

# NTT INDYCAR SERIES

## News Conference

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**Scott Dixon**

**Pato O'Ward**

**Conor Daly**

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: Scott Dixon does join us. Driver of the No. 9 PNC Chip Ganassi Racing Honda. Second quick overall with just roughly ten minutes or so remaining in the practice session. 2008 winner of the Indianapolis 500 resented by Gainbridge. A good day for you, Scott? How would you describe it?

SCOTT DIXON: Yeah, it was decent. There was a lot more teams doing qual sims, which was interesting. That was similar to last year. We had some teams even yesterday doing that. We won't switch over until tonight.

Then we feel like it's just such a big difference from the boost levels that you don't get to feel too much. It's actually been kind of nice because we can kind of watch and record and see what's happening deployment-wise, which is nice. So, yeah, see what happens tomorrow.

THE MODERATOR: You did do the high boost up at the open test, so it's not a complete unknown heading into tomorrow, right?

SCOTT DIXON: Yeah, I think all three runs of ours that we did, we had to waive off. I think it was similar with the 10. I think the 8 was the only one that actually finished a full lap, and I think he might have been the quickest on the full-lap average from the test. That was good to see.

It was nice I think to have that addition. Honestly the two-hour practice when you had all 33 or 4 cars trying to do that same qualifying scenario is pretty tough. It was nice addition that they added that for the teams. Yeah, I guess we'll see what tomorrow brings.

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

**Q. You already had one engine change. Do you have any idea why?**

SCOTT DIXON: Yeah, I know why.

**Q. Are you just not going to tell us?**

SCOTT DIXON: I don't know if it's for me to tell. We'll do another one tonight as well.

**Q. I knew the second one was coming.**

SCOTT DIXON: Yeah.

**Q. Put you in a hole in Detroit?**

SCOTT DIXON: Yeah, already on engine number five, so it's a pretty good going. Five races, five engines.

**Q. Second question: Might have been Rossi who said the three fastest cars -- he thinks the favorites for the pole are the 2, the 9, and the 10. Would you agree?**

SCOTT DIXON: Oh, I don't know. We really haven't done any kind of qual stuff. I think our car has been pretty good in race running. A lot of things changed, so I don't know.

I will say that definitely the Penske cars look strong. There's no doubt about that. They definitely are running some big laps. I don't know. There can always be a weird twist I think that kind of comes, so I would hope that that's true, but you know, right at the minute I don't know.

**Q. You said you haven't worked on qualifying much these last three days, but your race car, where do you feel like -- is it moving in the right direction? Are you happy with where things are with three days heading into Fast Friday?**

SCOTT DIXON: I would say we did one long run at the end with a pretty big change that we haven't -- well, I've never done here. That wasn't great, but it was good to kind of learn from it.

I would say the long run that we had done earlier in the day was actually -- I was really happy with the car. The car was solid, pulled up really well. We could sit really close. We could make passes. Yeah, that was definitely the best

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I've felt for a while actually, so that was good.

**Q. Then following up on Jenna's first question there about your engine change, I talked to Taylor Kiel earlier this afternoon. He said you guys noticed something Wednesday night and could have had the choice to either not make the change last night or this morning and basically skipped today to only be going into engine number four tomorrow, but it was really important for you guys to take the whole day, and you guys obviously logged more than 90 laps. I know engine change penalties are probably something you were going to face regardless, but why was it important to make sure you guys got everything out today even if it might incur you some more difficulties down the road?**

SCOTT DIXON: I don't know. Probably Chip I think has said a few times, You think you're so good, you don't have to practice. I didn't want him to say that.

It wasn't a case obviously for us. It was more of a sequence of changes that we were trying to forecast for, but this is the biggest race of the year. Long story short, we wanted to make sure that we could bank some laps. I'm glad we did. We learned some pretty good things today. So, yeah, that was good. We didn't want it to bite us later with not getting out there.

**Q. What would it mean to you to tie Rick Mears because that guy is held in a very high regard around here?**

SCOTT DIXON: Immediate answer to that would it would be better to tie him in careers with four wins, post six poles. Obviously that's the name of the game for this week, and definitely there's two races for the 500 for us to pole. If we're in a position like that, that would be great.

