

# NTT INDYCAR SERIES

## News Conference

Saturday, May 20, 2023

**Alex Palou**

**Callum Ilott**

**Tony Kanaan**

**Santino Ferrucci**

**Felix Rosenqvist**

**Josef Newgarden**

Press Conference



We finally on the last run nailed it. Great team effort. It was nice. It was unexpected, especially I don't think I've ever done that many qualify attempts in this place. I guess because it's my last one they kept sending me out, so it paid off (smiling).

THE MODERATOR: We've never seen this many qualifying attempts before. Today set a record for single day qualifying attempts for the Indy 500.

Also joining us Felix Rosenqvist. Felix, P1 today, which is great. Doesn't mean anything for tomorrow. But you advance to round two tomorrow.

FELIX ROSENQVIST: Yeah, I think it's still a pretty big day for us. I mean, we've been good here the last couple years. Today to have all the cars in the top eight, in this competition, it's really hard. We saw with Tony today, even if he's doing a perfect job, still things that can outside factors that can play in, it can become really difficult in this field.

Super proud of the whole team for executing. That last run we did was just phenomenal. Almost in a 234 average. That was pretty mind-blowing how we found so much speed. We weren't super happy on our first run, so we had two or three reasons to think we were going to go quicker. We kind of put them all together, wow, what a run.

Team Chevy as well, great job. Yeah, just a fun time to be in Arrow McLaren right now. Everything kind of resets for tomorrow, but we definitely feeling good right now.

THE MODERATOR: Callum Ilott, after the drama yesterday, you're in the show. How much of a relief is that?

CALLUM ILOTT: Yeah, I mean, I don't know where to start with that. It's been a tough week, a tough month actually from the open test. We changed chassis middle of yesterday. I was kind of given an almost impossible task from what some people said. Just tried to keep the confidence high.

The first run wasn't great. I don't think my engineers would even look at the video because they were scared to watch

THE MODERATOR: We are going to go ahead with our news conference, wrapping up day one of qualifying. Felix Rosenqvist P1 today, as well as Tony Kanaan, Santino Ferrucci, and Josef Newgarden will also join us.

Already joining us here up on the stage is Callum Ilott, qualified 28th. That's where he'll start. Also advancing to tomorrow's top 12 Alex Palou, third quick today.

Alex, thanks for coming up. We'll begin with you. It's on to round two tomorrow. Goal accomplished, right?

ALEX PALOU: Yeah, it was a goal for today. We didn't really know. We had a tough day yesterday. We had to do an overnight engine change. We didn't really know if we were going to be as fast as we were or not.

But, yeah, this morning on practice felt really good. Qualifying was great. So, yeah, cannot wait for tomorrow.

THE MODERATOR: Also joined by Tony Kanaan, sixth quick after some late drama in qualifying. Also joined by Santino Ferrucci.

Tony, some drama there for you, got kind of emotional as well.

TONY KANAAN: I don't know if it's a drama. We started the day a little bit more conservative. We just kept digging. I need to thank definitely my teammates for it. They're all in. They kept supporting me, asking me, You got to do it again, you got to do it again.



it. We just managed to turn the car around into something that was fast, managed to scrape four laps out of it.

THE MODERATOR: Santino Ferrucci joins us, getting into round two, the top 12. How excited is the team and you?

SANTINO FERRUCCI: Yeah, I think it's a pretty impressive feat for the team. To see the 14 up the front, my teammate right there as well who went earlier in the day, it's been pretty awesome. To see us up there is pretty sick, man.

THE MODERATOR: We'll open it up for questions.

**Q. Santino, when we talked to you out there in the bullpen, you were trying to get in on the Fast 12. Now that you're officially in the Fast 12, to have an A.J. Foyt Racing driver in the Fast 12 at the Indianapolis 500, how big of an honor is that? How much do you feel you want to go the extra distance and get it for A.J.?**

SANTINO FERRUCCI: Yeah, definitely. Like I said, the goal here is to bring home A.J.'s sixth win, sixth 500 victory. I actually feel a lot more comfortable in the race car than I have been in the qualifying car. To be in the Fast 12 and have a shot at pole tomorrow I think is huge.

Our car definitely has some more in it. It's getting really tight up top there. Inches are going to make the difference. I'm excited to see what we can do tomorrow.

**Q. What did A.J. say to you when you got out of the car?**

SANTINO FERRUCCI: I think he's really happy to see that car up on top. I think he's more thrilled that both cars are equally competitive. I think he believes in what we're doing. He believes in the program. It's just one of those things where he's ready to see what we can do on race day.

**Q. T.K., you're a McLaren guy now, but you're a former Foyt driver. How big a deal is this?**

TONY KANAAN: C'mon, it's a big deal. The team doesn't have the budget of all the other big teams. They work really hard. It's a big family there. They've been through some tough times lately with some personal stuff.

