

NTT INDYCAR SERIES

News Conference

Saturday, July 12, 2025

Pato O'Ward

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: Now joined by the champion of the Synk 275 powered by Sukup in Pato O'Ward, who led 33 of the 257 laps this afternoon, driver of the No. 5 Arrow McLaren Chevrolet, his first win of the season, Chevy's first win as well as mentioned, eighth career win, second here at Iowa. The first win at Iowa came on your 50th start. This came on your 100th start. Your thoughts about win No. 1 this season for you.

PATO O'WARD: Yeah. First time I do a repeat at a track, so that's a cool milestone for myself. Super happy for, first of all, all the guys and gals at Arrow McLaren. We've been working really hard. But the guy we're chasing down keeps winning a bunch of them.

Also very happy for Team Chevy. This was important and very deserving for Team Chevy. I'm glad it was an all-Chevy podium.

Yeah, for my race, I started getting creative. They're just such long races. There's time to get your car in the window, start getting creative on where you want to place it. So yeah, we got moving in that second restart, and as soon as I got to Josef, he's one of the guys that when you're behind him, he tries to outsmart you, definitely. He's been running ovals for more than I've been in the series. That experience only comes with laps, and he's also very strong here, so I knew that we had to be perfect.

We capitalized on that in lap. I think I went a little bit over the limit and risked a bit more than I was planning to, but all in all, it actually worked out because he was right on our gearbox on that 3 and 4 when we came out. Yeah, great pit stop, and did my job to secure us that overcut, and that's pretty much what gave us the win today.

THE MODERATOR: The difference was between you and Josef just over two-tenths which was the closest finish at Iowa since 2012 when Ryan Hunter-Reay defeated Marco Andretti.

Q. I saw this stat on social media. I haven't been able to fact check it myself, but it sounds right. You've had

16 runner-up finishes in your career and seven of those have been in races that Josef Newgarden has won. In those moments, I think of the Indy 500 a year ago, I think of Texas 2023. What have you taken away from those late-race battles, particularly on ovals, with Josef, and was there anything that you did tonight that you would say kind of came from some of those learnings?

PATO O'WARD: I mean, he's the guy that I've been most around, especially to win races. If it wasn't for him, I would have a lot more wins. But he's a tough competitor. I think this year for him has been quite different to what it's been in the past. I see him very differently, to be honest, like his attitude and everything is definitely not the Josef that I've always praised, I would say.

But I've studied him. I know how to race him. He gets what he gives. If he was flirting with fire there, then that's what he got, and that's what I was going to give him because you get to these points in your career, and for me especially today when I was behind him, I said, today is the day that's going to change because obviously he's got a lot more experience than I do, but I think over the years, I've grown to realize that I'm pretty handy, at least in certain ovals, and I believe our package is very strong, and it's important to capitalize when we can get those wins.

We were super close in Gateway and we've been so close there, and now here, we've won here before, but it was kind of given to us when Josef had a failure there that 50th race for me that I won here. I said, you know what, today we're going to -- I knew I had all the pieces in place to outright beat him at his own game. Yeah, that's what we did today, and it obviously is a great feeling to go into tomorrow and know that we've got a car that we can fight our way forward and battle our way and see what we can make happen.

Q. Of the kind of three late-race moments that I think you guys were probably closest together, when you blended out in front of him on the last pit stop and then the final two restarts, which of those did you feel like he was closest to being able to pass you, and as you think back on whichever moment that is, what did you do specifically just to make sure that you held him

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back?

PATO O'WARD: Those Penske cars were running quite a bit higher than I was, so when I kind of made my way through the guys, when I was fifth, I think, in line, fourth or fifth in line that second restart, I feel like I kind of started the trend.

I think Conor started it, and then I followed. Then I could tell he was watching when I was behind him, and then I saw him start exploring.

Then I think -- I don't know if it was maybe 40 laps to go or so, Power was coming quick. He was running really high. With new tires, you can run a lot higher than I thought. I think tomorrow -- with now a race under our belt, people are going to try to get a little bit more confident up there and see if they can make it work.

But yeah, it felt very reminiscent of Conor and I in Gateway where you can hold that outside line pretty much almost as fast as the guy down low and you can just stay there and see what you can come up with.

Yeah, I think the closest he was was probably when we came out of the pits where we're still coming up to speed. He's coming fifth, sixth gear and we're just coming third, fourth, and we're trying to spool up. But we got it done.