We'll have to see what the next couple of days bring. I think conditions are going to be pretty interesting. I think with the hybrid there's probably adding more chance of making bad mistakes and things like that. We could see some pretty great runs and some pretty bad runs as well.

No, it would mean a lot. It would be huge if we could.

**Q. Mike Hall told me on pit lane about 30 minutes ago, he said, Greed is the enemy on pole day. What exactly does he mean by that? He was saying that you know the difference between being greedy and giving it all that you can give it.**

SCOTT DIXON: I think greedy is a bit of a problem for this place in general. I think it's easy to be greedy. You can

get in kind of scenarios where everything is going well, and you can kind of try to go for a bit more.

I've done it many times in my career. Even one of my first Indy Lights tests, five minutes before 5:00 trying to go out there and throw down and end up destroying a car. It can put you in a hole. You have to be very careful in just the things that you pick and choose.

Yeah, it's true. That's true. You don't want to be greedy.

**Q. Back in the open test in April when you all had the added boost doing some running out there, with tomorrow the added boost coming in, was there any data from April that is still applicable, or was the weather so different that not much is applicable?**

SCOTT DIXON: I think any time you run there's things that you learn. I know we were pretty aggressive on car setup at that test. I think that changed direction for us maybe coming into here. So you definitely learned a lot.

Cars were trying different things performance-wise. We'll have to, I guess, kind of re-evaluate tomorrow. The conditions look pretty tricky, especially with the wind gusts. I think having a pretty clean run is going to account for a lot. You are always learning.

**Q. Were you running your superspeedway car or some other random car instead of keeping that later?**

SCOTT DIXON: Yeah, these cars really only run here. Yeah, I think it was a road course car that we were running, which I think is true. Maybe with the exception of maybe Helio and Sato and people like that where it's a one-off.

**Q. You spent some time recently at Riley Hospital. Some of those children will go home, and that's a wonderful thing, but some are facing bigger challenges. As a parent, can you share your reflections about that a little bit?**

SCOTT DIXON: It's great that the speedway has community outreach programs like that. It's big. I get to do not similar to that, but PNC has a great program and younger education and reading and the importance on it.

Yeah, it feels really nice. Obviously last night they've got greater difficulties than all of us have witnessed, so it's definitely a hard way to start life, but it was fun, you know, just to hang out and hopefully get some smiles.

There were definitely some kids that you make cry, I think, when they see you. It was definitely a highlight to see



Sting Ray turn up in his race suit. That was pretty cool.

No, it was a fun event, and I think a lot of the times it would be nice if we could have the schedules to do more of that.

**Q. Scott, how are the tires towards the end of the longer stint that you did? Logic would dictate if you add the weight of the hybrid to the car, then the tires are going to degrade more. Have you noticed much difference this year compared to last year, or is it quite similar?**

SCOTT DIXON: No, I think definitely been more difficult. I think we've seen -- it's kind of hard to tell because a lot of even the full-tank runs or supposed full-tank runs that some we've seen been doing have only been doing a maximum of eight to 15 laps.

I think the last six or seven laps of a stint are going to be kind of defining depending on wind conditions. I think it's a hot race day right now. Conditions look like they're going to be pretty favorable, but it could be a defining moment for sure. Especially if the balance kind of changes quite quickly.

You could even see it out there. You can see cars that are pretty comfortable kind of for the first eight to ten laps and then start to fall off. We're adding, what, 100, 120 pounds from last year. With the corners in the G-load, it's 3 or 4X. It's a pretty big addition to the car. It definitely won't make it easier.

I think even on the qual sim for the full-lap average the degradation can be pretty high if you get pretty greedy on trim levels. I think we'll even see that play out in qualifying as well.

THE MODERATOR: Thanks for coming up, Scott.

Pato O'Ward joins us, driver of the No. 5 Arrow McLaren Chevrolet. Fourth quick overall. Best finish of a couple of years. 2022, 2024 as well. You feel pretty good heading into past Fast Friday tomorrow? Your thoughts?

