

NTT INDYCAR SERIES

News Conference

Saturday, August 30, 2025

David Malukas

Pato O'Ward

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: Wrapping up qualifying. The No. 4, second straight front row start here in the NTT INDYCAR SERIES season. Third front row start of 2025 as well. You have a sly grin on your face. Disappointed, or how would you describe your result?

DAVID MALUKAS: Yeah. No, definitely disappointed. The guys just did a fantastic job. When it comes to Nashville here at the superspeedway, everybody is generally pretty much flat, right? It comes down to the guys in setup, and these guys just built a beautiful car.

I went out there and was, like, It's going to be hard to beat, it was a perfect car. Just driving a beauty. It brought me home. That was sweet. Very easy going 200 miles. Can you imagine saying that? That was a piece of cake going 200 miles an hour. That's because of the guys, the Foyt team. They did such a good job.

Yeah, that's going to be hard to beat. Waiting all the way until the end, and yeah, I didn't say anything this time. It doesn't work. If you say stuff or don't say stuff, it's still -- I wanted a sticker, man. I thought maybe we would get the sticker.

THE MODERATOR: Obviously a strong finish to the season when it comes to qualifying. Maybe that bodes well for whatever happens in 2026.

DAVID MALUKAS: Yeah, I think when you look at the whole season as a whole from month of May onwards, we made big steps in qualifying. That's from ovals, street courses, road courses. We really, really made some big gains. Looking at Portland to fast sixes as well and all the way to the end, so did a good job in qualifying. If there's anything from the race car that we need to work on are road courses, but with ovals we're there. It's another day of (indiscernible). It's a young crew. We're going to keep pushing.

THE MODERATOR: You'll still take a front row.

DAVID MALUKAS: Yeah, we'll take a front row.

THE MODERATOR: Questions, please.

Q. A bit of engineering evolution as well. It seemed like no matter who you get paired with, you make some good speed. James Schnabel last week. Got some fun family stuff for him to take precedence this week. Michael Armbruster stepping in. Also hard to ignore among the greater Foyt-Penske technical alliance.

You keep showing folks that you can be right there up front. Tell me about the ability to continue to deliver these kinds of performances even with some pretty big personnel changes to adapt to.

DAVID MALUKAS: Yeah, I mean, it goes to show just from the whole AJ Foyt team, I mean, Armbruster has been very strong. He's been our head of engineering overseeing everybody. I had no doubt in my mind with the step up in the change that we would do a very good job.

He made some fantastic calls right before we got into that car where we were listening in on the radio and coming up. I mean, the idea is never stop. Even if the car is on the grid, we're always trying to figure out where are we going to be with tools, et cetera.

The plan that they gave me and all the information that they gave right before, I mean, it was right before I went into that car we had headsets on trying to figure out our strategy. We perfected it, and it worked out beautifully.

As soon as we went out, the track temp, everything played in our favor right where we were planning it to be. That just comes down to him and the guys.

So, I mean, just, like I said, fantastic execution from the guys.

Q. I have two questions. Number one for you, David, same good results like last week in Milwaukee. Despite that, Nashville is a little bit longer. Are there some similarities in the speedway design?



DAVID MALUKAS: Can you repeat the similarities from Nashville to Milwaukee?

Q. Yeah, some similarities in the way --

DAVID MALUKAS: Not really, to be honest. Just with the surface being different and this being a superspeedway, we're going a lot quicker. I tried doing that high line in practice one, and it did not work out very well. I picked up a lot of marbling, and I tried to get it off the tires, and I just couldn't. It really hurt it.

I don't know how this race is going to play out. I think it's going to be a big play on the high line session more than anything. I think that's going to be very important. I think it's very good that we're doing that.

I don't know. We'll see how the racing goes, but that high line seemed like a struggle bus this morning. We'll see how it's going to be.

Q. Question number two: For the race tomorrow, in case we have the same brutal heat, do you think that can be an important factor?

DAVID MALUKAS: Yeah, we have the different tire strategy with the primers and alternates this week. Any sort of heat changes, it's going to have an affect on tire deg and results. Going to have different strategies up for play. I think it will help at the end of the day for different plays. Hopefully we're going to be on the front end of that strategy and be out there at the top at the end.

Q. David, I think the officials changed the downforce level that you're running here this year compared to last year. Could you talk a little bit about that? And then for qualifying, you probably trim out the car. Do you have an idea if your car is going to be as happy as you are now with the qualifying run? What it's going to be like in race traffic?

DAVID MALUKAS: I think a lot of those answers are going to come the final practice session. A lot of changes we're going to have to make. The car is going to be very different with heavy fuel going over that bump, especially in turn four. We'll see how that goes. No, I think from a race car we'll get our answer soon.

Q. (Off microphone.)

DAVID MALUKAS: It's changed, but my memory from last year has dwindled, so...

Q. Is there any specific to your driving style that feels suited to the ovals or maybe anything that you like in

an oval car that really seems to translate to kind of the whole range of tracks?

