

NTT INDYCAR SERIES

News Conference

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Santino Ferrucci

Larry Foyt

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: We're joined by Santino Ferrucci for AJ Foyt Racing with his first career NTT P1 award.

Santino, congratulations. Tell us about this. What are the emotion months like?

SANTINO FERRUCCI: Man, it's pretty awesome. It's my first career pole in the series. To come on a road course like Portland where it's so tight, it's so competitive. It just felt great.

That lap felt amazing. We rolled off the trailer really good coming here. We knew we had a strong car. So it's really nice to put everything together for myself and for the team.

Yeah, super stoked as well. New sponsor on the car this weekend, Phoenix Investors. They were all down there in the pits with us when it happened, so it was a blast.

THE MODERATOR: You were already P1, but pushing towards the end. The unknown is what you're fearful of. You weren't backing down at the end at all, were you?

SANTINO FERRUCCI: No, definitely not. It's always about who crosses the line last year. I've watched enough Fast Sixes to know that. We field for three laps, so I was going to use them all, regardless if we ran out or not.

THE MODERATOR: Questions, please.

Q. Larry, could you talk about what this means for the organization.

LARRY FOYT: Well, it's huge. I think you can just see how happy everybody is because a couple years ago it was a struggle. We've just kept building this team, kept adding better people. It's led to all this.

Having some consistency with Santino, man, everyone is just really happy. This whole year, even fighting for a top 10 in the championship was a huge step up. The

qualifying pace, don't say you're not a good qualifier, can't say that (smiling).

We have such a good group working together from the engineering, mechanics, and a hell of a driver. So it feels great.

Q. How much does the Penske alliance put you in this position today?

LARRY FOYT: It's great. They've been super to work with. I've learned a lot. So can't thank them enough for everything that they've done to help us achieve that, get to where we're headed. Awesome organization to be with.

Q. Santino, you said this gives you some bargaining power for next year. Are you going to get a contract out of Larry by the end of the day? What's your situation?

SANTINO FERRUCCI: When is warm-up? How long do we have (laughter)?

No, it's good. I don't think it's any secret that I very much found a home here with Larry and AJ Foyt. I want to stay. That's kind of in the cards here. Obviously there's a lot that needs to happen, still a pretty big off-season.

Getting pole today definitely doesn't hurt (smiling).

THE MODERATOR: AJ Foyt's first P1 award since Belle Isle in 2014. This has to feel good, Larry.

LARRY FOYT: Yeah, I was in my 30s (smiling). It does feel great. We had a good car from when we unloaded. Santino said the car was really good. We thought we had a shot at top six, but we really didn't think the pole. Just a hell of a lap he put in there.

Q. You felt this was a place you could target for a strong result. What about this track, permanent road course package, made for this? Did you feel like a pole was possible or did this take you a little by surprise today?

SANTINO FERRUCCI: I said Portland would be a good

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one for us just based off of how we did at Barber and Laguna. We kind of understood why we were so quick there in the race. It was just putting it together here in Portland. Obviously they're three totally different tracks.

When we unloaded on Friday, we knew we had a really good car. Then it was fine-tuning it really into today. I kind of figured we'd be able to get into the top 12. The Fast Six I knew was going to be really difficult.

The new tire runs for us we're not super sparkly. The second tire runs is where I kind of knew we had something. So in my head, when Larry told me we had advanced into the Fast Six, I knew that if I just stayed calm and hit my marks, we could really be a threat to contend for a pole.

I didn't think we would get it, but I thought we would at least be on the front row. I'm beyond thrilled to lead the field to green tomorrow.

THE MODERATOR: Larry, any chance you've heard from the boss yet?

LARRY FOYT: No. I'm going to go give him a call right now and give Marlene Sexton from Sexton properties a call. None of this would be possible without them. This will be a fun call (smiling).

Q. When the Fast Six starts, we see everybody pile out onto the track. You stayed in your pit stall for quite a few minutes. Was it just a matter of that's the way you wanted to do it to build a gap or did it have more to do with the heat cycle on the reds?

SANTINO FERRUCCI: There were a couple of strategy things involved. I think I'll say a lot has to do with the fuel situation here in Portland. Just we've run a lot today. We really only had one run. Just wanted to make it count.

Yeah, that was kind of the plan.

Q. We had the announcement about Malukas. Santino, when we know what you've accomplished, how this program has grown together, the ability to not get demoralized, down, continue to rally when you're facing an unknown situation for next year...

SANTINO FERRUCCI: Yeah, I think it's been a very interesting two years. I think me and Larry have worked really well together. That news is honestly a huge steppingstone for the team. There's a lot behind for that. Obviously for me it's a bit of an unknown.

Things like today help. The Indy results that we've had during the 500 help. Being 10th in the championship

helps. We've really brought it together.

Regardless of news, I never really found it demoralizing if that makes sense just because of how much we've been able to accomplish in the last two years. I don't see it as a negative. I see it as a massive positive for something like that to come along.

Yeah, no, it's exciting for the future. I can't wait to see what unfolds.

