

# NTT INDYCAR SERIES

## News Conference

Thursday, May 22, 2025

**Pato O'Ward**

**Takuma Sato**

**Robert Shwartzman**

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: Robert, what has the last several days been like for you?

ROBERT SHWARTZMAN: Very busy. Yeah, it's good to be that busy, let's say I'm very happy. Actually, I'm extremely happy. It's still quite an unbelievable thing that happened on Sunday.

Like the guys said, we're all trying to now focus on the race and try to get our best from the car to have the most comfortable environment starting the race.

It's 200 laps. Probably the conditions are going to be changing a bit. From what I've seen, I've never raced on the oval, but you can get a bit of traffic. We'll try to find a good way for having a good car for all of these conditions.

We need to use wisely this Carb Day. I like the name of it, it's actually fun day. I come from karting. We used to have a lot of playing with carburetors. Carb Day is quite cool.

We'll see how we're going to go on Sunday. We'll have two guys quite experienced, one guy that won twice, one guy that really wants to win. Big hunger. Twice super close to winning it. For sure it's going to be a big challenge for me, but at the same time I want to learn, I want to experience, I want things going smooth.

I try to be calm throughout all the race. From what we've seen, the race is decided on the last lap. Just hopefully be there at the top battling with the guys for the win.

THE MODERATOR: No better way to start your first 500.

ROBERT SHWARTZMAN: Big responsibility. You see 350,000 people, it's quite impressive. We come here to race and win and do our best. Whenever there is a green flag, it's just full focus on the front.

THE MODERATOR: Questions.

**Q. Robert, you knew when you won the Indianapolis 500 pole it was a huge accomplishment. After what you've been through the last couple days, has it been jaw-dropping the experience, the notoriety that has come with it?**

THE MODERATOR: We'll continue on, row 1. Starting third on Sunday, two-time runner-up, seven-time race winner in the NTT INDYCAR SERIES, Pato O'Ward.

Starting second, two-time winner in the race, back for his 16th Indianapolis 500, Takuma Sato.

On pole for Sunday's race, first rookie to win pole position since Teo Fabi back in 1983 for a team that was founded in 1983, driving the No. 83, Robert Shwartzman.

Pato, I'm sure you're champing at the bit, ready to get going tomorrow. What do you hope to learn?

PATO O'WARD: Yeah, obviously two more hours to get the car into a nice window, best window that you can go into the race.

Yeah, just looking forward to seeing everybody back at the Speedway. It's going to be a sold-out event, nuts. The vibes are going to be cool. Yeah, just really ready to just be done and dusted with this. It's been a long month (smiling).

It's been a smooth one so far.

THE MODERATOR: Sato, a lot of good chances here. How is this one?

TAKUMA SATO: Echoing what Pato said, obviously we all look forward to see the energy of all the fans come in. Most importantly you need to be confident. To do that, you need will in Carb Day. Tomorrow is our last chance to see the car setup, see how it's going to work.

After the qualify, we were satisfied with our performance very well. In race car situation, I think we were still halfway. So hopefully we can sort it out before Sunday.



ROBERT SHWARTZMAN: Well, I mean, I don't even know how to answer that question.

It obviously feels amazing. I've never felt such a great qualifying in my entire career. I come from Europe. Normally qualifying, it's important, but it's never something that stands out so much. The next day you go race. Here it seems like it's a different event. The whole race separates in two phases. There is one that is qualifying, another one is the race.

It's unique. It's the only where I've seen that so far. It's just awesome. Honestly the whole vibe and fans that come here to watch qualifying, support drivers, support us, it's just awesome, honestly.

Obviously I was very happy and tired at the same time doing so many interviews, having so many questions. I will still probably do quite a bit. But yeah, this is part of the job and I'm looking forward for it.

**Q. Pato, we know how bad you want to win the Indianapolis 500. This year you've displayed a lot of inner peace and confidence. Do you feel a lot more confident here than in the past?**

PATO O'WARD: I mean, I'm just calm. It's such a long race, man. It's like three hours long or something. You got to be there in the end just to even have a shot.