DAVID MALUKAS: No, I kind of just take it as it is. We found some success in ovals. Clearly we have speed. If I knew where my success was in ovals, I would definitely take it and put it in the road courses and street courses as well and have the trifecta of everything that there is for INDYCAR.

No, I don't really know what it is. I just manage to connect with ovals, and I'll take the performances as they come.

Q. Are you in the Premier League yet?

DAVID MALUKAS: I haven't been able to play it, man. I haven't been able to. Once the season ends, though, I'll keep you updated. There's going to be a lot more time for me to get them in the Prem.

THE MODERATOR: David, thanks. Congratulations on a front row start. Good luck with the practice coming up this afternoon.

It's an all-Chevrolet front row. Pato O'Ward joins us, driver of the No. 5 Arrow McLaren Chevrolet. Second NTT P1 award here. Matching pole position at the Thermal Club from earlier this year. First on an oval. Seventh career pole, fourth front row start here in 2025. Congratulations. Another box checked. Pole position on an oval.

PATO O'WARD: Yeah, yeah, checking off boxes. That's what we like to do. I've got a big one on the list this weekend. I've never won from pole ever, ever, ever. I'm determined to make it happen this weekend. Step one done and super happy with my car. I was very comfortable with it in qualifying -- in practice and qualifying.

Yeah, we'll see what practice later today has got in store, and we can make her as good as possible for the race.

THE MODERATOR: Questions for Pato O'Ward.

Q. Funny to think how much things have changed in a year, Pato. We came here last year, and the main topic surrounding you was, "Pato who?" That was the big thing. Here you are locked into second place in the championship pole position again. Talk a little bit about the year you've had from Nashville 2024 to here. It seems like you're living in a very different world.

PATO O'WARD: It's been a growing year, I must say. It's been a successful year. I know in racing it's either you win or bust, you know, but I think there's a lot of value in seeing the growth that I have had this year, that the team has had



this year.

Ultimately, it seemed like there was two championships going on, and it was Alex Palou with himself and us, the rest of the field. I think there are many ways to see how it went, but I think all in all it's been successful.

We're obviously proud of our efforts and how we keep on getting stronger and stronger. You know, we want to be in this position next year, but even closer to fighting for that championship. But yeah, I'm very pleased with how this year has gone, even though there's obviously been quite a few things that stand out not being perfect, but there's always things to work on and keep getting better.

Q. Pato, the entire team was just super strong in qualifying. Just kind of talk about why the Arrow McLaren car seems to take to this track so with well.

PATO O'WARD: Yeah, the Arrow McLaren Chevys around here, even from last year, they're very strong. I think in qualifying we kind of lost it there a bit last year, but this year all three cars are dialed in.

I think Christian is right behind me in third and Nolan is seventh, I believe. It's the best qualifying that we've had as a team, I would say, all year. Like I said, hats off to all the work that has also been going on in the background by everybody at the shop, you know, the development program to deliver three very fast race cars. We're going to be working hard this later practice session to make sure that we can all have a shot tomorrow.

Q. I know you haven't done a lot of laps on the alternates yet, but what's your read on the primes?

PATO O'WARD: Yeah, I didn't want to use the soft on the practice one, because I think you're going to thank yourself to having a new set in the race. So we took a bit of a risk there, but didn't really seem to be too much of an issue. I think obviously the deg on the soft is going to be more. It doesn't seem to be so aggressive initially, but when it does start hitting a cliff, it seems to be very cliffy, I would say. From one lap to another you can be looking at a pretty big deficit.

On the black, I don't think it will get to that point, at least from last year. I know it's the same compound, so it doesn't always translate identical, but I think we can expect quite a bit of how they behaved last year.

Q. Pato, two questions: Number one, you were on pole. Christian is third. Are there any team orders issued by the team?

PATO O'WARD: Team orders?

Q. Yeah.

PATO O'WARD: Not that I know of. At least they haven't spoken to us about it, but we want to maximize the race for all three cars, right?

Q. Then the second question, do you maybe expect from Christian to help you against attack from Malukas to build you up?

PATO O'WARD: I think tomorrow if there's going to be someone helping the other, it will probably end up being me helping him, because my championship position is secured. I know he's fighting Dixie, so if there is any sort of help there, I think it's going to be coming -- or asked from me other than him to me, because it doesn't really matter where I finish. We obviously all want to finish on the podium, so we'll see.

They're very long races. We don't want to influence a race result by having to let one go or something like that. So hopefully just naturally kind of falls where it needs to.

Q. I just wanted to drill into what you were saying about the growth that you've had this year. I know consistency has obviously been a big factor. Has there been anything specific in either your driving or your approach that has kind of led to that newfound consistency compared to previous years?

PATO O'WARD: Yeah. I think I would like to say it's just a bit of the experience, you know, just year after year trying to learn and really digest the seasons and really seeing where did we need to get better, were we making impulsive decisions, where we should have had a bit more of a cool head? You obviously will never have a perfect, perfect season, but you try and get there as much as you can.

