

NTT INDYCAR SERIES

News Conference

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Pato O'Ward

Tony Kanaan

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: Joining us here this afternoon from the winning team, Tony Kanaan. Team win 27 for Arrow McLaren.

This is one of those things if you said the nine-place starter, 10th-place starter, 13th-place starter will be on the podium, a sign of how crazy it was.

TONY KANAAN: 100%. In our debrief this morning we said, You never know. This is a race that those kind of things can happen.

Great result obviously with Zac here. His first live win.

THE MODERATOR: Good luck charm maybe? Or pressure when he shows up?

TONY KANAAN: It's always pressure when he shows up, chaos (smiling).

Yeah, feels good.

THE MODERATOR: We'll open it up for questions for T.K.

Q. Tony, few times does a strategy work so well to be able to come in, get rid of the green tires, then caution right on the next lap. How did you devise that strategy? When he nailed it like that, did you think it would work out real good for you?

TONY KANAAN: I mean, strategy wouldn't go without a team to perform on the pit stop and a driver that can actually pass some cars. You saw how aggressive he was on that restart.

For strategies to work, you cannot only depend on luck. We knew, we talk about a few strategies last night. This was one of them. But everything had to be well-executed.

When he pulled it off, I was still holding my breath. I'm not a very good spectator, to be fair. 15 laps to go, I could not

stop pacing around.

But yeah, it work out pretty good.

Q. By far Arrow McLaren was the most popular team in Toronto. There's mobs around your area all weekend. To suddenly be on a team that popular in Canada, how great of an experience was that to deliver a win?

TONY KANAAN: I mean, we're here for the fans. My entire career I always said that. With Pato and Zac and the team, also a brand like McLaren, it's hard not to be popular. We have to keep the standard pretty high. Feels good.

Obviously there's a lot of pressure on the entire team. This weekend was a lot of ups and downs. I think we split strategies between all three cars. It hasn't been historically a good weekend for us here, which I didn't want to hear that coming in here. I was never that type of person.

As a team, I think we got together last night. I said, Let's change that. You guys been around. I've heard so many statistics in my life, even before I won the 500, this guy never won until this age, this, this, that. I said, Let's change that. I don't want to believe that's why we won, but...

Q. Tony, outside of the execution of pit stops and the way Pato raced today, what did you feel like was the key moment from a strategy standpoint where what you were trying to do allowed all of the pieces to come together? Was it that first yellow or...

TONY KANAAN: I think it was when he came off of the green tires. On that restart, just cleared the field. Then obviously a lot of people were wondering what was happening. I was getting texts. We knew we were in control.

The thing is, it could have gone yellow again. In a restart you never know. Somebody can come and make a mistake. I think he was managing the gap pretty well, just really controlling the cars behind.



I would say the crucial part of that race is when he cleared all those guys being pretty aggressive and making those passes. That there set the tone obviously for the win.

Q. Winning on a track like Iowa, where this team has been strong, but can you explain that satisfaction level of watching this team over the past week put together a car and Pato executing on track, everything coming together to prove those statistics wrong?

TONY KANAAN: Yeah, I think my biggest challenge Pato and I have is to make everybody believe that no matter what, especially in INDYCAR, every time you take the green flag, that is an opportunity.

I think we had a pretty good and intense meeting last night. I said, We got to believe it. Days like this, it makes a big difference in our people. I think you give them an extra boost of confidence that we can do it, we can take the next step. To me, that's what sometimes I have a hard time vocalizing because I've been into very successful organizations, part of trying to build a really good one.

We use days like this to say, See, that's how we do it. More important than the win and everything else, I think it's what we're trying to build here, to be able to not have a car winning seven races, having us challenging that.

THE MODERATOR: Pato O'Ward joins us. Second win in 2025. Ninth career win. First on the streets of Toronto. Third career win on a street course.

Congratulations. Crazy race, right?

PATO O'WARD: Thank you. I love the sound of those statistics. Hats off to the boys and girls at Arrow McLaren, also Team Chevy.

We keep making our Sundays so much harder than what they have to be. Qualifying has been not our friend. But Sundays have been. I feel like the gist of this year for at least the 5 side, it feels like it's always a recovery Sunday, always been a recovery Sunday. We keep fighting our way forward.

Today it was a very similar post to what I had in Mid-Ohio. We got hosed in timing in the qualifying here. We've been struggling a bit on the alternate, which sadly is the one you need to transfer.