I'm glad to see. Really happy to see them there. I'm pretty sure A.J. is laughing pretty hard, but going to give Santino a run tomorrow again so he better be on his toes.

**Q. It seemed kind of effortless that Arrow McLaren has been able to put all four in the Fast 12. Can you**

**describe what it's like being on the inside watching that happen?**

FELIX ROSENQVIST: Yeah, I think the team is really maturing. We're still a fairly new team as the current structure. But you really feel a difference. There's a lot of young guys. When I joined the team, a lot of young guys on the team now becoming pretty experienced, being up front for many years, still not a championship, but we're up there lurking all the time now.

You really feel that the confidence is growing in the team, I think both on the engineering side, driving side. Now especially with Tony and Alex joining, it's just a good environment.

We're having fun. I feel like we're able to attack. When we have tough days, we're pretty good at bouncing back quickly which normally puts us in the mix. To do it four cars as well. I think already on the 7 car this year with Alex, it's really impressive with what they've done because it's pretty much a completely new group. Then you have Tony's car on top of that. I think a couple of months ago we were like, what people are we going to use for running these cars? Here we are in the top eight, all of us. It's really remarkable.

As I say, it feels not effortless, but it feels like we're vibing, it's a fun group.

TONY KANAAN: Yeah, I mean, it's a tough job. I mean, I was in the shop in January, and we didn't have probably between the 7 car and my car half of the people yet. I walked in, Where is everybody?

They said, This is everybody.

I'm like, Whoa.

It's a big challenge. It gives a lot to Gavin making a best out of people, Barnhart, all the group there. It's a really good environment. They give you the freedom. Gavin is really good picking up who is good at what. Doesn't mean if you're not good at one thing he will place you somewhere else. I think it has shown how strong this team is.

I think between the driver lineup, it's the same thing, we have an awesome combination. We have two young kids, they're fired up. Alex is there with his experience, then I come. It's a really good environment. They've been doing it.

It's not a surprise. Look how strong they start the season. It's a work in progress. It's not easy, especially adding a fourth car. It's remarkable. I think it's something. Props to



everybody there.

THE MODERATOR: Also joined by two-time NTT INDYCAR SERIES champion Josef Newgarden.

You went for it there at the end, trying to get something to happen for you.

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: Yeah, no doubt. I couldn't be more proud of my team. This is what Indy is all about. We had to go for it and try. Unfortunately we just weren't good enough. I really wish we had just a little bit more. We were really, really going for it.

I felt like we were as aggressive as we could reasonably be at the end there. We definitely gave it a good attempt. It just was still not quite strong enough.

Unfortunately we got to work towards the race now. Feel really confident that we can put together a good day next Sunday. Just sad that we're not going to be in the fight tomorrow. But we are where we are.

We'll be working towards hopefully a great race day with Shell and Chevy. Team Chevy did a phenomenal job today. I don't think we were lacking anything there. Really proud for the whole group.

**Q. Callum, after the first run you said as long as you could get some clean laps. 231, that's where you ended up. Did you pretty much have the second run just fairly smooth?**

CALLUM ILOTT: First two laps were good. I think I put two 232 twice, then dropped off big-time, just super loose.

We kind of undershot it the first time with the car, then overshot it the second time aero-wise. Made it quite difficult. I got it across the line, so...

**Q. Alex, obviously Ganassi was dominant last year. This year there's more Chevys up there, but you still have four in the mix. Describe the dynamic now. Do you still feel like you got a good shot at pole?**

ALEX PALOU: Yeah. It's great to have four cars again in the Fast 12. I think it's pretty tough to do it, especially nowadays, how tight the field is.

Yeah, we feel confident. That doesn't mean that we feel like it's going to be easy to get into the Fast Six or fight for pole. But we feel confident that we have speed. It's just going to take four amazing laps, no mistakes, try and get a consistent third and fourth.

Yeah, I have confidence in my car, but at the same time I'm not underestimating anybody on the Fast 12.

**Q. For the Chevy drivers, it definitely has a Chevy heavy day today. Marco Andretti, one of the first things he said was that Chevy was holding something in their pocket all week. Do you feel you are the advantaged engine right now?**

TONY KANAAN: Yes, the grass is always greener on the other side.

I think it's pretty tight. I'm talking about it because I've driven a Honda a year ago, then I switched. I really think both manufacturers have advantages and disadvantages in some areas.

I really think it's pretty tight. It's not like we are holding things up. We did not. Maybe we did a better job at ballast. If we look at how tight this field is, how many attempts of qualifying, how close we were.

One thing I would love people to realize, if you would convert that to lap time, you will see how close it really is. I don't see it. But I'm not good at math so...

