

NTT INDYCAR SERIES

News Conference

Thursday, May 23, 2024

Indianapolis, Indiana, USA

Pietro Fittipaldi

Conor Daly

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: Row 10, driver of the No. 30 5-Hour ENERGY Honda for Rahal Letterman Lanigan, Pietro Fittipaldi. Conor Daly should be on his way up momentarily.

Your thoughts on race week, heading into Carb Day tomorrow?

PIETRO FITTIPALDI: Yeah, I hope we're able to race on Sunday, though the weather has been increasingly worse throughout the week. I think it's 80% now for Sunday. I hope it gets worse so it resets itself for Sunday, goes back to zero.

I'm excited. It's the Indy 500. This is the first time I'm experiencing the full Indy 500 because there's a lot of activities that are new to me this week. I thought it was like, Oh, maybe it's only Team Rahal that does this. It's not. When I raced here in 2021, it was the year after COVID, so a lot of the stuff we were supposed to do we didn't do it because of COVID. I'm actually now feeling like I experienced the full, yeah, Indy 500 spectacle.

THE MODERATOR: Far from over. Questions for Pietro.

Q. About all the different festivities, how much fun is it to get a chance to do all that stuff? Were you with other drivers doing that?

PIETRO FITTIPALDI: Yeah, it was super fun. Yesterday we went to a middle school, elementary, middle school. I went with Graham and Christian. We did a bunch of activities with the kids. It was honestly, like, yeah, very funny. It was a blast.

A lot of the other things that we do, for sure when you're on track and you have to do a lot of media activities the same day that you're driving the car, it's a little bit mentally tiring, but it's part of the game.

I remember the other days when we were off track in 2021, like the days were just very slow and boring. Now it's filled up with media and different activities that we do for the community. I think it's very important.

Q. With the weather possibly getting worse and worse, how important is Carb Day to you trying to get the last little adjustments ready for race day?

PIETRO FITTIPALDI: Yeah, it's super important. For sure coming from the Monday practice, there were things we needed to work on. We have an idea what to do for Carb Day. I think it's going to be dry for Carb Day, which will be good. The last two hours of running. Then, yeah, get ready for the race.

THE MODERATOR: Starting 29th, makes his 11th Indianapolis 500 start, driver of the No. 24 Polka Dot Chevrolet with Dreyer & Reinbold Racing.

What has your race week been like so far?

CONOR DALY: Great question. It's been wonderful. Nice and warm, the weather's beautiful, as I'm sure it will be continuing this weekend.

It's been fun, a lot going on. Very busy. That must mean something great. A lot of good vibes. Vibes are good.

THE MODERATOR: You feel good going into tomorrow?

CONOR DALY: I do. I asked my engineer. He said we will get in Carb Day. I just want one or two more things to evaluate that we didn't get to do on Monday because we couldn't run the second half of the session just out of kind of a precautionary measure.

Yeah, just want a couple more things, couple more things out the car. Honestly, I think we've kind of been low-key pretty good and kind of sneaking under the radar, I hope. It feels good. Car's fast. I mean, certainly one way to go, can't go much further back, so we're going to go forward.

THE MODERATOR: We'll continue with questions.

Q. Pietro, Graham has had an eventful week for the

ASAP . . . when all is said, we're done.®
sports

second year in a row. Talked about how maybe Takuma is an anomaly within the team. Also they seem to have been off in qualifying but found it a little bit on Monday. Does your car seem like it's as drastic as his in any way? Is that within the team?

PIETRO FITTIPALDI: No, I think there's one thing to run fast by yourself, so when you have no tow speeds, the car has its own natural pace running alone, that's the car speed. When you get to practice running, yeah, I think when the car is good under traffic, you're able to follow much closer. As well, the practice times, in my opinion, it relies a lot on when you go out for your run, you can get a group of cars in front of you, set like a super fast lap time. That doesn't necessarily mean the car by itself in qualifying has the speed, you know?

I think our race cars are much better than our qualifying cars, for sure, because you cannot go more back. But I do believe that our race cars are better. I think Graham was able to show that. He was running well in traffic. I think he was the happiest of all four drivers in our team.

I know Takuma felt like there were still things he needed to work on in traffic. I think it's just two very different situations. I think it's hard to compare race running and practice results with qualifying because it's two very different things.

Q. In your brief couple of weeks with Takuma, what has he brought that's different that maybe you didn't pick up on a couple years ago?

PIETRO FITTIPALDI: He's very technical. He understands a lot about setup. This car has been kind of the same here for let's say, I don't know, 10 years or something. He knows a lot of details in the setup, race for other teams and stuff. He's very particular with what he wants, the feeling he wants to get from the car when he's driving in qualifying or under traffic.

In the briefing room, a long table with all the engineers, Christian and Graham on one side, me and Takuma. He's right in front of me. I'm able to hear everything he's doing with his legendary race engineer Eddie Jones. Understanding what a driver like that wants to feel.

He's super aggressive. He takes a lot of risk. But he needs a certain feeling from the car to be able to do that. It's important for me to learn that.

Q. Conor, you seem to be just really friendly with everybody here. You have the podcast. You have a relationship with a lot of the drivers. You have experience at the 500. Have you talked to a lot of the

first-time drivers this year telling them what to expect?

CONOR DALY: I mean, I don't think as much this year only because I haven't been around the paddock at all until this month. That's obviously a little bit different.

Shoot, I talk to Pietro a lot.

PIETRO FITTIPALDI: I was going to say, he's nice to everybody this week except me. He sent me a very mean message.

CONOR DALY: I did. This guy almost caused me to crash.

