

NTT INDYCAR SERIES

News Conference

Saturday, July 12, 2025

Tony Kanaan

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: As promised, we have joined by Tony Kanaan, team principal of Arrow McLaren as the team celebrates their 26th win in the NTT INDYCAR Series. It was a pretty thrilling race, Tony. Your thoughts from the pit stand.

TONY KANAAN: You want to know? I'm not a very good spectator. It's nerve-racking, actually, checking on Nolan that was at the medical center at the time and red flag and so on. I did not watch the last three laps. So I could never blame my mother for some watching my races anymore. I texted her right after the race and said I am sorry, for 40 years I made fun of you; today I was you.

Q. Obviously it was a team win for Pato and the 5 and a good pit stop to get ahead of the 2.

TONY KANAAN: Yeah, obviously a tough place to pass. We had to do something, and then Pato -- it was all Pato there on the out lap, so the guys did a great job, and then once Pato got in the front, I knew it was going to be hard fought for Josef.

I've been in that position before. I've lost this race in the last five laps to Hunter-Reay, so I was just watching Newgarden on the podium. It was the same face I had when I lost to Hunter-Reay.

But it feels good. Obviously Chevy needed this. I think the series needed this as far as Palou is doing a great job, but we wanted to break that, and as a team, for me, everybody back home, especially the F1 team doing so well, Zac was looking at me like, I think it's you.

I texted him today, it's not me. But happy for the team and happy for Pato for sure.

Q. Tony, were you not watching the last couple laps because you were still involved with Nolan or because you were too nervous to watch and figure out how --

TONY KANAAN: I can use the first one, but no, I was in the timing stand with Moyer and Hunter, and I just sat

down just because I couldn't watch. No, I was not with Nolan.

Q. I know Team Chevy has been looking for that first win. You guys have been carrying the mantle in terms of the podiums you've had where your top 2 drivers are positioned in the championship, overtaking Team Penske this year. How important was it to get that first win for Team Chevy this year?

TONY KANAAN: I mean, as a team, we're chasing a championship, but also we get so much support from Chevy that it was not getting any easier for us every race to have a Honda win.

For me, it was a matter of we've got to do it. Obviously I wanted a Chevy to win. Most likely I want us to win. It came down to that.

But for me, we kept looking around. This is what we're doing. What can we do to try to beat those guys? Last race we played three different strategies of three cars, the strong cars we had to try to, and they still managed to get us.

It was good. I think coming to an oval, we kind of knew the Penskes are going to be strong, especially here. Newgarden has been dominating the ovals for the past few years. It was kind of a little easier to say I think we're going to get that win, and that we did.

Q. I know you were on the Nolan stand and probably watching him a lot and kind of focus on that, but as the laps are winding down, Pato is sitting right there with Josef, it seemed like it was especially up toward the front, pretty difficult to make a pass for that one-two spot. I don't think we saw that on track at all today. What was going through your head? Did you feel like there was going to be an opportunity for Pato to pass if that exchange didn't happen? What were your nerves going into the final 50 laps or so?

TONY KANAAN: I'm on the 6 timing stand, but I had a scanner so we actually can communicate. Pato said the only way I'm going to pass this guy is if you guys pull something out in the pits or on the pit sequence or if it had

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gone yellow maybe he would have tried.

Obviously the guys did an awesome job with the pit stop. Pato knew what he needed to do. Newgarden for some reason decided to pit when he pit, we stayed out and Pato pushed as much as he could to close that gap and then on the sequence we ended up beating him out.

I think one thing that people don't take into consideration, if you guys notice, Pato spun this morning coming out of the pits because he was trying to leave as fast as he could, and I think he found the limit, and today he won the race. It was all him today on that pass. The guys did the job they needed to do, but we needed him to come out of the pits as fast as he could, and that was it.

Q. TK, what were you thinking throughout the course of the race? Seemed like Pato obviously looked like he could get by a couple guys during the duration of the race. What did you think of the passing today compared to last season?

TONY KANAAN: The race was as tough as last year. I think this race was better last year. At some point we got actually a two-lane race. I think at some point when one guy went up there and then the spotter started telling people, hey, that's working, it came up.

It was tough to pass. If you look at the guys in the front, it was just a waiting game. But they're getting some pretty good positions on the restarts and then you'd just sit there and wait. But to me it's INDYCAR racing. In comparison to last year, I think it was a better race.

Q. So many drivers in the INDYCAR Series have gotten a win in their 100th start. How much does it mean to you to be a part of Pato's win in his 100th?

TONY KANAAN: Oh, it means a lot to me. It's my first win. This kid is unbelievable. I've been a fan of Pato even before I was here. We've been through quite a bit in the past three years, and I'm a big supporter. We're here to win, and he has this team around him, and he delivers when it needs to be delivered. I'm not going to keep talking about him. Glad that I'm part of this.

Q. Mr. Tony, you remember Adrián Fernández, Mario Dominguez, Bernard Jourdain. How do you feel remembering these racers with Pato O'Ward?

TONY KANAAN: I don't disrespect my old Mexican friends, but Pato is Pato. Obviously this is the era of social media. But watching every race, how popular he is and how much he has behind him from his own country, it's pretty cool to see.

Obviously I had a little bit of a small part of experiencing that myself, and then Pato comes along and makes you feel like you don't have that many fans. (Laughter.)

He put me back in my place pretty quick. But obviously it's generations. I think with Adrián just started all that, no different than Emerson starting for the Brazilians. Hopefully we will keep growing that fan base. When Pato doesn't win, I get a lot of complaints in Spanish on my own social media. They blame me quite a bit. Hopefully today I kept the Mexicans happy. (Laughter.)

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