

NTT INDYCAR SERIES

News Conference

Thursday, May 21, 2026

Indianapolis, Indiana, USA

Pato O'Ward

Santino Ferrucci

Felix Rosenqvist

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: Great to be joined by Pato O'Ward, starting sixth. Two-time runner-up in the Indy 500. He's led 95 laps in his previous six starts here. Starting fifth, finished in the top 10 in every Indy 500 he's competed in. Sunday will mark his eighth appearance in the race, Santino Ferrucci. Starting fourth, two top fives in the 500, a fast day of qualifying on Sunday, this Sunday will mark his eighth Indianapolis 500, Felix Rosenqvist.

You have the crew shirt and the fire suit. You're ready for anything today?

SANTINO FERRUCCI: We actually took the photos correct today on the Yard of Bricks that we should have done post-qualifying. Happy we got those done.

PATO O'WARD: Who chose to go back?

THE MODERATOR: It was a hot pit.

SANTINO FERRUCCI: One-chance qualifying.

RINUS VEEKAY: Sexy backdrop in tech. For the fans, it was really nice.

PATO O'WARD: I think that was a fail (smiling).

THE MODERATOR: How much importance is there for tomorrow's two hours of qualifying?

PATO O'WARD: Whatever we get tomorrow I'm going to be very grateful for. Hopefully the rain decides to at least stay away a little bit and we'll get some running in.

I want to get one full run. Very important for me. I have a new car. Regardless of it, the car will be good. It would be nice to just get a run, just pepper out anything it might have. There's a lot of new things on it.

THE MODERATOR: For a guy that wasn't interested in qualifying that well, you qualified really well. What is your race car like?

SANTINO FERRUCCI: That's the new strategy next year. Sit out there, qualify 15th, don't have to run the rest of the day.

Our car's really good. Obviously I got really lucky with the wreck that happened on Monday that I didn't get caught up in it, too. Honestly, I'm happy to see it go green for the first five minutes, get the install checks in, some pit stop practice, then let it rain. Sorry (smiling).

THE MODERATOR: Maybe disappointment from qualifying, but the car looks good in race trim?

FELIX ROSENQVIST: It's been good. You asked how important this Carb Day will be. It's easy to forget how much running we're actually doing, right?

I think for us, we had some sessions where we've been great in traffic, some where we were a little worse. It kind of goes between there, right? A lot of drivers and teams it's the same.

You have to nail it on race day. I think it's more for Pato and Roman and Alex, if you have a new car, that will be a very important session. For the rest of us, we just try to nail it each session. We'll try as much in Carb Day to nail it as we do in the race. Hopefully we're right for Sunday.

PATO O'WARD: Looks cold tomorrow.

THE MODERATOR: Cool off a little bit.

FELIX ROSENQVIST: Actually better for the racing if it's cold.

SANTINO FERRUCCI: I don't want it to be a hundred degrees.

PATO O'WARD: I don't think Sunday is going to be that cold.



FELIX ROSENQVIST: I haven't dared look at Sunday yet.

PATO O'WARD: Changing by the hour.

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

Q. Pato, even though you believe the car is going to be set up exactly the same as the one the other day, until you get in it, is there that little bit of sense of what if this isn't quite right?

PATO O'WARD: Every car is different. Every car has its little differences to one another regardless of the setup being the same or not. There are differences. This car, I've had a past with this car, a good past with this car. I'm not worried. It's been a great car to me. It's been a great car for the team.

I mean, ultimately I'm not actually worried too much about me with the car, I'm more worried about there's a lot of new pieces on the car that you want to get some running on to just let it kind of settle in. That's the most important part, yeah.

Q. We know how popular you are in INDYCAR, especially here at the Speedway. When you see all the young kids wearing your crew shirts, what kind of feeling does that give to you?

PATO O'WARD: It's cool. It's obviously a big part of why we do what we do, right? We want to be here to entertain people, inspire people. At the end of the day it is the greatest event in the world. I might be a little bit biased. But it's going down this Sunday.

I feel very lucky and fortunate to be in a position just to be in it.

Q. I was double-checking my notes, it looks like come to Sunday's Indy 500, it will mark your 100th career start in the INDYCAR SERIES. Six instances of INDYCAR drivers who had won in their 100th start, none of which have occurred in the 500. What would it mean for you if you were to win?

SANTINO FERRUCCI: That would be quite the day.

PATO O'WARD: Your first win.

SANTINO FERRUCCI: A lot of firsts. I could continue on with our record. Honestly, I think Sunday, we have a great car, we have great crew, there's no reason as to why we won't be there.

I think if we keep our heads down, worry about us, there's no reason to why we couldn't be doing that at the end of the day.

It's kind of wild, 100th start around this place. Just that milestone for me.

Q. Does it almost feel like yesterday that you made your first?

SANTINO FERRUCCI: Still feels like 2019, rookies around here. It's been fun. It's really fun, too, here when you have a really good car.

Q. Pato, you said you had a good history with the car. Where is that car coming from?

PATO O'WARD: Last year, all my race wins.

Q. As far as leading into this weekend, what is that preparation? What are you trying to work with your team to make sure is right with it?

PATO O'WARD: Not that I'm worried about the team. Engineering has a mind of its own sometimes with all the gadgets on the race car, the electrical. There's all the new bits and pieces that you want to make sure you get through the whole systems check.

That is the most important, just getting the systems running, connecting properly with telemetry. A lot of little things we want to make sure they turn on and the car is rolling around the Speedway with it still being able to do what it's supposed to. That is the main focus for me tomorrow.

If the car is feeling a little bit off, then we'll make changes. But that can happen with the other car, as well. Every day here is different. It always seems to find a way to surprise you. But yeah, no, it's going to be like nothing had happened on Monday.

Q. Santino, is this the place on the schedule you feel most comfortable?

SANTINO FERRUCCI: I don't necessarily say I'm most comfortable around here. I have the mindset of just understanding it's a long day. I've seen anything happen in this race. So have these guys. You just really have no idea. It's one of those races, you're just never out of it.

I think having that mindset has just bode well for me here. Having someone like A.J. to talk to in the garage area is really helpful for me. Just a good team around us, good people, good engineers, everyone very much pushing us

forward.

Q. Pato, has your car ever run at the Speedway?

PATO O'WARD: I think I've had a test or something. I don't have any worries about it. I know it's going to behave like it's supposed to.

Like I said, it's a very good car. I really like this car. I don't know why they actually removed it from me.

SANTINO FERRUCCI: I have a question for you. Does it have a name? You keep talking about "this car."

PATO O'WARD: It's got a name. It's a she. She's got quite the résumé (smiling). I promise to share this. I think Felix might know what is.

FELIX ROSENQVIST: I know.

PATO O'WARD: Don't say it.

FELIX ROSENQVIST: It's going back to his ex, basically.

PATO O'WARD: It's a bit of history there.

I will share the name if I win on Sunday.

Q. Felix, after what happened on Sunday, how fast were you able to put all that behind you and focus on pure race running?

FELIX ROSENQVIST: Pretty quick. I was definitely bummed. I've been so close to pole here three times now. It's just such a testament to building a good race car, driving a car very free around here. It's just such a cool thing.

No, when you look at it, it's like we're P4, that's pretty damn good start position. We're excited about it. Qualifying here is like its own little race weekend. Maybe next year.

Q. Pato, you said you're not worried about the car. You said after an accident like that, you're not particularly worried about getting back in the car. Talk about that psychology of coming to terms with the inevitability of having a crash around this place, your relationship with fear or the lack of it.

PATO O'WARD: Yeah, I mean, I'm a pretty big believer, especially when guys come here as rookies and they haven't had that first shunt. After you do around here, I think anything above 50 Gs in motorsport is considered a massive hit. You're lucky if you're below a hundred here.

I would say after the first time that I had one in my rookie year, I know Felix also had one in his rookie year, but you haven't.

SANTINO FERRUCCI: 2021, I broke my fibula here. I wrecked in Thursday practice following Takuma. I made Barstool because the guy took the selfie video.

PATO O'WARD: I don't know if you agree, but after you have that first shunt, one, you definitely feel more like a man when you get back in it. Two, I feel like it just puts some reality into your head. Like dude, you're moving. You need to be aware of your surroundings, be careful who you're running. You do grow quite a bit. At least I did.

I would say that is the biggest part is after that first one. I've had three here. They've all been pretty solid. Yeah, I'm going to get back in it like nothing happened.

Do you agree?

SANTINO FERRUCCI: I had great advice by Bobby Rahal. You're either going to lift in two, and that's the end of your career, or you're going to keep it flat. I'm like, All right, we'll keep it flat.

PATO O'WARD: It's no joke. The hits here are no joke. They hurt.

SANTINO FERRUCCI: You're almost guaranteed to injure yourself.

PATO O'WARD: Every time you strap into this race car, you need to realize, beyond what the safety has gone, how amazing these cars are now in protecting us, there's only so much the human body can take. Even like a small hit can surprise you how much damage it can do.

Yeah, I mean, I way much rather would be doing this than doing something else.

FELIX ROSENQVIST: Retweet.

SANTINO FERRUCCI: Same.

PATO O'WARD: We're so lucky that we are here and get to do this. We are kind of risking our lives, but this is straight-up badass.

THE MODERATOR: Trying to imagine an office 5:00-to-9:00 job.

PATO O'WARD: Probably a finance bro or something like that.

SANTINO FERRUCCI: As someone that lives in Dallas,
please no.

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