That's pretty much how I approach it all the time. You have to be there in the last stint. When you get to the last stint, you got to be there five laps to go, four laps to go. It can end in a split of a second. But it also can turn around quite quickly and you can have a shot.

Every 500 is different. Taku has done more than me, but I think he can agree none of them are the same. Knowledge is priceless. If you're obviously in a similar situation to the past, you can pick and choose what you're going to do.

They're all different, man. This year with the hybrid, the cars have been so on the edge. Some guys are driving insane in practice. I mean, last year in the race I was shocked with how some guys were driving in lap 15.

Yeah, I think it's safe to say you never know what to expect. Just be ready for anything.

**Q. Pato, with what's come out over the last 48 hours about Newgarden's car from a year ago, do you wonder whether he could have passed you, whether it made a difference in passing you on the last lap?**

PATO O'WARD: You know what, whatever it was, I would have never wanted to win an Indy 500 a year later just because one car got caught being illegal, whatever. I truly believe Josef won that race. He timed it better than I did. I want to be able to experience what any Indy 500 winner gets to experience, the whole schnaz, the energy. That's ultimately what makes the experience to the next level, just being an Indy 500 winner.

I know how to position myself to be in a chance to win. I believe I have the team behind me able to do that.

Starting on the front row, best starting position I've ever had, we'll see what we can do on Sunday.

**Q. Robert, have you heard from any recording studios?**

PATO O'WARD: I saw TikTok.

ROBERT SHWARTZMAN: It just doesn't leave me now. (Smiling). Not yet. Trying to focus on Indy 500. I hope eventually at some point some cool studio or Colares is going to contact me. Maybe I'll get a couple of guys as well on the beat.

I heard Colton is good on drums or something.

PATO O'WARD: Will Power also.

ROBERT SHWARTZMAN: Probably will take couple of guys with me to the studio to do an Indy 500 song or something like that.

**Q. Have you noticed any additional views, bump in any of your socials?**

ROBERT SHWARTZMAN: Quite a bit, yeah. For sure. I mean, it's such a big event here. I've had a lot of -- I was coming from Europe, so like 90% of my following are people who were following me from Italy, Ferrari, or Europe because that's where I was performing, showing myself.

When I come here in the U.S., especially in the beginning, not many people knew who I was or my story. Step by step I was trying to get them to know me a bit. Especially that's the whole qualifying thing, it was just a big hit for everybody. Who is this guy? Out of nowhere I just pop up. This is interesting.

For sure there was a good, let's say, amount of people that started to know me. I'm happy about that. I always wanted to have an American fan base, as well. If you see Pato or Takuma, they have a lot of people that follow them, support them. They've raced here. It was also for me to become

at their level, but also to represent my country, battle with them and have a lot of fun here in the U.S.

**Q. Robert, after winning the pole, you didn't get out of here till very late at night. Were you surprised at how much you had to do after all of that, the last couple days?**

ROBERT SHWARTZMAN: Yeah, initially before qualifying I thought we'll finish it on Sunday, then we're going to have a couple of days of chilling, relaxing, then focusing on the race. All of a sudden I take pole position. The moment I jump out of the car, they stick the camera right in front of my face and say, Let's go. I couldn't even see my team. It was just so fast. They brought me in here. There was interview after interview. It was just crazy.

I finish at 11:00, arrive at home at 12:00. The next morning I had to wake up at 6:00 because at 7:00 I had already another interview. And from then on it just started again.

So this amount, a lot of, let's say, talking and interviews and podcasts and videos and stuff, I've never experienced in my life, in my career, that amount. In F1 they hit quite a bit, but it was way shorter. It was not as big as you guys have it here.

**Q. Going into your first 500, you have a lot of veterans that are around the paddock that you can talk to. What has been the best piece of advice you've been given and who gave you that advice?**

ROBERT SHWARTZMAN: There is quite a few drivers that have talked to me, just generally tried to sort of give an advice.

I wasn't there in the garage, but at some point Will Power showed up to the garage and spoke with my engineer because my engineer worked in Penske before. He sort of give him probably more of an advice that it's getting quite cool in the qualifying top six, so get ready to have a different car balance. It's going to be more grip. It was a good thing for us to also have a bit of info from his side.