**Q. Santino, you told us the other day you didn't like qualifying. Have you changed your tune on that? Felix, how do you celebrate this?**

SANTINO FERRUCCI: I'm still never a fan of qualifying. I'm a racer through and through. Getting these four laps out of the way was amazing for us and the team to be as fast as we are. It's incredible, a major feat. To have to go out and do it again tomorrow against once again the same super competitive top 12, obviously it's something that I'm looking forward to as a team because it's something new for everybody.

Personally as a driver, yeah, it's definitely something I'm happy to check off the list, happy I don't have to pass as many cars come Sunday. But, yeah, I'm more looking forward to the race than anything else.

FELIX ROSENQVIST: I mean, I think in this field when you get a run like that, it's always special. We're fully aware that this doesn't get any points. It gives some good memories, though. I think it was a phenomenal day for us as a team. I think we have the right to celebrate for a couple of hours, then kind of resetting tomorrow.

Tomorrow, the wind might be different, the humidity, the track, the engine. Everything changes. I think that's the beauty of it. Also everything that goes into every time you're out there, I only did two attempts today, but some

poor guys, like this fella, had to go out like five, six.

CALLUM ILOTT: I only did two (laughter).

FELIX ROSENQVIST: It sucks if you have to do that.

TONY KANAAN: I think my engineer was trying to make me match every single qualify I've done in this place in one day. We're doing 26 today (smiling)?

FELIX ROSENQVIST: All the commitment it takes, when you get a run like that, you're pretty happy with it. We wake up tomorrow, it's a new day.

**Q. Josef, where do you feel like you sit after the end of today? As a team, how do you feel it's gone today? How can you reflect on that?**

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: Well, perhaps as the rumors have stated we're just holding something in our back pocket. It's a very interesting strategy I guess, but...

Look, there's no place to hide. We're just not fast enough. We really weren't. It's unfortunate. I feel terrible for our team because I'm front and center of being able to witness the amount of effort that has gone into this place. It is just not from a shortage of effort.

We're obviously just missing something else. I don't know how we're missing it. We've worked hard, all of us collectively. We've tried to have no ego about it. It's just not enough.

I think we're still short. Unfortunately the weird thing was I think we were more in the mix yesterday. I think the wind plays a big factor into that. Maybe we're missing something in these type of conditions that we saw today.

Any way you want to slice it, we just weren't good enough. We've got to go back and really assess again. Unfortunately we've been doing that every single year here. What's most important now is we're going to focus on the race. I do believe with how tight the field is, as Tony talked about, there's opportunity anywhere. If you qualify for the race, there's opportunity anywhere to win this event. We have to put our focus to that now and be able to collect ourselves after the 500 and see what we can do better. I have strong confidence we have great race cars and can be in the fight on Sunday.

**Q. Santino, four Ganassis and four McLarens in the top 12 in qualifying. You're making it up with them. Does that give you any sort of boost or enjoyment that you're up there with those guys?**

SANTINO FERRUCCI: It's pretty funny. You sit there going against two four-car teams that have an insane budget, up front like this for a long time. McLaren is new, but you guys have been doing a fantastic job. To compete with them is definitely something special.

I think we've definitely been there more on the racing side of things, at least I have in the past few years. To see us up there on raw car speed is pretty cool.

**Q. Callum, the last 24 hours has been a whirlwind. What can you share that you've talked to your crew about in the run you had today?**

CALLUM ILOTT: Sorry, the last part of your question?

**Q. What did you say to your crew and everyone that put your car back together?**

CALLUM ILOTT: To be honest, I obviously was there when they were rebuilding it. This morning it was a big thank you. Then it was hard work, trying to stay in it because it wasn't easy. It wasn't a nice car to drive at first. But we managed to make it drivable and fast. Then at the end there when we knew we made it through, that was another big thing. I'll buy them dinners at some point soon, but I'm going to have a quiet one on my own and destress a bit.

**Q. How important is the Monday practice going to be to get your car ready for the race?**

CALLUM ILOTT: Yeah, I mean, today included, we just found so many little quirks with this car that we obviously didn't experience with the other chassis that we had or we never got to experience because of how bad it was.

That's going to be interesting to fine-tune as we come to the race with different speeds and that. But again, even though it wasn't perfect this morning, I was so much more comfortable with it than what I had. Honestly I think we know where to target now, now that I've got something.

Credit to Agustin because he's kind of had to do what I did the whole of last year, which is go on your own and go for it. He led us into our starting point this morning. Yeah, it wasn't perfect, but we didn't stray too far away from it and that was more because of the quirks of our car.

Hopefully now we can build as a team, and Monday and Friday get a quicker race car.