PATO O'WARD: They're two different beasts you're trying to make go fast, to be fairly honest with you. Just because they have traffic car, doesn't mean you're going to have a good qualifying car and vice versa.

So I have done no qualifying stuff, yeah. It changes a lot with the boost, so it could feel good today like trimming-wise, but then tomorrow you put the boost on, and you are, like, What the hell happened to the car?

We had a read at the test. I was somewhat happy with it.

Tomorrow we'll see what we've got once the boosts come up.

In traffic I think we've gotten better, but there's still a handful of other cars that I believe are a lot stronger than we are. Still work to do.

THE MODERATOR: Checkered flag is out. Wrapping up the session. It looked like a number of teams are trying qual sims out there. Were you surprised by that today?

PATO O'WARD: I mean, I'm not surprised, but also, I don't know how much everyone will be able to read into what today was for them because, like I said, the boosts really change how the car behaves a lot.

It can be as big as, like, I'm loose now, but with the biggest boost, you're destroying right front, and now you have to understeer. The wall is approaching a lot faster, so yeah.

THE MODERATOR: We will open it up to questions.

**Q. If you are happy with your car now and it does not react well to the boost, are you then extremely worried, or are you like, Okay, we may not qualify as well, but I feel good for what I have for the following week?**

PATO O'WARD: I mean, you try and qualify as far up as you can. For some reason I've never had I would say the speed or my car has never really had the speed in qualifying, to be honest, for the front row. I would love to be able to challenge for the front row. I think that's a really neat experience. I've always been in the neighborhood of sixth, eighth, tenth, ninth.

We usually race really well. So, yeah, I mean, I'm not so worried about it until we really see what we've got just because we really don't know how it's going to go tomorrow. It's never right to panic even if you might not have the speed the other cars do.

Sometimes it's just unexplainable, and I've had to deal with it every single year of qualifying here because all my teammates' cars have always been quicker than mine. I always know that I race really well, and putting the car in a decent place in qualifying gives you that opportunity to drive forward.

It's important to qualify well. It's a cool experience, but also, it's not the end of the world.

**Q. How do you show up at a place that's broken your heart and has so much emotion around it and some of you want so bad, but then avoid letting that get into your head or letting the pressure build or letting how**

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**badly you want it affect what you are doing on the track?**

PATO O'WARD: I treat it as a new thing every time I come back. You can't plan just like you can never plan a start. You can never plan an Indy 500. You depend on other people's decisions and mistakes as well, so that plays a lot into how your race is going to go, to be honest.

I just really enjoy it. Obviously as the race starts falling and you see where you are at and stuff, that's where it can get a little bit more interesting or intense, but all my Indy 500s, they've all been different.

I would say the one last year would be the last one that I would have expected to be fighting, but somehow managed a way to get the car there. It's a really long race. A lot of things can happen, but yeah, I'm focused on what we can do to put ourselves into a position to win, and the strive is obviously to get that right. We have a pretty good track record here in the past.

**Q. Nolan obviously had an unfortunate mishap last year, but sometimes the most trying times will cause the most growth. In what specific ways have you seen Nolan grow over the past year, not only as a driver, but as a young man?**

PATO O'WARD: I mean, I think it's safe to say that I went through the same thing. In 2019 I got bumped. Well, the whole team that I was in kind of got bumped.

To be honest I actually told him after he got bumped, and I said, You're lucky that you actually got bumped because it's miserable to drive out here with a car that sucks. I would much rather not be in the race and not race with a car that's just horrendous rather than having to do the 200 laps with a car that just is fricking miserable.

The speeds are so high, and it's not enjoyable when it's really there, and I feel like that's what Nolan's position was last year. The car obviously didn't seem strong, but I think this year he's with a team that obviously gives him a lot more tools to showcase what he's got in a superspeedway. He's obviously in good hands in that regard.

I still tell him, You look like you're 12, but he's a good kid.

**Q. Pato, you've said several times you just don't know what to expect out of tomorrow. Yet, some of the Andretti guys feel very, very confident that they are the favorites for the pole.**

PATO O'WARD: They look confident for sure. Oh, yeah.