There was Scott McLaughlin, who was also giving some tips and tricks what he have done in the past. There was a lot of drivers that give their support. It's another thing that is quite impressive here.

When I was in Europe, it seemed that all of the drivers were just against each other. There was nobody talking, nobody helping. There was so much tension between drivers. I understand why. When you're going to Formula 3, Formula 2, you want to stand out to get the chance in Formula 1. You need to show yourself as something

special. Therefore the mentality of drivers were different.

Here it seems that everybody is way more supportive. It's may more enjoyable. It's a competition, but at the same time it's way more respectful, let's say. I really like it.

**Q. How was it milking that cow?**

PATO O'WARD: I'm jealous. I wanted to do that. I've never milked a cow.

ROBERT SHWARTZMAN: That's maybe what you need to have a proper good luck for winning the Indy 500. The woman, she came to me and said, The people who didn't milk the cow, they never won Indy 500, and they were like DNF. It's a bad luck. Whoever milk the cow. Alexander Rossi did it. He won the 500. You have to milk the cow.

PATO O'WARD: I'm going find a cow, and I'm going to milk it tonight.

TAKUMA SATO: I didn't do that. There are some other ways you can get away with that (smiling).

ROBERT SHWARTZMAN: You can always ask for milking a cow. Maybe next year ask for it.

PATO O'WARD: Get my own cow.

ROBERT SHWARTZMAN: The cow name was Indy. I got to meet her. She was very calm and cute. First you need to pet her a bit, get comfy with her.

PATO O'WARD: Are they always ready to just...

ROBERT SHWARTZMAN: That went a bit sideways (laughter).

As I said, try next year. Whenever I came to her, she was ready. She explain to me the technique. It was working well.

Again, I don't know. I don't know how it works there. But it was a lot of fun. It was good. It was good.

PATO O'WARD: Did you try it?

ROBERT SHWARTZMAN: The milk? No, I didn't try it, man.

TAKUMA SATO: Just don't drink (smiling).

ROBERT SHWARTZMAN: I imagine Pato underneath the cow like this (laughter).

**Q. Takuma, last year the commentary within your team was that your motor was freakishly fast. Any talk about what success?**

PATO O'WARD: The motor is between his legs, mate. That's where it is (smiling).

TAKUMA SATO: No, seriously, HRC Honda did what an amazing job to come back in very strong this year after two years of clearly see the competitor was better.

Anyway, longer to make it short. Actually after the race we went to all the numbers together, and I was fourth strongest engine amongst my teammates. So it really didn't do anything, to be honest.

Also, you know better than me all the engine has to go through the INDYCAR, and everything goes to the lottery. Everything you can have a choice even if you want it.

I think longer to make it short, all the competitors are about special engine. They don't to that. Chevrolet and Honda is very fair. Tolerance within a few percent. May be a little bit different, but...

I'm very happy to what we have in terms of environment. As I said, HRC did an amazing job. Really proud putting them on the front row.

**Q. Takuma, as one of the older guys in the field, how have you over time changed as a driver? How are you different than when you started?**

TAKUMA SATO: It's a tough to say. I simply enjoy it. I simply appreciate it. Every time you come back here, I think Robert obviously going through amazing experience over the course of the last few weeks in particularly. But he will feel it next year come back. You will appreciate even more. Regardless where you are, who you are, what results you have achieved, but come back here once you experience on the Sunday of over 300,000 people, just magnitude, impact, you have something done nothing like in the before.

That's experience, you then motivated, I want to challenge it again, I want to challenge it again.

In my case, I been over 25 or 27 years in my professional race career. Those experience help me to jump into the car after the months absent. I think age at this point doesn't seems to be stop me go fast. You could say Helio is one hell of a driver, of course. Still keep winning. Hopefully one of us can stop.

I think all competitors, so many younger, new generation

drivers, make sure with myself, Helio, Dixie, some of the experienced and old-ish driver, we can still make sure are we racing. I think that's the name of the sport. Hopefully we all have our great fun.

THE MODERATOR: Have a great day tomorrow. Good luck on Sunday.

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