I knew I had such a strong car on the preferred tire for the race. I had a car that I could attack with. I had a car I could really put it where I needed to, at least just to get by people. We had to get really aggressive there sometimes. We had to get our elbows out a little bit if we want to keep

this championship somewhat of a conversation.

It's always good to feel that way, and that gives you that little extra edge to make these days come to fruition. They did a great strategy. I made sure that I was going to be the winning one.

THE MODERATOR: More questions for either one.

Q. Pato, you told us on Friday the team brought something totally different package-wise to your car. Was whatever that was, did that have a noticeable impact on your ability to perform?

PATO O'WARD: Yeah, it's more of a feeling like you have something that is somewhat consistent when you throw something random at it. If you dive into the inside, if you take maybe a different line somewhere, something that's not just going to be like 'screw you' and lose three seconds, that's a little bit of a consistency that we've always been trying to find, which in the race has always been better for us. In qualifying it's been more of a theme of conversation.

That's basically what you need. Like, you need a car that you can attack with and that you can pass people. I feel like you can't just always rely on strategy. If we just relied on strategy today, I think maybe we would catch a whiff of a podium. But that's not enough. You need something to be able to really fight your way forward, especially if we're 10th, 15th, 12th.

It feels really good to earn it today. It really does. Especially in a place that's been a very tough weekend basically every time we come here. I'm really happy for everyone. Happy for Chevy, as well. Otherwise it was going to be a Honda, so... I'm really pleased with today.

Q. What was the moment in this race where you felt like the pieces were falling together and you had a shot at winning this race?

PATO O'WARD: We had a great pit stop, the first pit stop. It was freaking awesome. The guys were great. We pushed hard in, we pushed hard out. We undercut everybody that was on the alternate. That was the first step.

The second step, we could have just kind of maintained there and waited for the other guys to start peeling off. I didn't really want to do that. I started picking them off one by one.

When we positioned ourselves, I think we were fifth in line with four cars in front of us, tried to make a bit more with



the fuel. VeeKay was super strong. That's why I said that I need to be behind the lead car. It's a lot tougher if I was behind maybe Kyffin, as well. I don't think I would have had the opportunity to overcut on VeeKay. It was just positioning myself to make it happen.

Q. Tony mentioned in your post qualifying strategy meeting that was tense or serious, there was a lot of emotion in there of trying to convince everyone this was a race you could come out and win. Take us inside the room and tell us a little bit about the emotions, how that motivated the team.

PATO O'WARD: I think it just made us look, let's really see where we've been strong this weekend. These street courses, the two tires, at least in my experience this year, they've been so different. I think you see it with some other cars. They were so strong on the primes in practice one, practice two. Then you get to qualifying, which is the tire you need to transfer with, the alternate, and it's such a small window, if any, basically.

Like, you have to be so perfect with how they want to be brought in. You replicate the same thing and one set is different to the others. The primes were consistent, but the alternate, they're not. It's so frustrating because I feel like I was best of the rest in practice. I feel like I was third or fourth. The Andrettis were on another planet. And in qualifying, sadly we weren't the best of the rest. We still struggled even more just to transfer to Q1.

I talked to my engineer after that meeting. I think it looked a lot worse than what that car actually felt, at least with what we're going to need in the race. Ultimately that's what opens doors to having better races. Then you really rely on having a strong car on Sunday.

I knew we had it. I told him, Man, as long as we have something to fight with, we're going to be fine. Yeah, like I said, it was very reminiscent to what it felt like going into Mid-Ohio race. Obviously we were strong there. Just unlucky in qualifying. But here we were starting five positions further. Another goal was to be in the top 10 for all three cars.

My engineer and I were talking yesterday. I was like (expletive) a top 10. We started 15th, ended fourth in Mid-Ohio. No, we can win, we can be on the podium. We did that today.

TONY KANAAN: Will, his engineer, texted me after the meeting. Zac and I mentioned the goal was for all three cars to finish in the top 10.

Will texted me, I disagree with that. I think we have a

better car than 10th.

I said, Zac didn't say you should finish 10th. He put you first and the other two inside the top 10.

He crosses the finish line. Will comes and looks at me and said, Hey, prove us wrong every weekend, we'll be okay with it.

Q. Tony, you had Zac here this weekend. When you saw Pato carving his way through the field, what were you thinking? Were you nervous? Did it feel like there was a lot of pressure there?

TONY KANAAN: I mean, me outside the car, I'm always going to be nervous. I'm still getting used to this spectator.

Inside the team, looking at the talent we have, what this guy can do inside a race car. Was I worried? I was worried about things we couldn't control. I knew he was in control. Any way you're leading and going for the lead, you're going to be nervous, even if you're in the car. It's about how you control it.