Q. Larry, any thoughts other than that?

LARRY FOYT: Yeah, this whole season is a big tribute to a lot of what Santino brings to the table. Fighting for us to get top 10 in the championship, first time in two decades that this late in the season we're fighting for that. That's a big testament to a lot that he's done.

We have a great relationship. I'm sure things will work out the way they should.

Q. Santino, in the Fast Six, you had last year's polesitter Graham Rahal, Alex Palou, Will Power. Does that make what you accomplished today, taking pole, any more satisfying?

SANTINO FERRUCCI: To be honest, when we made it into the Fast Six, I was like, Who's in it?

They said, Will.

I was like, Oh, damn.

It's so hard to compete against everybody here. Everybody's so talented. On any given day as a driver, as an athlete, if you get everything right, it's a chance and an opportunity to excel. We had the car. Today was the day for me in qualifying to nail the lap, to get it right, especially when it counts.

Honestly the Fast 12 was more pressure than the Fast Six just because it's so hard. I mean, you're going against so many more people. Once you're in the Fast Six, the math in my head was you're in the Fast Five. Once you're in the Fast Five, it's only two more spots to third. If you nail your lap, it's front row.

To take the pole, I didn't really think about it (laughter).

Q. Were folks communicating to your ear with 30 seconds to go that you were on top or did you not know you had pole or were sitting on the fastest time until the session was over with?

SANTINO FERRUCCI: I knew I was first starting the final lap, when I came onto the frontstretch just because we have telem in the car and stuff like that. I knew I was good. With one more lap to go, it's whoever does the last lap normally gets the pole.

I just kind of put my head down. I felt like the car was in a perfect position. I just drove as hard as I could. When I got on the back straight out of seven, that's when I keyed up the radio 'cause they have more telemetry than anybody else. I was asking them if I'm going to make it. Knew we were quick. I knew it was a hell of a lap. I just didn't know how good.

At the line, we kind of knew. We were just waiting for Palou. Yeah, once we came down pit road, we had it.

Q. What is it like when you look down with a lap to go and you're sitting on top? Was it surprising? How do you keep your emotions in check?

SANTINO FERRUCCI: Kind of made me hungry, I'm not going to lie. When you see it there and you know you got more lap time that you can wring out of the car and yourself as a driver, I saw that. I saw I was already negative on the dash. I just wanted to push as hard as I could to see what I could actually do without the threat of what's the worst that's going to happen. You're still going to end up in the Fast Six. At that point there's no pressure to not push. That's kind of where I was at mentally.

Q. Larry, there's been a lot of attention on the Penske deal. A lot of people you brought into the team over the past few years. Might you want to talk about those people and reaction to all this happening, the importance of some of the hires you made.

LARRY FOYT: Well, for sure. I mean, we've been fortunate to bring in some really great people that have helped all the way from Michael Cannon to a lot of the other engineers, Adam, James. The whole stand. C.J., has been here a long time. A lot of people have stuck with us through the hard times, and as well a lot of new people have come in and been a great addition.

It's just a great group that are working hard together. Definitely the Penske alliance has been great. They're a great company to work with. We go back so far. AJ and Roger go way back. Obviously Tim Cindric. Working with him and Ron has been great. I've learned a lot. Certainly has been a benefit to help us get to where we're headed.

No, can't say enough about everyone on the team. That alliance has been very helpful, as well.

Q. Santino, is this your first pole since British F3 in 2014?

SANTINO FERRUCCI: Yeah, I think this is my first one in a minute. At least that I can remember (smiling). It will be nice to lead the field to green, to have no one in front of us.

I've been off pole a couple of times. But yeah, it's definitely fun.

Q. Will was saying you two could strategize for tomorrow. Does it help to have someone who is sort of a teammate to you alongside you?

SANTINO FERRUCCI: It's definitely going to make it interesting. At the end of the day we are kind of our own team. We're fighting our own championship. The championship doesn't really matter as much to me as getting a win. That's kind of my goal.

If we can help out some of our Penske alliance friends, to help Will with the championship in any way with how we do things, then yeah, we're obviously going to. It's what teammates do, how things kind of work.

By no means am I going to start and pull over and let him take the lead into one.

Q. Can you assess the rise that you and the team have had over the last 12 months?

SANTINO FERRUCCI: Man, yeah, it's been a huge help. There's so much more that goes into it between just the alliance and working with everybody. Our engineering staff is unreal. We have some really overqualified guys here. They've worked together so well.

It's one of those things to where it's kind of created a perfect storm for us to where everybody has just gelled seamlessly. The car, we found good setups throughout the year. We found a lot of speed at a lot of different tracks, a lot of different disciplines. We were good at Laguna, Barber. We were average at Road America.

Coming into Portland with the last road course, I knew if we put everything together correctly... Everyone working with Chevrolet and some of the other things that we get as being a Chevy team really prepped us well for this event and it shows.

This is definitely a glimpse into the future for the team, I believe.

THE MODERATOR: Congratulations to both you guys.

