

NTT INDYCAR SERIES

News Conference

Thursday, May 22, 2025

Santino Ferrucci

Devlin DeFrancesco

Graham Rahal

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: Starting on the inside of row 10, Graham Rahal is here.

Starting 16th on the inside of row 6, third appearance in the race, Devlin DeFrancesco.

Starting 15th on the outside of row 5, he's led a lap in all but one of his starts, Santino Ferrucci.

Graham, how was the golf tournament? Not the most ideal weather conditions.

GRAHAM RAHAL: It was cold, man. I was freezing. I didn't have a pair of pants in the bus this morning. I was in shorts.

But always a great turnout. Sold-out group. Got this guy in for our 37th team. No, I mean, can't thank everybody enough in the paddock for their support. A lot of guys that give us support, gear, signed stuff. Makes a ton of money for us on our auction.

THE MODERATOR: For those that don't know...

GRAHAM RAHAL: Our golf tournament is always Thursday before the 500. The money gets split up between Colorado State One Cure, which is doing wonders in comparative oncology. The money that we donate specifically goes to the Losartan trial, which is a bone cancer trial, the first-ever clinical trial of a treatment found in dogs on humans. The Losartan trial is specifically for kids with bone cancer. It's been incredibly powerful. Really successful. Hopefully this year we're going to add our third and fourth children's hospitals to the Losartan trials. Hopefully that will continue to increase and get better. Then 50% goes to our Turns for Troops initiative with United Rentals, getting veterans back on their feet, helping with PTSD treatment with VR technology.

I can go on longer. In a nutshell that's it.

THE MODERATOR: Dev, I'm sure you're looking forward to getting back in the car tomorrow. Your thoughts on that final practice.

DEVLIN DeFRANCESCO: We're ready. I think we've been strong all month in terms of race running and traffic running. The car has behaved very well. We seem to have a constant. We know what we've had since the open test. I think we'll just do a last few tweaks on it. I think we'll be ready to roll on Sunday.

THE MODERATOR: Santino, how would you describe your month or two weeks of May?

SANTINO FERRUCCI: I don't know if I want to summarize my month (smiling). It's been a lot. I really feel for my crew, who have probably split the car now eight times, which you're only really supposed to do three. I feel really bad for those guys. They've been working really hard to give me a really, really solid race car.

Monday practice was the first time we got to really be out there racing in the pack. I felt really competitive. Was able to pass a bunch of people, especially in the train. Couple small changes we want to do for Friday's practice. Hope that everything is the same once we put it back together for the weekend.

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

Q. Santino, INDYCAR season is finished after the European standard relatively early by the end of August. A couple of years ago you did some NASCAR stuff. Are you planning to do similar things the rest of the year to stay sharp?

SANTINO FERRUCCI: I'd like to. I don't have anything currently on my schedule. The only thing past INDYCAR that I have is the Chili Bowl, which I'll be back again for. As everybody knows, I love my dirt racing.

If I could figure something out over there once our season is over and my job is complete here at INDYCAR, then yeah, definitely.

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

Q. Graham, a lot of your charity stuff goes back to Paul Newman. Even before you had kids, does that hit harder now when you see them?

GRAHAM RAHAL: Yeah, I mean, it's totally different. I think the way that you relate is completely different once you've got kids of your own.

One of the young guys that we were trying to help and had been to the races a few times with us we lost I think two years ago. Poor guy was 11 years old. He fought cancer for I think eight or nine years of his 11 years of life. When you sit and experience that and see that stuff, it brings you right down to earth on all of those things. Once you have your own family, clearly, man.

It's the one thing I tell Court all the time, I don't have a lot of fears in life of things, but the one thing I'm fearful of is my kids' health. Nothing you can do at all in that situation. It changes your perspective on a lot. It's also been a lot of fun.

We had a young man who has been fighting bone cancer actually for years and years. Unfortunately it spread to his lungs. It looks, knock on wood, that they had some really good scan results this past month. But he came to Barber. He's come to the last five in a row. Good to see him each and every year, see how he's progressing, stay in touch with his family.

It's been fun. It's tough at times, no doubt. But there's a lot of positive reason for it, too.

Q. Santino, you're always up in the front of this race leading. How do you think the race is going to run with the hybrid, the conditions?

SANTINO FERRUCCI: I think conditions... Even having the hybrid in the car, it makes it a little bit more free on the entry, which is one thing. Everybody is kind of fighting the same things, free in, pushy off. At the end of the day, the biggest thing that affects our racing other than downforce is the tires. If the tires are wearing really good or wearing out too aggressively or not wearing at all, really have a big impact on our racing.

From what I can tell, it's going to be pretty decent. The weather is going to help us. When it gets really hot and you can't follow and you have as much downforce on as you possibly can. Gets cool like this, we can trim the cars out, not run wickers on the rear and get a lot closer. It'll also allow the track to run two lanes, which is nice. Two lanes at the start, not two lanes throughout.

I think it should be pretty good. If we get a nice 65-, 70-degree day, a little bit overcast, even for the fans that don't want to be sunburnt, it will probably be good for everybody.

GRAHAM RAHAL: I think he said it all. Last year the late race was awesome. It gave the track a little more life than we probably would have had. Cooler races always provide better racing, I think, generally. Tires last a little longer. The grip allows you to run a little closer. If you're bad, it's not going to mask that. It should be a really good show.

Obviously it's still a bit windy, gusty from what I see. That's the same for everybody. At least in race downforce, not qual. Hopefully put on a great show.

DEVLIN DeFRANCESCO: They summed it up perfectly. I think the hybrid brings an element into it of how you're re-gearing and deploying when you're in traffic. That is going to be something else to play with. Other than that, they summed it up perfectly.

Q. Santino, how do you think the personnel changes at Team Penske could impact the technical alliance that you have?

SANTINO FERRUCCI: To be honest with you, I don't know. I mean, like I said, I drive for AJ Foyt. For us, I mean, our focus is to win the 500. Nothing's changed for us. Seriously, nothing's changed under our roof.

Yeah, no, we still operate at two totally different teams in that respect. Like I said, it's a bummer to see that happen. I think those are all fantastic people that have worked really hard to get to where they are today. It's sad to see that happen in today's world of motorsports.

Yeah, no, that's all I got.

Q. Graham, you have a better race car than qualifying car. At RLL, where would you see the growth this year? Where do you assess the oval progress at RLL?

GRAHAM RAHAL: I think everybody was quite close. If you looked at Saturday, there were a lot of guys in a really small window. The high 230s, mid 230s on average to the mid 231s, seems like there were a lot of cars right in there. Almost seemed like from the pointy end of the grid to where I was basically. Quite close and competitive.

I think our cars have had really good speed. I've been struggling all month with handling and balance. I think Dev can tell you, I don't think there's one practice I've come back happy yet, including Monday. It's been a brutal month for me on my side of things.



That's okay. For the rest of the group, I think they're in a pretty good spot. I feel like from a team perspective we're leaps and bounds closer than we were in years past. There's a lot of reasons to be positive about that.

Q. Rookie on pole who has never been on pole in an INDYCAR race, let alone an oval. How do you navigate the start?

SANTINO FERRUCCI: Pretty cool. I'm not going to lie, it's pretty cool. You have a brand-new team, a driver that I've raced with growing up in Europe. So I've known him a long time. All in all, something of history. Cool to see. Not just as a competitor, but as a fan of this beautiful race.

Now, I think does he trust his spotters? I hope so. Next to him you have probably one of the most talented people around this place starting it off, too. Then Pato, as well, who has done amazing here.

I think, yeah, it's going to be entertaining.

DEVLIN DeFRANCESCO: I think it's good for the sport, right? It shakes things up. They've clearly done a very good job at getting that car in a good window for qualifying. I think it's going to shake things up at the start for sure. It will be an exciting race on Sunday.

Q. Dev, obviously this is your first Indy 500 back. How confident are you that you've regained your form from before the break? What does it mean to be racing at this level again?

DEVLIN DeFRANCESCO: It feels great. I think we're ready. We're ready for Sunday. We've had a strong car all month. I think we're going to have a good Sunday. It's generally great to be back.

Q. Last race was pretty good for you. Do you feel this is finally the momentum shift you have been looking for?

DEVLIN DeFRANCESCO: I think so. I think so. The name of the game for us has been execution. I think most races this year we've had really good speed. We just haven't quite closed it off yet. But what better place to start than the 500 come Sunday?

Q. How does the perfect Sunday look for you?

GRAHAM RAHAL: I think that's kind of an obvious statement that we want to finish up front, we want to win. Our team was 1 and 3 here a couple years back. It would be great as an organization to have all of our cars be at the

pointy end of the Friday at the finish.