PIETRO FITTIPALDI: I got in the way in a bad way. It wasn't intentionally. But he was right, Bro, you can't do that. I understand.

CONOR DALY: I'm going to be honest with anybody, you know what I mean?

I've talked to Kyle a little bit, but not really only about racing. He asked me if I stole his scooter. I don't know if anyone else is looking at me for advice or anything.

I had a great interview with Nolan Siegel yesterday. It was a tough weekend for him. I'll talk to anyone. Obviously, I don't mind. I just like talking about this event. This is the coolest thing in the world we get to do.

Not sharing too much with people is probably the goal. Like, Marcus Armstrong is a guy I've talked to a lot. Seeing his face, it's kind of like, this is crazy what we're doing. Yeah, man, welcome to the show. This is it, what we're doing every year. It's kind of wild. To see their reaction is actually kind of cool.

I remember having the same reaction many years ago now when I was a rookie. I remember having the same -- I was like, Marco Andretti, when I was a rookie, I was like, dude, this is kind of nuts. And he was like, yeah, welcome to the game, this what is we do here. Kind of cool.

Q. You have a unique perspective with this being your only INDYCAR race of the year. How do you go about preparing for it from a mental and physical standpoint?

CONOR DALY: I mean, they say go big or go home. I'm literally going big and still going home afterwards. I have no other choice other than to leave it all on the table.

I love this event. It doesn't really feel as much as if -- when I showed up at St. Louis with the Rahal team, it was one



practice session, then we're racing. We've had a bit of time to get used to this team. We've had some practice sessions, couple days of qualifying, a lot of time to bond and get used to what I want. It's definitely unique in that sense.

Monday practice, I'm just trying to run race stints because I haven't done a race length yet this year. Physically you have to get yourself ready and more in tune with that. I wish we had more practice last week 'cause that would have been nice. Still, this event gives you more time than any other event to kind of get in the system again, get your body and mind kind of in tune with what you're going to need for Sunday.

Q. Everybody talks about how much they love this event. Seems like you might have a greater appreciation for it because you're from here. How do you go about not taking it for granted?

CONOR DALY: I mean, it never gets old. The butterflies every morning, wanting to stay here, the bus lot. Still that feeling is incredible.

I've seen this event, it's always been the same car for me technically, just different shapes of the car, but I feel like I've seen many different eras of this event. I've been part of the hundredth running of the Indy 500, coolest thing ever to say. I've been here when Alex Rossi won the hundredth, all this cool stuff. It's been amazing and it never gets old. Something exciting and cool every year.

I want to make history here, too. That would be really awesome. I love it. Never gets old. I just hope I can keep doing this for a long time, maybe as long as my teammate, Ryan. He's in his 40s, right? Hopefully I got that many years in me, too. That would be pretty cool.

THE MODERATOR: Always nice to peel Ryan off a boat.

CONOR DALY: We were fishing last night. He looked like he lived on a boat. He was really good with the water activities last night.

Q. Conor, on the qualifying morning, you posted an undertaker getting out of the coffin. Compared to previous years, what is your level of confidence going into Carb Day and the race this year? How different is it compared to the past seasons?

CONOR DALY: Yeah, honestly, when we did Fast Friday, that was the first time in a week where I was like, Oh, we might have -- something's going on here. The car was definitely difficult to drive.

Usually there is a reason for that happening. What I felt turns out was accurate after we looked at the data that night. Saturday morning we go out, we're right back in the window. When you're in Fast Friday and the car is loose, physically sideways in the corner, you're like, this is probably not great. The next morning when you go out and you can do four laps, cool, we're back. It was the same all during qualifying day on Saturday.

We actually were behind because of how difficult Fast Friday was. You maybe don't run it as trim. We hope we fixed the problem, but if we didn't, we don't want to make an irresponsible decision.

Thankfully we probably could have run a little bit more trim, more aggressive qualifying day. We obviously know what happened on qualifying day anyway, which prevented us from being a little bit further up.

Other than Fast Friday, we've been really confident every day. I've honestly been impressed with this Dreyer Reinbold Cusick team. Everyone from Chevrolet has been super helpful for us, as well. As a one-time entrant, it's tough to show up to the big game here and be right in the gate. We have cars in the Fast 12, two cars that are really fast. That's really impressive yet again from Dennis and everyone at the team.

I feel great. I feel very confident. I wouldn't lie to everyone clearly. I've been very honest, probably too honest, in my life. We're pretty stoked about this weekend.

Q. Larson's scooter, has there not been any driver bus lot pranks at all this month?

CONOR DALY: It's been quiet in there. I don't know what's going on. Maybe we're all just focused. It's kind of sad. I sleep better at night, though (smiling).

Q. Pietro, last time the yellow submarine did a pole position, Emerson Fittipaldi won the race. Are you superstitious?

PIETRO FITTIPALDI: I didn't know that. I didn't know about that, but that's a good statistic, you know, going into the race.

Q. Conor, do you have time to offer your golf services with the drivers?

CONOR DALY: Golf? Yeah, that was funny. I'm always happy to help a friend in need. Colton needed some assistance because the poor guy ran out of gas. I've run out of gas on the highway before, too. Sometimes you just need a ride. The SkyCam is always watching, so you

never know.

**Q. You said in your podcast you will get the video.
Did you get it already?**

CONOR DALY: I do have the video already, yeah. It's a good one. There was video of Alex Rossi. I had to fix Alex Rossi's golf cart for him in the middle, too. Somewhere there's SkyCam footage of that, too.

THE MODERATOR: SkyCam never lies. We'll wrap things up with this group. Thank you.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports

