done it twice now. When you have days like this that are so on, what does that feel like inside the cockpit?

ALEX PALOU: Amazing. I mean, everything goes so well. The car feels how you want it to feel. Even though we had a lot of traffic by lap cars at the end on the last stint, yeah, we didn't have too much, so we could run our pace.

I think once you have your day that you're comfortable with the car, it's doable to do. Obviously those days don't come too often here in INDYCAR. It's so tight. With three, four pit stops, it's tough to do.

Yeah, glad that we made it today. A win is the same if you do it by 30 seconds or by 1/10th. Obviously feels better for myself, for the confidence. Yeah, a win is a win.

Q. Having come so close to winning here at the Indianapolis Motor Speedway, does winning here mean something more than winning at another racetrack or still quite not what you're looking for?

ALEX PALOU: Yes and no. I wanted to win at the IMS because it's a special place, but it's not like I'm relaxed. I want to win the big one. We've been close. I know that being close is not enough. There's been drivers trying for years and years. It's a tough race to do. 200 laps, five pit stops. You need to have a perfect, perfect day there.

We'll keep working. We'll keep digging. Hopefully comes. Yeah, it's the big one that I'm waiting for, obviously without forgetting about the other ones. This means a lot today. I'm only focused on the GMR GP today. When it comes on Monday, I'll be thinking on the Indy 500.

Q. Three guys from Arrow McLaren are in the top five. Does a day like today have you thinking any more about what your plans for next year might be?

ALEX PALOU: Absolutely not. It's too early. It's May, c'mon.

Q. You said, Once we knew we were starting on reds, we were going to fight for a win. You were the only one of the top seven to start on reds. Does it surprise you more guys didn't try that strategy?

ALEX PALOU: It did. It did. For us it was clear. We were struggling a little bit more than some of the guys on used reds in the warmup. But still it's not like they were amazing. We knew that we didn't want to use used reds. That's why we started on new alternates, try to get the lead, try to get a big gap, like two, three, four, seconds, then work on our pace on blacks.

Once I saw the starting grid with the tires, we were like, Okay, we're in a good place. Still you have to do it. If you get stuck behind Lundgaard on reds, you're done, your race is over, because you'll have more tire deg, not get the benefit of jumping four seconds, then you're always stuck in traffic on the same strategy as his.

We knew we were on the right strategy for the 10 car, but you still had to do it on track.

Q. A little bit of a gamble, aggressive move, but less so when you saw the other cars around you?

ALEX PALOU: Well, we were going to do a bigger gamble before warmup, which was starting on used reds. We knew that since practice, honestly, that we wanted to start on reds. I was surprised that not other people at the front started on reds.

But it worked for us, so yeah.

Q. I think I heard you say you feel like the last two years you had the car that could have won at the Indy 500. You go back and run those races clean, you feel like you could have won both of those?

ALEX PALOU: Not '21 because I didn't have the experience. I did the best I could. Last year, yeah, absolutely. My car was super fast. We went from the lead when we had that. It's not that we were dropping. We were on the lead, managing the field. We went one lap longer than the guys around us. That's why we got on a bad position.

I'm not worried about the speed of the 10 car at the IMS honestly. I'm just worried about the day that we're going to have ahead of us. We've been really strong at the open test. I feel more confident running here at the ovals.

As I said, you need the perfect, perfect day. Just having a good day is not enough here.

Q. Where did you feel like you had an advantage today, what part of the track?

ALEX PALOU: We had more speed I would say on the sector two, turn seven, eight, nine, ten, on the blacks. On the reds, I was still struggling compared to them. We were still good there. We made 1/10th and a half to 2/10ths. Then we were really close in the other areas.

It's normally like that. It's tough to do a big difference in turn one. Everybody brakes at the same spot. Being such a slow-speed corner, everybody does the same driving lane. Seven, eight, nine was the biggest difference.

Q. Your closest call today was where?

ALEX PALOU: I would say turn one at the start. I was a bit conscious that Lundgaard could have gone aggressive there because otherwise if I would have closed the door, we would have touched a little bit. He did nothing wrong. He did everything right.

Yeah, I would say that was the only area.

Q. Now that you're an Indy 500 veteran, does it seem like the race is going to be in three days or three months?

ALEX PALOU: Yeah, I mean, it's coming really fast. Faster than I thought. Honestly until now I was only focused on the GMR Grand Prix. I just wanted to do the best we could here. Tomorrow we will rest. On Monday we'll go back to work.

Honestly with how the schedule is, it looks like we have a lot of track time. We actually don't have as much as the engineers think, because they want you to try an amazing list of setup stuff to try to get the best car.

Yeah, honestly we just try and do small work each day, try and get our targets, then race day is suddenly there.

Q. At the end of the race you said your 2022 win at Laguna came too late. Do you feel like it's absolutely vital in INDYCAR that you need to win a race in the first half of the year to have the momentum for the championship push?

ALEX PALOU: Yeah, it always helps. Honestly, last year we were really good to start. I think we had four podiums on the first five races or three podiums on the first four, which was pretty impressive.

A win here gives you a lot on confidence and on points. You need those wins when you have the car. When you

don't have the day yourself or the car or the strategy or the luck or whatever, you need to score as much as possible.

When the car is there, you need to maximize and execute. We did today.

THE MODERATOR: Congratulations.

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