

NTT INDYCAR SERIES

News Conference

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Pato O'Ward

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: Joined now by Pato O'Ward who led 11 of the 200 laps this afternoon and early this evening, driver of the No. 5 Arrow McLaren Chevrolet, second runner-up finish in the Indy 500, second podium of the season, 22nd of his young NTT INDYCAR Series career.

You've kind of had a chance to think about things a little bit. What are your thoughts on the runner-up finish in the Indy 500?

PATO O'WARD: Yeah, first of all, very proud of what Arrow McLaren did for not just me, but for everybody within the team. I think I can speak on behalf of Kyle, Alex, Callum. They gave us the tools to fight. They gave us the tools to be there.

As for my race, it was just such a stressful race. We were up and down, up and down. The car definitely wasn't the easiest to drive at certain moments.

I just tried to keep peace as much of the race as I could. I feel like I did. Really prepared to open the doors to ultimately have a chance to win at the end of this, and yeah, it's just heartbreaking. Two corners short.

I'm glad that we finished the race. Congratulations to Josef, two in a row. But yeah, I put that car in certain points where I didn't know if I was going to come out the other end and in one piece because I just want to win this race so freaking bad. It owes me nothing, so every time we come back, there's always a smile on my face to have another opportunity.

Q. Do you mind talking us through the pass that Josef made in Turn 3.

PATO O'WARD: Yeah, I think Josef is a great competitor. I've raced wheel to wheel with him so many times. He's obviously one of the stars in the series, one of the strong ones. I knew it was going to be a fight until the end. Just two corners short.

I really thought that I did everything in my power to get it done.

Q. Are you okay? I've never really seen you react the way that you have reacted today.

PATO O'WARD: Yeah. I'm fine. It's been a tough month. So much goes into this race. I think I'm somebody that wears my heart on my sleeve. I don't really hide anything.

It's just when you've come so close and it just doesn't seem to -- you just can't seem to get it right, it's just a lot of emotion I would say.

Q. Will you go back and watch the last lap and look for something you could have done different?

PATO O'WARD: No, I don't think you can control that. I think in a way I've cracked a code and I know how to position myself to win this race. I know I can win this race, and I know that I know how to also protect a good result when maybe the win isn't in the cards for me.

But yeah, just in a race like that where it was a constant emotional roller coaster where things -- things that weren't going perfectly smooth, they really weren't, but I think the team did a fantastic job, gave me an opportunity and called a really good strategy to then get ourselves back to the front and made a very strong overcut which ultimately put us into contention there in the end.

And then just trying to get into the top two cars the last few laps was like -- it's so hard to do with these cars. You're just stuck there, and you have to risk so much.

I think on both fronts, on Scott and Alex, I was like probably higher probability of shunting the car than getting back in one piece. But that's what you have to do, I guess. Today we're second.

Q. Does that make it that much harder because you put yourself in those situations, and will that fuel you? Are you already thinking about that fueling you moving forward?

PATO O'WARD: Every 500 for me has been very different.



There's been some that I've led a lot more and been up front a lot more. This one we were stuck a lot more. Some people were driving like maniacs on the restarts. I was just playing defense for 85 percent of the race. Some of the moves out there were just mental, stupid. I was just glad that I didn't touch anybody, I didn't crash.

I know how to make my way up in this place. All I needed to do was keep my car clean and for yellows to stop coming out because then you can't do anything. Where it gets good is when we can start getting creating with overcuts, undercuts and all that jazz.

Glad I was able to do that, and yeah, made our way with I think one exchange it was. Just come back next year and go at it again.

Q. You mentioned that history with Josef. I think by my count this is the eighth time you guys have been 1-2 and he's got six victories. Does that make it sting a little bit more? Does that go through your head a little bit that it's him?

PATO O'WARD: No. I was glad that I was racing somebody that I can trust and somebody that I think is a fantastic competitor. He's on a fantastic team.

For us, I think it's a privilege to really make them sweat. I think we certainly did today.

Like I said, a couple seconds short.

Q. You mentioned that roller coaster of emotions today. Was it like that for these two weeks because it seemed like Monday you didn't feel like you were in the ballpark at all and you didn't know if the team was going to be able to fix it?

PATO O'WARD: No. It's been a tough month. Monday we were definitely struggling a lot; Friday my car came alive. During the week -- I'm getting out of the flu. I had fever for five nights straight. I wasn't sleeping. It's been a ride.

But I felt good enough today to -- I guess almost get the job done.