Making sure we roll four good cars back into the trailer is a positive thing to cap that off, keep everybody safe.

I think we've got some good cars. Like I said, I've been struggling a little more than the others. I think Dev has a damn good, fast car for Sunday. So does Taku. Louis will do a great job. 500 miles is a long time around here. There's a lot that can happen. We can certainly go forward.

It's going to be a mix up, too. You have a split grid here. Penske cars at the back. They're going to be exceptionally fast. There's a lot of good race cars. I thought Harvey and Hunter-Reay looked really good on Monday. They start right with me.

It's going to be an interesting race to watch, for sure.

DEVLIN DeFRANCESCO: He summed it up perfectly. We have, as Graham said, strong cars. The perfect day for me would be finishing at the pointy end of the grid. From what I've felt this month, from what I've seen this month, we're 100% capable of that. A mixed grid. As Graham said, the Penske guys will be coming through. It going to be a 500-mile race. Making sure you execute cleanly. Regarding all that goes well, we'll have a really strong day.

Q. Santino, third year for you driving for AJ Foyt. Is there any extra pressure on you to perform well here?

SANTINO FERRUCCI: Yeah, I mean, A.J. has won it four. He won it once as a team owner as well. I would love to give him his sixth 500 win. Obviously it's been a few years since the team has won.

I brought them back a pole last year. I've come very close to winning this event in '23 with them. I feel really confident in our abilities this year. I think this is going to be one of better shots I've had at it, too. It's all about maximizing on race day.

Driving and spending time with A.J. in the pits is unbelievable. You can't even put into words what it's like to just sit in the garage with him, especially during one of the days like Monday to where you have a lot of time on your hands before you go out for two hours of practice. Him telling stories back in the day, talking about the car, explaining to him the feeling of what I have, what we were doing in engineering, hearing his opinions and thoughts.

It's almost crazy to think that someone, when A.J. drove, he only retired in the early '90s, that his car, what he would do with the setup, to what we're doing in engineering really



lines up pretty well. It's pretty spectacular.

It's just a joy to be around him, and try to cherish all those moments while I can.

THE MODERATOR: Do you have a favorite A.J. story?

SANTINO FERRUCCI: Not one that I'd like to share.

THE MODERATOR: We asked Malukas the same thing...

GRAHAM RAHAL: No stories (laughter).

SANTINO FERRUCCI: They're all in the book. If you want to hear about the stories, read the book. I'm telling you, read the book.

Q. Graham, you said you were struggling with balance and handling. Takuma was fast. Can you copy his setup?

GRAHAM RAHAL: No, because his race car is the same as me. His race car is not very good either right now. Yeah, not going to sugarcoat. His car is fast, but we got to make race cars good. I know Monday being around him and stuff, he has the same concerns I have.

Mine are maybe a little more severe. But my car has been kind of numb all month. Dev will tell you, I've tried so much this month on my car. I've been all over. I've never, ever, ever put this much into it. That's what's been frustrating about all of it. Normally people think the RLL cars come, they're not fast. It's got plenty of speed. That's not the issue.

We need to keep working on it. Taku and I, I know yesterday, our engineers were together, Eddie and Yves, Todd, meeting for a long time meeting about setups, looking back at previous setups that Taku and Indy have had here, which we study anyway. But looking for anything that may stand out that will help both of us.

I think he's really in the same boat as me. We've got to be a lot better. Clearly it's going to be easier to start on the front row than on the 10th. But again, as I said before, 500 miles is a long time. We've got to get our cars right to make sure we can stay there. If we do that, we'll be just fine.

Last year we have experience, sadly, starting towards the back, but some of my best races here ever were starting there, and some of my worst races were starting up front, row 2, row 4, those two didn't end well.

We'll see what Sunday brings. We'll see what tomorrow

brings, then Sunday.

Q. (No microphone.)

GRAHAM RAHAL: I don't know if we found a solution. I can tell you this, I've dedicated myself and my team and more time, energy and effort to this month of May than anything I've ever done. Every night I've gone back to the bus and been absolutely mentally exhausted from trying to look into this.

I was there 10:30 last night sitting at the kitchen table looking over data, looking at setup sheets from the last five years, looking at everything and anything I can to give Yves some ideas. We're all in the same boat. There's a lot of things to go through. I hope the decisions that we made will be beneficial tomorrow.

THE MODERATOR: Guys, have a great day tomorrow and even better day on Sunday.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports

