

# NTT INDYCAR SERIES

## News Conference

Saturday, April 18, 2026

**Pato O'Ward**

**Felix Rosenqvist**

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: Pato, your thoughts on how it played out this afternoon.

PATO O'WARD: Stellar day for me in Long Beach. This is by far the best qualifying day I've had. I've been happy with the car I've been given from practice one. Hats off to Arrow McLaren and Team Chevy. I know we're leading their pack.

I think the plan for us this weekend has truly just been going out there and executing with something I know I'm comfortable with and I know I can push.

Yeah, feels good to be a bit more in attack mode rather than defense. Good to be on the front row with my old pal Fro.

Yeah, I missed it there a little bit. Nonetheless, it's been a really good day.

THE MODERATOR: Big jump, going fifth into Firestone Fast Six. Well done.

PATO O'WARD: I was very comfortable. I was very comfortable. I kept seeing that we were right on our Q2 lap. It wasn't really moving much throughout the lap. I knew it was going to be really tight. I don't know where I put it there. Fro put down a heater.

THE MODERATOR: Open it up for questions.

**Q. You decided to go last. What went into that? Would you have done something similar if you had been higher up in the Fast 12 order?**

PATO O'WARD: I like going further in the back because you have the deltas to kind of base yourself off of. You can also see what issues they're having, so maybe you can see some track progression to prepare your run for.

I was pretty happy I was going last.

**Q. Would you have gone last if you were higher up? Had you discussed that already?**

PATO O'WARD: Well, no, we hadn't discussed that. We were probably going to go first. You go first when you want to take advantage of the brake temperatures and the tire temperature, if you're going to stay on that same set.

For us, we knew we were going to be fifth or sixth. I'd much rather be sixth.

**Q. You were part of the single-car in Arlington. Now we have this adjusted one. Your thoughts on the adjustment?**

PATO O'WARD: I love it. I think it's a great addition to the show. Like I've mentioned before, it's great to see the pole laps. That's usually everything that kind of shows off after the normal qualifying sequence we've had in the past.

I think this way you can also appreciate the laps second, third, fourth, fifth and sixth have done. Someone in fourth has done a pretty impressive lap with a car that probably shouldn't be there. There's always those instances during weekends.

It's cool to watch everybody be so tight, but the laps do look different.

**Q. Was it surprising to see how different this round ended up, considering you had the option to choose, whereas in Arlington you didn't?**

PATO O'WARD: No. I mean, where is Malukas? Fourth?

THE MODERATOR: Fifth.

PATO O'WARD: Yeah, opposite to Arlington. I don't know. Palou I think was last in Arlington, wasn't he? I can't remember. Ericsson was on pole.

I don't think there's any coincidence in that. I think it's kind of how it fell. Whoever can get the tire switched on the soonest is the best.



FELIX ROSENQVIST: How was your hairpin?

PATO O'WARD: Shit. That's where I lost it.

THE MODERATOR: Pole winner, Felix Rosenqvist, has joined us. We'll prioritize questions for Pato.

**Q. When we spoke yesterday, you were not confident at all. I feel déjà vu. This feels a lot like Toronto. Would you agree?**

PATO O'WARD: I think so. It's great when you come into these with zero expectations, and you're kind of blowing them out of the water to what you were planning on, having difficulties yes or no.

It's been one of the toughest places that I've come to in the past. I would say Toronto has always been on the top step in terms of difficulty and challenge for us. We turned that around last year.

So going into this year, like, there was a huge emphasis. Like I told my engineer, I told my 5 team, I'm sick and tired of sucking there. I know that I can be strong there.

So we've just brought something completely new. It's obviously working. I'm so much more comfortable. I mean, it just feels like a completely different car, which it pretty much is, so...

Hats off to the team being able to give me those tools to do that. Yeah, it's crazy when you start doing much better, how much more you enjoy (smiling).

**Q. It seems like you're feeling confident around this track. Do you expect any challenges tomorrow? What do you think is going to be the biggest challenge to take home the victory tomorrow?**

PATO O'WARD: I think many challenges. I think strategy is a big question mark on everybody. Can we make these reds last? Is it going to be a fuel-save race? Are we going to be able to attack or is everything going to be kind of in pit stop sequence? I think there's a lot of unanswered questions that we'll probably have an idea when we get to warm-up, see where the race car goes.

Yeah, I feel just so much better in just being able to... I feel like I'm driving the car now, and I'm not getting driven around like I have in the past. I feel like we're in a way better place.

THE MODERATOR: Pato, thanks for coming in.

PATO O'WARD: Thank you.

THE MODERATOR: Felix Rosenqvist, congratulations. You came into this coming out of the top 12 in third, so what did you find between that and the Firestone Fast Six?

FELIX ROSENQVIST: We actually didn't change anything during qualifying. We did quite a lot of changes going into it.

The first run we had a real good run. We kind of nailed our tire prep. Then we just focused on executing what I could do in the car, kind of improved and improved. Yeah, it was pretty dialed in. Felt confident.

I love the one-lap shootout. When they announced it, I was like I really want to be part of that because I think it's such a cool thing when you're doing the one-lap dash. Watching it was nerve-wracking. That was probably the worst part of it.

Amazing day for us at Meyer Shank Racing. They got the pole yesterday in IMSA and the win today on the 93 car. Huge congrats. We're rocking the Green Day Acura livery. Huge day for Acura. Super happy to be here.

It's amazing how I went into this weekend kind of we said we needed a little turnaround, kind of turn the year around a little bit because we haven't been quick. Certainly worked well. Better than I dare expected.

THE MODERATOR: Timing and scoring showed you picked up 2/10ths on Palou there on the final corner, the hairpin turn. Did you have any idea?

FELIX ROSENQVIST: I didn't feel amazing about the last corner either. I was surprised to hear that. But he said, Alex, had a lockup or something. Sounded like Pato wasn't happy with his. Seems like we all kind of screwed it up. On one lap, it's super hard to nail that one.

Yeah, it was a clean lap. Yeah, it's just so tight, man. One little mistake and you're out of the mix. Yeah, unbelievable.

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

**Q. This race generally favors the frontrunner. Is this strategically the most important place to get the pole?**

FELIX ROSENQVIST: I think one of them. You can still pass here. It's not the hardest track to pass on the calendar. Yeah, this is definitely one of them where if you can settle into the lead, it's going to be huge. Any street course really.

But it's still pretty open with strategies. We're not really sure about the tires. It certainly indicated that the reds are pretty good, considering how well they went on the one-lap dash, and even yesterday on the rerun, they seemed pretty good. Yeah, just had to figure that out because it's a completely different ballgame compared when I had pole here a couple of years ago and even last year.

Full focus on the race now. Try to take in the moment a little bit, just push forward.

**Q. It was a little bit later they had qualifications than normal. With this format change earlier in the day, later in the day, how would you view that in terms of track conditions?**

FELIX ROSENQVIST: I mean I think if anything it was a pretty stable track condition right now. It's kind of the peak of the day in terms of track condition.

I think it's good when it's fair like that. Obviously if you are P1 in Q2 you get the chance to pick where you want to go. I think all in all it works out pretty well. I think the thing that would be even better is if everyone had new tires, then doesn't really matter.

I think it turned out pretty cool, how you had to really try to nail Q2 to give yourself a good opportunity in Q3. We were P3, which was pretty good, but still a couple of cars with warmer tires. Not all easy.

Yeah, I like the strategical part of it.

**Q. Sitting 14th in points, how badly for you personally did you need to get this win for your confidence?**

FELIX ROSENQVIST: Oh, a lot, yeah. It was exactly what we were looking for. I think when you're struggling, it doesn't come easy, like it's kind of between the races where you find the problems. You show up and hopefully it's better. We were quick from the get-go here.

I feel like the confidence you get from something like this, it's obviously huge not only for me but everyone in the team after having a bit of a draught, I will say, in terms of results.

Yeah, super happy with it.

**Q. With this format, do you think this could translate to road courses?**

FELIX ROSENQVIST: You mean the Fast Six?