**Q. That's the question. They look good?**

PATO O'WARD: Yeah, I think they look very strong both speed-wise and traffic running. I would say at least two in their camp are super strong. Yeah, I would say Kirkwood, Herta. Don't count the Penskes. They're going to have rockets just like they did last year.

For us, I don't know. I don't want to assume before we really see what to expect, but Ganassi seems to have taken a step forward as well just from kind of playing around with them in traffic. Yeah, the speed feels a little bit like '22, to be honest, us against Ganassi. It's hard to say right now.

You don't know who is hiding what or are both manufacturers showing everything? Not sure, but they do look very strong, I would say.

**Q. Does it make a difference that Honda will do its engine changes tonight and Chevrolet will wait until post-qualifying?**

PATO O'WARD: I did hear about that, but I have no idea why each one kind of prefers to do it that way. I'm assuming we're doing the best decision for our camp. That's probably what's best for their camp. Why? No idea, but they seem to have brought a very strong package, I would say.

I'm confident that our Chevy power is going to be pulling us forward.

**Q. Pato, I have a personal question for you. Regardless what happened in the race, where you finished, if you win, I hope you do, you seem to be very ultra popular already here in Indianapolis. You are on the front cover of the "Indianapolis Monthly Magazine?"**

PATO O'WARD: Did you like the pictures? They make me look way too good (laughing).

**Q. Then also I'm in the Krieger's Supermarket, your picture is hanging from the wall.**

PATO O'WARD: My cardboard Patos, yeah.

**Q. Do you have an explanation why you have been so popular here in Indianapolis?**

PATO O'WARD: Do I see it?

**Q. Yeah.**



PATO O'WARD: I keep getting tagged people wanting to steal my cardboard Patos, but it's grown a lot really. Last year's Indy 500 was a big step in that, I would say. I definitely felt the difference. It's amazing to see. It's great to see.

It's always a great feeling seeing your shirts walking around and people smiling to support you. It's got to be a sold-out event, isn't it? Pretty much. It's going to be.

THE MODERATOR: If you want a grandstand ticket, good luck. Buy it quick.

PATO O'WARD: I bought 300 to give away, bro.

THE MODERATOR: Nice.

PATO O'WARD: People don't have to pay for it. I give away for free, 300. I'm so generous. No, anybody that buys stuff in Pato Shop gets free tickets. Buy a shirt, buy whatever. Make sure it adds up to more than \$100, and you're getting a ticket.

I think it's great. It's just such a phenomenal event, and I have my own suite for the first time here at the Indy 500. I'm super stoked about that one. Definitely haven't sold out in that one, but it's okay.

**Q. (Off microphone)**

PATO O'WARD: No cousins are coming this year. Can you imagine? One guy is getting married, and the other one is, like, No, sorry, I can't. Apparently they're all on unavailable for me now, so...

THE MODERATOR: This will be the year you win when they aren't here, right?

PATO O'WARD: I'll send them a selfie when I'm pouring myself with milk (laughing).

**Q. When you see where you are now and what you had to endure in 2019, does that almost seem like a nightmare, or are you where you are now because you survived 2019?**

PATO O'WARD: No, I mean, I didn't make the race in 2019 because the car sucked.

**Q. Also, there was the uncertainty with the team. You were going to be --**

PATO O'WARD: Yeah, that was a blessing in disguise to GTFO out of there. That ultimately ended up being a blessing in disguise.

I love the position I'm in right now. I love the people that I get to work with day in, day out. Yeah, I mean, I'm a believer that things do happen for a reason. I don't think timing is always -- timing doesn't always seem like it's on your side, but then when you look back, sometimes you're, like, Huh, well, that worked out a lot better than I thought.

Yeah, I guess it's just part of the journey, man. It's such a high and low. It's just you got to ride with it. You got to ride with it. You got to just flow and, you know, make the best decision that you think you are doing at that time. Those will lead you to success.

THE MODERATOR: Funny how things work out sometimes, right?

PATO O'WARD: I guess (laughing).