I think I fake a lot more inside the car than I do outside back in the day.

PATO O'WARD: He was freaking out (laughter).

TONY KANAAN: Pretty much (smiling).

Hopefully I was just sitting there. I mentioned that in Iowa. My mom made so much fun of me. Every time this happens I think about her because she could never watch my races. I cursed myself.

THE MODERATOR: Tony congratulations. More questions for Pato.

Q. Zac was standing there pumping his fists to the crowd and everything. What was it like to be able to celebrate with him in attendance?

PATO O'WARD: Zac is the superstar this weekend. He's never been at any of our wins. He's been close, at the 500. He's never been at one of our wins.

I'm glad and I'm super happy that I can give him that first memory of his INDYCAR team, at least first win being there in the flesh.

It's a really cool place to do it at. Kind of wish I would stay tonight and party. It's a nice city here. But I'm going to go home. It's been a crazy four weeks. We've got another one coming up. So yeah. ...



Q. When you're leading, is any part of you wondering where is Alex and how many points am I cutting offer?

PATO O'WARD: No. I already saw. It's only like 99. 128 to 99, it's a good chunk. His good weekends are days like today. We need to make sure that we continue to have days like today, not just one but a few. I think we're going to keep this conversation going until Nashville. That's my goal.

Obviously we're at a time in the championship where we're going to have to get a little bit more into the conversation of getting our elbows out because that's what I had to do today just to open the doors to having a chance to win this race. That's the only way we're even going to catch a whiff of making him sweat a little bit.

Q. You had the contact with Will. Were you concerned about damage to your car and/or INDYCAR...

PATO O'WARD: I knew that was going to be a racing incident. I want to go see Will actually. That's the last thing that you want to have. I respect Will so much. We've been racing against each other a lot.

But yeah, the problem is that it's such a fine line that you're battling with. You don't want to lose any positions. When you're going through where you're full opposite lock, we basically hit square. When you hit tire to tire, both of our wheels got out of our hands. You had to, like, gather it back up.

That's what happens when you're racing so tight in a place like this. The cars don't really do everything perfectly. They will be moving and they'll understeer, they will be within places where you're like, Oh, I hope I make this kind of thing.

I think when you go to the outside, that's a risk that you're willing to take versus the guy that's on the inside.

It did end his race?

Q. No.

PATO O'WARD: I'm glad that it didn't. Obviously that's not the way that I like to go racing. I like to be always fair and give the respect that each one deserves.

Yeah, it got tight, really tight, in a corner that's pretty much what you get if you go side by side, so...

Q. The narrative going into this weekend was that was Arrow McLaren's most difficult track, even internally in

the team. How important is it to conquer this track and win here?

PATO O'WARD: It's a big day. It's a very big day. It feels pretty special in a place that has arguably been one of the biggest headaches every single year that we come here.

It just feels good. It's a really good feeling that we didn't just nail the strategy and get lucky, but we also had to earn our win today. It wasn't given to us. We had the car to be able to do that.

Q. You mentioned how difficult this stretch of the season has been. What is your energy level going into Laguna?

PATO O'WARD: I feel good, man. I'm pretty good at being very selfish to the things I want when I want. I'm pretty firm. When I don't go with something, I say, No, I don't do it, whatever.

Yeah, my dad's the only one that's here this weekend. I'm going home tonight to Texas to see my mom, my sister, then I have to head to Laguna to do media days on Wednesday early.

Yeah, it's busy. It's busy days. To be honest, us drivers, we have an amazing life. I actually feel for the engineers and the mechanics. They have it way rougher than we do.

When the calendar is so aggressive like this, I mean, it's five races in four weekends, then one off. August is a bit better. But July is brutal. To be fair, month of May is brutal, as well. June really wasn't too many free weekends 'cause we went testing. Pretty much the same thing as going to a race weekend.

It's wearing. It's important for people to make time for themselves. I hope that this keeps them going, as it's going to keep me going. Days like today are ultimately what pull you back anytime you have a not even a bad day, like lots of bad days or a bad season. Days like today are what you work for.

Q. Why did you decide to stick with the strategy even though you knew this race was changing we quickly and drastically?

PATO O'WARD: Because that's the only way you make a strategy work. You can't be half-assing it. You can't be, We should have done this. No. Make a decision and send it. That's how you can put yourself in a position.

Maybe if it's not the easiest strategy to be a winning strategy or podium strategy, you make it happen because



you put yourself in that position.

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