**Q. Yes.**

FELIX ROSENQVIST: Yeah. Why not? I mean, Arlington was kind of a long lap, one of the longest laps. The time aspect, it becomes a pretty long session. Most laps we do are right over a minute. It will be something like that, let's say, like a Laguna or Indy road course.

Yeah, why not? I think it's amazing. You have to adapt. I actually felt like I had a lot of grip. There will certainly be tracks where you feel like you're on ice, which is also kind of cool, because it's the same for everyone.

**Q. You're on front row pole position. What are the challenges you think you're going to be facing?**

FELIX ROSENQVIST: I mean, you always need to be fast, otherwise someone will get you in the sequence. We haven't really gotten a full understanding of the tires yet. There might be a case where you need to save the tires or not, fuel save, so on.

My thought going into this weekend is that the two-stopper is going to be the winning strategy. I'm still kind of a believer of that.

But yeah, you have obviously like lapped cars, all that stuff. We all think Palou has an easy life. When you actually look from his point of view, there's a lot of stuff going on, a lot of lapped cars and stuff.

It's never easy for anyone, but you certainly have an advantage. We'll try to take advantage of that.

**Q. If there is a win in the future for you tomorrow, what Green Day song are you celebrating with?**

FELIX ROSENQVIST: Certainly not Boulevard of Broken Dreams (smiling). When I Come Around. Especially with the hairpin there, you come around the corner (smiling). I think that one. Don't ask me to sing, though, please.

**Q. You've been in this position quite a few times before, starting up at the front. One of your issues has been finishing the job. What do you have to do to complete this tomorrow?**

FELIX ROSENQVIST: Yeah, you're right, I mean, I'm aware of that stat. This is my seventh or eighth pole or something. I have only one win. It kind of speaks for itself.

I think race pace is literally the only thing I've been focusing on all off-season, all season. Like qualifying, we always feel like the speed is there. We try to really maximize the time we have to figure out how to go quicker in the races.

I'll say we've done some good progress in that area, especially from second part of last year and even this year. I should say qualifying has been more of an issue this year.

But yeah, we're fully aware of that. I think just looking after the tires has been a thing for me many times in the situation where I have to pit early. That's definitely something you don't want to happen. Just keep an eye on tires, I think we'll be good.

**Q. How crucial is it to get to turn one first in this race?**

FELIX ROSENQVIST: I mean, it's such an advantage. I think even before that, tire deg, fuel save, all that stuff just gets easier if you're up there from the get-go. Yeah, we'll definitely try to take advantage of our position and keep that spot going into turn one.

**Q. You mentioned the IMSA win earlier. We saw it in Phoenix with Team Penske where they swept everything. Is there an extra motivation you get from the other series?**

FELIX ROSENQVIST: It's a good energy. The whole INDYCAR team was standing watching the monitor earlier before qualifying when the IMSA guys were going. It just gives everyone a buzz. This is in the end of the day something that feeds the whole operation, right? If you don't have good results, we can't do what we do. That's just part of the business.

When we have days like this, it helps everyone, every employee and every man and woman in the team. Yeah, we'll try not to celebrate too much yet, but it's certainly nice to have these days, for sure.

**Q. Was there time in between you guys starting qualifying and the end of their race for you to exchange any conversations with the IMSA side?**

FELIX ROSENQVIST: I just sent a text message because I had some issues with my neck. I was being worked on on a table. But yeah, I haven't really had time to catch up with them, but I definitely hopefully tonight we can have not a drink but a hug maybe (smiling).

**Q. Can you talk about the difference in the track evolution, because you did a P2 before the IMSA race. Even after all that rubber, starting qualifying till the very last Firestone Fast Six.**

FELIX ROSENQVIST: It was actually less than we're used to seeing here. This is actually the biggest tire track

evolution track we go to. It wasn't really the case this year. I think I did a 7.4 in Q1, then a 7.2, then another 7.4. It was pretty flat.

If anything I thought the IMSA race helped a lot. Really cleaned up the track well. Put some rubber down. So yeah, it's always different. A fun thing with racing, you never really know what you're going to face.

THE MODERATOR: Congratulations.

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