THE MODERATOR: Thanks for coming up. Good luck tomorrow.

Conor Daly joins us, driver of the No. 76 Juncos Hollinger Racing Chevrolet. Third quick overall. Seventh on no tow in the 77 laps turned today, qualifying this weekend for your 12th Indianapolis 500. Things are looking pretty good here, no?

CONOR DALY: Yeah. I don't want to get too overly excited about things. These last two days have honestly been two of the most fun days I've had here. I don't know why. I mean, these guys have obviously given me a great car, and that really makes the driver's job a lot easier, and it's just got a lot of raw speed.

That's also thanks to Chevrolet. I think Chevrolet has done an amazing job for us. Yeah, it's been fun. I feel like we're quite competitive in traffic. Then our first qualifying run was seventh of the no tow, so I feel pretty decent about that. We haven't even trimmed as much as the Penske cars.

I don't know. We're just going to keep our expectations in check. We're going to keep our belts tightened a little bit and see what happens.

THE MODERATOR: Did you go through more than one qual run today?

CONOR DALY: We tried. Yeah, we ran into some stuff at the end, but we sorted that out just with kind of like a safety lap at the end just to make sure we had everything taken care of.

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



**Q. Conor, when you sat down, Dave said, third fastest today. How good does that make you feel coming down here after having what you've had in the past before coming here?**

CONOR DALY: I mean, people seem to -- if I end up close to the front here, it's like, Nice tow lap. Guess what Josef and Scott are doing every day. They are timing these huge tow laps to get these huge media runs. I don't want to be given any crap about it because those guys are doing way more than we are. I was lifting on my lap. We're in traffic.

It's just luck of the draw a lot of the times when you get a good lap here, but we've been two days in a row here now up at the sharper end of the grid. That's not a mistake. I've been here enough years to know that if it's much easier to just pop up there, then you're probably in a good car, and when you are up with the Ganassis and Penskes, that's not a bad thing.

I feel really good. This isn't anything like, Oh, we got lucky. We've had speed all day long and the last two days, so it feels good. It's just something that, again, measure everything to the smallest degree. Just execute tomorrow. Don't get too frustrated with anything because obviously you're going to have tough days here too.

Tomorrow Fast Friday is a tough one because you're adding boost. It's probably going to be windy. I think realistically we have got good speed in the car, and it's been awesome to drive in traffic.

**Q. Growing up in Indiana, obviously this race meant a lot to you. There's also additional specialness with the Pacers doing well. How much more fun is it coming here in the month of May knowing that they're doing well, everyone is in such a better mood, does it affect the team at all or you or anybody else?**

CONOR DALY: It's just cool. I love the Pacers, so let's keep winning. That's all. It's the greatest month of the year, and there's so much excitement around this event. I think this year more than ever. Yeah, it feels awesome just all across the board.

**Q. As the Indiana guy and as someone who has had this up and down career, to be where you are after three days here and to know that you're probably in good shape this weekend, just emotionally how does that make you feel?**

CONOR DALY: Well, I mean, qualifying here I'm always pretty honest with everyone. I've struggled here in qualifying, without a doubt. The Andretti car that I drove

here was actually the most -- that was the best qualifying that I've had. I was comfortable, but we had a good draw too, you know what I mean? A lot of it's about the draw.

It would be awesome to have like my best qualifying. I would love to make the Fast 12. That would be awesome. That's goodbye to be super dependent on the draw and the weather and stuff like that.

But this car kind of gives me a little bit of a feeling that I had in 2021, which was the best car that I've ever had here for sure. Again, it's a big statement to say. That was definitely one of our strongest races, but it kind of -- I get that feeling that I'm, like, Man this thing sucks up really well in the tow and the draft, and it's just got the ability to race well.

Again, the race is the most important part. Josef Newgarden started 21st when he won. I'm not too upset about where we start. It's just nice to have that confidence, I would say. These guys have done a great job preparing.

This team has done a fantastic job, just all the meticulous detail. We've had a lot of small things go wrong so far this year. Just tiny little things here and there. When it comes to the speedway car, they've done a great job executing and bringing a fast machine.