**Q. Felix, talk about the last run a little bit, how hairy was it.**

FELIX ROSENQVIST: I mean, it was one of those runs where you have kind of like a perfect balance. You feel the rear sliding, but you're not reacting that much on the wheel. You're just putting in less wheel. You get a perfect arc, which is great. You're not shaving off speed on any axle really. I was kind of able to keep that balance for the whole run. Got a little bit spicy on the last lap.

The speed was just there. Actually when I looked down at my dash the first time on lap three, I saw a 33.7, I actually thought it was stuck from lap one. I didn't even know I had done a 234 at the time. My steering wheel was like a Christmas light for most of the run, which normally means you're going quick.

Yeah, that's just awesome. It's fun. I wish I broke into the 234, but we can try that tomorrow.

**Q. A lot of athletes when they're getting ready to end their career, they want to still have something on the table rather than the sport necessarily. Pretty obvious you still have a lot left on the table.**

TONY KANAAN: Yeah, I mean, I guess, but I never doubted I could still drive. To come back next year, the following year. But I think it's time. I have other goals, other projects that I want to pursue.

Every year, let's face it, it gets tougher and tougher. I had a really good year last year, then I got this opportunity. Once I did that, I was like, Hmm, maybe let me call it before somebody else decides that.

I'm not leaving or quitting INDYCAR racing because I don't think I'm competitive or anything like that. I just think it's time. I love being with the team. I'm enjoying other parts of somehow a new role. I still get to race all the type of cars.

Yeah, I mean, I'm okay with the decision. I am not coming back, so people keep making fun of me.

ALEX PALOU: You can change, right? There's still time.

TONY KANAAN: Yeah, somebody can come with an offer. That's what happened last year.

ALEX PALOU: We'll change that, Tony (laughter).

**Q. Josef, you mentioned you have tried the last few years to get back in. McLaren second straight year has all their cars in. Do you feel as the Chevrolet camp, have they passed Penske?**

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: I think there's no doubt that

they've done a tremendous job. They've just excelled. We fell short today. There's no hiding it. We did not do a good enough job. I can't speak highly enough about Chevrolet. I think they've been tremendous this whole season, particularly tremendous today.

You can see that by evidence of everybody that was up there. We weren't missing anything from that side. They've been a great partner for us.

We seem to be able to figure out most situations, but for whatever reason this cruel mistress, she's just tricking us. I don't understand how so. I think all of us don't fully understand it.

You don't stop working. I think for us, we've just got to continue to put in the work and not have an ego about it. We weren't good enough, let's figure out why. Indy is not easy. This is not an easy place to just succeed. I don't care how many Indy 500s you have, what team you are, there are no guarantees when you show up here.

We don't have an ego about it. We have to work hard, come back, do a better job.

**Q. Tomorrow as close as it is, how do you balance making even a subtle change between now and tomorrow?**

SANTINO FERRUCCI: I'm having a good dinner, go to bed (laughter). Driving the same car tomorrow. Nothing I'm changing.

ALEX PALOU: Yeah, we'll make a couple of changes. Motorsport is about improving. Feels like it's limitless. We can go the other way, but we'll keep trying.

**Q. Callum, given the courses of the last 24 hours, to know now you're going to race tomorrow, does that make this entire experience a little bit more special for you knowing it was not a guarantee 24 hours ago?**

CALLUM ILOTT: Last year was the first experience for me at the 500. There was no Bump Day. It was quite an easy process. Made life a lot more relaxing. You still want to do better. Made it easier.

48 hours ago, I even put bets that I wasn't going to make the race basically because you just knew it wasn't going well. At that point then it becomes a pit of a panic, desperation. For sure for me, I was probably the first to be quite desperate as soon as I drove the car on Wednesday. But we had time to work with it.

Coming into today, I was really confident. Honestly I just



knew if we just got a clear couple of runs, the car had pace.

So yeah, super special. In some ways it's kind of one of those never-give-up situations, prove people wrong on that side. At the end of the day kind of feels like a win even though you're 27th or something. That's life sometimes.

**Q. Santino, A.J. Foyt Racing looks good. You and Ben are in the Fast 12. He's a rookie, you're done this many times. How is that dynamic?**

SANTINO FERRUCCI: It's actually been a pretty interesting couple of days this week between the two of us. We both rolled out really good. He was a lot happier in the open test than I was. I wasn't comfortable. Things weren't going well. Came here, it was a complete reset. Rolled off the trailer, car was super comfortable.

We made two, three changes this entire week. We've just been there. The car has had pace all three days. Benjamin has actually had pace all three days. He's trying to get his footing in traffic, which is understandable as a rookie. Today was no exception.

He rolled out first and I was actually relying on his comments, feedback. Everything felt good for him. He was actually a little stuck. I went out with exactly the same car, conditions obviously changed slightly, the air got a little bit thinner. I was able to go quicker.

If you put the cars back to back, they'd run the same time.

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