Q. Obviously nobody can control the weather, but what was your strategy for dealing with that delay and the uncertainty around knowing exactly when the window was going to open up and even maybe dealing with the track at a later point in the day than you're used to being on it?

PATO O'WARD: I thought it was cool. It was like sunset

Indy 500. It was pretty badass. I don't mind it. I think a night race here would actually be so sick. I don't think it's going to happen ever, though.

Q. I was talking to just the team and Rossi after. Everybody is emotional, but everybody on the Arrow McLaren team is giving credit to each other. You even did at the start when you were talking. How do you build the camaraderie that you guys have in the entire team?

PATO O'WARD: We do no good to each other by not helping each other. It's important to know that if your teammates are up there, that's a good thing. It's a good thing. I was very happy to see that I had two of them up there. Before the race, Alex just came out, and he's like, I'll see you there soon, because he knew that I was going to be in the mix.

It's cool to do it with people that you trust and people that you get to work with day in and day out, and at the end of the day if it was him winning this race, if it was me winning this race, I think we could see we would have been really happy for each other because I know how much work we've all put into just making the team take that step into where we want to be.

Yeah, I've really enjoyed the month with my teammates and with my engineer, my performance engineer, all the team bosses. It was a very strong result as a team today for us, and yeah, obviously it stings that it's that close.

Q. You've talked a lot about your emotions already today, but as soon as you got out of the pit today, I saw you kind of bury your head in your helmet on the hood of your car. What was going through your mind at that moment?

PATO O'WARD: It's just very wet in there. I didn't want to take it off just yet. Just wanted to calm down a little bit.

Q. When does the pain go away and get replaced by the pride of what you were able to do?

PATO O'WARD: I think in a few hours. I feel very proud of what I did today. I really do. It's just after all that work and all those -- just very risky kind of choices that I had to make in order to put myself in that position, it's just like, oh, it just stings to not be able to just finish it. But it is what it is.

I know we'll be there next year.

Q. When you made the pass for the lead, the crowd reaction was a lot more enthusiastic than the ultimate pass for the victory. To know there was that many

people out of a crowd of 340,000 fans that would rather have seen you win, how does that make you feel?

PATO O'WARD: Everybody here, the INDYCAR community, all the INDYCAR fans, people from Indianapolis have really made it feel like home here to me. I'm so thankful for that. I'm so grateful for that.

At the end of the day, I hope I put smiles on kids' faces and people that were here out to support us. I hope that they go home tonight happy with the show that we gave them because I feel like it was definitely not a boring race.

We had to fight for our result today harder than I've ever had to fight for it, and I think that's why it's just that much more emotional, because I put everything into today.

Q. How much fun has the last month been working with Kyle Larson?

PATO O'WARD: It's been fantastic, but the guy has been so busy. He hasn't even been part of the engineering meetings for like 80 percent of the time. But I think he'll be back next year. They haven't said anything, but I think it would be fantastic to have him back. I think he did a phenomenal job.

I didn't see quite where he finished, but when I was playing around with him out there, playing in traffic, I think he did a phenomenal job.

Q. I saw you had this amazing double save in Turn 2. I don't know if you remember exactly --

PATO O'WARD: I remember. It wasn't the only one. I don't know if they televised the other ones.

Q. Talk to me about what happened there and how you dealt with that.

PATO O'WARD: Man, if there was one time where I had to put so much trust in my skill, it was today. Like I said, there were so many where I was like, I don't know if this is going to work out.

I was so loose, so, so, so loose. It was just wiggling so much, moving around a lot. There were so many moments like that where I knew what to expect, but sometimes you just never know when it's going to kind of want to bite.

That's just what makes it so much more like, oh. Right? I risked so much today to put myself in contention to win this race, but that's what you have to do whenever you're stuck in line like that. That's why if not you're just stuck, no one passes.

I did it when it counted, and yeah, there were -- probably the most crazy 500 that I've had for sure just in terms of like issues that I was having within my car. So many moments.

Q. You mentioned how highly you rate Josef. Can you take any solace in knowing how long it took him to win a 500, and it's taken some really fantastic drivers along the years a long time to win this race?

PATO O'WARD: I think everybody's path is different. I don't quite think -- some guys obviously get it done very early on and then never again, and some guys take a long time and get it. But I don't think any of these guys have been basically in contention five years in a row and not gotten the win. That's what I'm going through.

I think probably the closest one that's been through that is probably Helio. I know he has four, but he's been second a lot of times. So I think it's a good thing that I'm finishing second. Maybe I get a couple in a row in the future. I don't know. Maybe I don't get any.

This place, like I said, it doesn't owe me anything. It's just very cool to be a part of this event.

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