THE MODERATOR: Who is going to draw for you?

CONOR DALY: I think Ricardo's daughter.

THE MODERATOR: That's cool.

CONOR DALY: I'm certainly not drawing. No one is going to draw well that way.

**Q. Josef is very much embracing going for three in a row, right?**

CONOR DALY: Heck yeah, I would do.

**Q. Why is that? I mean, this place, it's so hard to win. We see over and over again, but he's not running from it. He's not being, like, I don't know, anything can happen. He's, like, I'm going to go take this and win three in a row, you know?**

CONOR DALY: When we know what we know and we see what we see and how fast those cars are and how well those cars can just go fast, I would be confident too. I mean, those guys are -- like, the Penske cars are without a doubt the most impressive cars when it comes to a speed performance platform.



I would be confident too. They've obviously won two in a row for a reason, and they got all the special information from Michael Cannon too, so then they got a little bit quicker. I was predicting a Penske front row lockout again.

I don't know. Kyle Kirkwood looks fast, though. I think Kyle Kirkwood might fight him a little bit. Maybe I would like to as well.

Josef is so good here. He knows exactly what he wants. His engineer, Luke, is an awesome dude and obviously really smart too because I know he's very smart. I enjoyed working with him. He's got the whole package.

Josef knows exactly what he wants. He's a great champion, and he's very smart. Yeah, can't fault him for being confident.

**Q. I'm doing a story on Buxton. I know you guys go back a long ways. What do you think he's brought to INDYCAR in terms of helping gain attention for the series or bridging that gap between F1 fans and you guys?**

CONOR DALY: I think what's interesting is Will has such a great respect for this series, and he did forever. He was commentating when I was racing in GP3. When I did the 500 for the first time, I was racing in GP3 full-time. He immediately was following it and already knew so much about it. Loved coming to America, going to INDYCAR races.

I think the interesting part about the Formula 1 world is I think a lot more of the people in the paddock and the drivers maybe behind the scenes have a lot more respect for what we're doing over here than maybe the public acknowledges or the fan base, F1 Twitter accepts.

I was trying to get Daniel Ricciardo here next weekend, but I think he's just enjoying life away from the world right now. Those guys I think have more of a respect for I think what we're doing than maybe the fan base might, and Will is exemplifies that. He has so much love for this series. The guy is full of energy, and I think he's a great addition for us here in Fox. I think it's awesome.

**Q. One of the questions that was asked to the previous drivers was were they surprised that some teams were racing -- were practicing qualification setups. You mentioned that you were earlier. What made your team decide to do that today to get ready?**

CONOR DALY: I think at least in my history here there's always a few runs at the end of Thursday just to kind of get a feel for low downforce for tomorrow.

Yeah, I can't remember a year where I haven't done a couple of qualifying runs just before Fast Friday. It's just to get yourself ready, get yourself mentally prepared.

I mean, we were really happy with the race car as well, so yeah, I think it's important to at least get a couple of runs and to know where you're at. Just a quick read on, Hey, are we really struggling, or are we actually not in a bad spot?

**Q. You never competed here for the pole under the old format that Rick Mears and those guys used to do where they had to get it right on one attempt if they were going to win the pole. Is the low draw more important now, or was it more important then?**

CONOR DALY: I obviously don't know what it was like back then because I didn't really get to experience it.

**Q. Once you qualified, the only way you would have to pull the time, and basically that car was done.**

CONOR DALY: I mean, I remember seeing last year a car that was in the first three runs never had to run the rest of the day. I think it was Kyffin Simpson ran really early and just literally never ran again the rest of the day. I think the early draw is for sure very important.

With the way the tires are going to deg I think with the heavier car, I think that's going to be more important. And it depends on the wind. It depends on the sun and the air and the humidity.

Yeah, it will be interesting, but I would love -- we're all crossing our fingers for that early draw.

**Q. Would you have liked to have tried that old format?**

CONOR DALY: I don't even know honestly.

**Q. It was one attempt.**

CONOR DALY: I'll race any time, anywhere, any era. Why not?

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