My goal going into this year was actually completing every single lap of the year. I didn't really have a win objective. I didn't have really anything. I just wanted to finish every single lap. Sadly, that dream was crushed in Portland, but apart from that, at least from my side, I've been on that objective, and I'm proud of I've been able to accomplish it, at least up until this point in the season.

But there's been many races as well where we were just not where we were supposed to be. We were just back there and really struggling. Our bad days are still too bad, I would say, but I think that goes to almost everybody in the grid, apart from the 10 car.

Everybody's got bad days and bad weekends, but it just



seems like they just seem to have one of those years. So it just made it so much more difficult to keep up and give him a challenge. But yeah, it's been a year of growth in many ways, so I'm proud of that.

Q. You mentioned the team element as well. I know it's been quite a big thing having at least two cars, most weeks, fighting. What big changes have you observed kind of within the team as well that's led to this sort of season?

PATO O'WARD: It's great. I mean, the more cars you have up there, the better result for everybody, the more motivation there's naturally going to be. There's obviously different strategies that you can be playing around with. If one car gets hosed by a certain yellow, maybe the other one doesn't. You always kind of pick and choose. You can always save a weekend at least on one side, you know, or at least that's what you hope to do.

But the objective is always to have the best weekend with every single car, but you know, in INDYCAR racing sometimes it is a gamble, and you never know what's coming at you. So far there's been a lot of work being done in the offseason and during the season to bring better tools to us drivers to extract more from the race cars or at least open the window a little bit more, making it a bit more friendly to carry in 250 laps, or 110 laps in a street course or something.

There's been a lot of curses, I believe, that have been broken this year. One of those being also Zak was finally at a race win, which was nice to have, because it just seemed like every time he was there, we just never won. So that sucked, but it was nice to get that done and over with this year and having that experience with him.

On the technical side, obviously just having upgrades and new things to try week in, week out and seeing things actually work rather than just having options and not really having any growth in that part.

Q. I'm just wondering, because this track is quite unique in many ways over every other track we go to and the concrete surface, is there an added variable in that because of that type of surface? Are you noticing that as a driver?

PATO O'WARD: It obviously has some sort of play into that tire deg. This is the roughest surface that we go to. I think last year explained to how your race can be looking one way, but it can really change courses quite quickly if you don't react and basically change lanes to the right one within, you know, a couple of seconds of maybe an incident or something like that.

I expect tomorrow to also be somewhat similar in the way that people are going to be on their toes and making decisions on the fly. Some people are going to get it right; some people are not. But we hope to be on the right end of that, and we just want to run our race and see what we can do.

Q. Has there been any variation from last year to this year in terms of how you go over the bump? Has it changed at all?

PATO O'WARD: I think the bump is a little bit -- I know they grinded it down. I think it's not much better. I don't think it's worse, but it would be great to see if we can make that second lane open up. That's going to make the race so much better, especially on restarts and stuff.

The ovals this year have been -- they've been great races. I was telling Rasmussen, that last stint of his in Milwaukee was bad ass. That's how you want to win your first INDYCAR race. That was awesome to see.

Hopefully tomorrow that's the show that we give all the fans here that choose to come out and support us and everybody on TV.

Q. A week to celebrate the Iowa win until you showed up at the track five days later. You had a week to celebrate the Toronto win, until you showed up --

PATO O'WARD: I showed up to the track the day after. I had maybe five hours or something. I had chicken wings.

Q. But the beauty of winning the last race of the year is you get to feel like king of the road for as long as you want. How much as a driver would be like to experience that, win the last race of the year and then just celebrate it?

PATO O'WARD: Straight to Vegas, the whole team, boom. No, I mean, you obviously -- the year has already been a success, so whether it's good or bad tomorrow, I don't think it's really going to play so much with how I feel about the year, because I'm proud of the work that everybody has done.

You know, proud of Chevy, obviously, bringing the power this weekend and giving us the tools to be able to get it done, at least in qualifying for now.

It really is all about tomorrow just trying to end on a high. But just if something goes wrong, it doesn't mean that it's been a bad year. You know, it doesn't mean that your whole offseason has to be a bad time or something.



I'm going to do everything in my power to win tomorrow. Like I said, I've never won from pole, so I want to get that done.

Q. And how much can this year, the momentum, roll into next year and get off to a great start?

PATO O'WARD: It rolls. It's a long offseason, so when we get to Sebring, we'll be a little rusty, but there's been growth every single year. I would say going into '26 -- for me the starts to my years have always been very calm. Well, maybe not calm, but they haven't been always the strongest, I would say. I usually pick it up and get into the flow of things during the summer.

One of my objectives next year is to try and start the season as strong as possible because maybe looking back, Thermal was great, but all the other ones were just not quite there where we wanted to be. So I think it also starts in qualifying, to be fairly honest with you, just because this year has been the worst year I've ever qualified in INDYCAR, but it's been the best championship year.

The points are awarded on Sunday, so who cares where you qualify? But I would love to make my life easier on Sunday and bumping those numbers up.

THE MODERATOR: Good luck tomorrow.

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