Q. I don't know if you've seen the points yet. You've still got a ways to go to get to Alex, but you trimmed off --

PATO O'WARD: Let me guess, still over 100 points.

Q. Just barely. 125 come into the weekend, it's 105 right now. You've got another chance to go out there and potentially sweep the weekend tomorrow and chip away at that even more. Does it still at this moment in time still feel like it's possible, or do I need to wait to ask you tomorrow?

PATO O'WARD: In racing, anything is possible. There's been some weird, weird stuff that happens. I think if weird stuff happens even more in INDYCAR, that makes sense.

But the guy just doesn't have any bad races, and a bad race for him is like fifth. Otherwise he's on the podium.

We've just got to keep chipping away at it. I've been as consistent as I've ever been. I feel like I've been laying low, and that usually means you're staying out of trouble. But it's tough to be podium contention and qualifying, top 3 every single weekend.

This year for me, qualifying specifically, it's been horrible. I find my ways in recovery drives like almost every weekend, which it's fun to try and do it when you know you've got a car that can go it, AKA Mid-Ohio, but there's other scenarios where you're like, we've really got nothing to fight with, and that's where you're just like -- you're just hoping that you stay out of trouble and you try and capitalize on people's mistakes when people are making mistakes.

I think the name of the game for us this year has been really the consistency that we've had but also capitalize when you need to, and I think today was an important day to be able to do that.

Tomorrow we're starting a little bit further back, but seeing how the restarts are working and that second lane, I think we can make our way forward and start getting the leaders a little bit nervous.

I've never doubled up. I know we've only got one double weekend this year. There's a few drivers that have in the grid, so I'd love to be a part of that list.

Q. There's been a lot of -- Tony was up there saying Chevrolet needed this and the team needed this, but I'm curious, how bad did Pato O'Ward need this?

PATO O'WARD: How bad did I need it? I wanted it. I wouldn't necessarily say if I didn't get it, it was going to be the end of the world. We've been chipping away at it. If it wasn't a win, I think it was going to be a second.

I don't know how many seconds I have this year, three or four -- three? Whatever. Number one looks and feels much better.

I'm glad that -- I was pretty determined to be the first one that kind of broke through for Chevy. I wanted to do that at Mid-Ohio, but we weren't able to do that. So I said, you know what, I think Iowa is going to be a great place to go capitalize.

We don't just one want. We want more. But it's a great start to have our first.

Q. Kit didn't follow through with the pinky swear and come to Victory Lane, so does he still need to --

PATO O'WARD: Yeah, yeah, I told him, and Emma was like, I'm going to bring him to the podium if you win. But no. Maybe he's sleeping or something. No, he's such a good kid, so much energy. So much energy. I spent a lot of time with him at the bus when we did the parade at the 500, and yeah, Scott is like, you want him? Great kid. He looks like a ball of energy and a lot of fun. Great family.



Q. Were you a little surprised when Josef Newgarden dived in first before you into the pit stops in the final stint?

PATO O'WARD: No. I was saving more fuel than he was. I know he was on defense mode for a while there. But he was stuck. He was looking for clear track, which he did get. But wasn't enough to get us.

Q. Out of the pit stops, I saw there was a couple bobbles coming through the gears there. Were you a little afraid of the same situation happening in practice earlier, that you were about to spin it trying to get to the lead?

PATO O'WARD: Me spin? In the exit from the pit lane? I was pushing. Oh, man, the apron was super busy. Oh, yes, I was pushing. That's what you have to do, man. When you're racing a guy like that with so much experience, you just know that he's going to try -- you know he's trying to do that, so you just got to do that and go better.

But yeah, I knew the objective in hand, and I did it.

Q. What was going through your mind when the red flag came out and you had to sit in pit lane?

PATO O'WARD: Nothing, really.

Q. You weren't worried about the restart? You weren't thinking about the restart?

PATO O'WARD: No, because it was going to be the same if we had a restart earlier and no red flag. It was going to be the same story. No, but I had VeeKay behind me. But anyways, I knew what I had to do.

Q. Pato, you said on the FOX broadcast that you wanted to turn the tables on Josef. Do you feel like you usurped the king of corn country?

PATO O'WARD: Yeah, he was poised to get another win. He's dominated here. But like I said, we've had a lot of battles, a lot of one and twos, and a lot of those one and twos, I've been two. It's just way nicer and a way better feeling when you're number one.

Yeah, I know how to race him. He's probably the guy that I know how he races the most and the one that I've studied the most because he's the one that I've been behind the most. Yeah, pretty straightforward really.

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