

NTT INDYCAR SERIES

News Conference

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Santino Ferrucci

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: The calendar still says May technically, but the schedule suggests we're moving on to Detroit, a return to the Chevrolet Detroit Grand Prix presented by Lear.

Certainly for Santino Ferrucci, finishing second last year, all of this after he comes off another top 10 at the Indianapolis 500. It was the eighth time he's finished in the top 10, doing so in all eight starts on the famed oval. The goal, keep that momentum churning.

Santino, good stuff on Sunday. Thanks for doing this today. How easy or difficult is it to turn the page after Washington is really three weeks at Indianapolis Motor Speedway.

SANTINO FERRUCCI: I feel like I've been packing my bus for the last two days, so... Quite entertaining. I've almost got it there.

Yeah, I wish we had the week off, but we continue on into Detroit.

THE MODERATOR: Before you know it, we'll be in St. Louis after that. So the season is in high gear.

SANTINO FERRUCCI: Yeah.

THE MODERATOR: As mentioned, a podium in Detroit last year. That place is fast, demanding, concrete barriers. You know the drill. What was it about last year's race that can carry over to this year for you?

SANTINO FERRUCCI: I think we had a pretty decent car. We got lucky on strategy. I think we did a really good job on that side of things. That's kind of what propelled us up to the front.

Hopefully this year we can bring a little bit more raw speed to Detroit. I think we struggled with the rear last year. The engineering team has done a great job. We'll see what happens when we unload.

THE MODERATOR: Open it up for questions.

Q. Santino, you mentioned you kind of wish you had the week off. We know about the three weeks, the long hours for the crews. Feels like we're quick to turn the page. Share your thoughts on that, expand on why you'd like to see us have the week off.

SANTINO FERRUCCI: Yeah, not necessarily for me, it's tough to go into the shop and see the crew that have been turning cars around, turn around cars to go to Detroit, when you're having 4 a.m. starts non-stop.

Yeah, I get that you want to ride the momentum as a series, but you also don't want to burn out your people that bring the cars to the track. Being a smaller team, I think it's a little bit more difficult for us to instantly turn these things around.

No, I get the idea of the momentum. For me it doesn't matter. I'm up in Indianapolis until post St. Louis. I'm with the bus and the dogs. My wife flies in and out. Yeah, a little different schedule.

Q. Just the significance of extending the record at Indy. I know we're supposed to turn the page, but I wanted to reflect on the magnitude of that. Your name is going to be in the history books for that record.

SANTINO FERRUCCI: I think it just goes to show that I've been super consistent around the Speedway. I think we struggled more than I would have liked on race day.

Looking back at it, I wish I had done a little bit more traffic running 'cause there's definitely points where I was happier with the car, points that I didn't feel as happy. I wish I kind of keyed off of those a little bit more.

It's kind of amazing, eight years here you're still learning things. We definitely came alive at the end. I got unfortunately a little held up on the second-to-last restart which I think kind of killed our run for a top five.

Proud of the team, proud of the effort. It also goes to show that having been here for eight years, having driven in the



top 10 with four different teams, the work ethic of all these teams to have a car that's also finished.

Not only on my side, but on the team's side, especially for AJ Foyt, we've put cars out there that we haven't had - knock on wood - any electrical [sic] engine weird failure. We had something weird on Sunday, but it wasn't the end of the world. Couldn't get the car into first gear. Electronic bug, but it didn't prevent us from racing.

Q. Obviously the picture shifts back to points and the championship. You're 15th in points. What do you need to do to regain the consistency that we saw, particularly in 2024, to repeat the kind of peaks we saw in this period of last season as well?

SANTINO FERRUCCI: There's been a lot of change I think with the crew. We're in a different crew this year. I think we've been just a little bit more unfortunate.

If you look back at St. Pete, lap one you're out. Arlington, it was on me. Barber went smooth. Phoenix was the strategy, but we still finished 11th. Indy GP, driving around with the rear floor, getting punted didn't help.

I don't think we've been inconsistent. I think we've just been unlucky. If you can tell me where to purchase some, I'm all ears. That would be fantastic.

I think that we'll hit our stride this year. I think Adam, my race engineer, has done a fantastic job. His first race as my full-time race engineer was Gateway last year. This was his first 500 as a race engineer. I think he did an amazing job.

I definitely know from experience, when you have an engineer that's the first race, first 500, versus going into their next, it is drastically different, the amount that they learn and they gain. The momentum is huge.

I'm looking forward to definitely the second half of this year, all these tracks that Adam and I have gone to. We can continue building off of our car.

We really started to hit a stride, like you said, last year with hitting some peaks. I think we can make them better.

Q. Multiple teams you've driven for. This is year four with AJ Foyt Racing. Even if there have been some changes inside the team, how much does that stability help you after a volatile phase of your career?

SANTINO FERRUCCI: I can never thank Larry enough for what he's done for my career. I'm just thrilled to be here year after year. I do love driving for AJ Foyt. I think I have

a long-term home here. I would like to start winning some races with these guys. I think that's really the next step.

We've been so, so close on so many different occasions. It's really hard to see when you're right there, it could be right in front of your eyes what you're missing, or sometimes you just need a little bit of a breakthrough. That is really the next step for me with this team.

Q. Relating to the 500, how difficult emotionally is it as a driver to come down from such a big event to the rest of the season and the discipline and the change in the track from the oval to the bumpy roads of Detroit this weekend?

SANTINO FERRUCCI: I wouldn't say it's more of like an emotional comedown. I think I'm much more fired up after Indy. I think I proved that in Detroit more than I would like.

I'm just super excited to get back out there. This place is emotionally draining and very hard, but it does instill a certain type of drive into you. Being here and being close and being in the top 10 eight years in a row, you almost want to punch something. That drive that it instills, that's kind of the tricky bit because how do you direct that passion into a productive gain for the team and for yourself.

That would be what we're looking for in Detroit. We had a great result there last year, which came kind of out of the blue. I'm really fired up with the engineers. I'm about to head over to the shop and make sure that we are all buttoned up. I've literally got my notebook right here. I'm ready to roll.

Q. Related to the race in Detroit, going to a street circuit where overtaking could be tricky, how do you as a driver balance being aggressive to make up spots while also avoiding getting caught up in someone else's mistake?

SANTINO FERRUCCI: I mean, I've kind of been on both sides of that coin. Honestly, it's chance whether you can predict what someone's going to do or not. Like I said, I've hit my fair share of people around that track, and I've been taken out there, too.

It's a street course. It's got a lot of brake zones, a lot of tight, slow corners. Yeah, I'm pretty sure that Max Papis taught me this when we were go-karting as kids. He said, If you're going to hit someone, hit them square.

We'll try not to use that advice.

Yeah, just want to kind of survive this weekend, get

 . . . when all is said, we're done.®

through it. I feel if we get it right, we'll be fighting somewhere in the top 10. Also I've seen this race where I started 12th, got punted at the start, went back to last, took a drive-through and still finished ninth. I mean, anything can happen here.

Q. Heading into Detroit, considering that it's a street circuit and the streets can change a little bit, weather conditions as well, how many laps does it take you to find the limit on the street circuit considering the nature of the streets can change?

SANTINO FERRUCCI: Probably about five to six on this place. You'll see a lot of drivers, we'll go out, we'll get the tires warm, then we'll start pushing our brake zones. It will take us five to six laps, maybe seven. We set the pressures lower, so it takes a little bit longer to come in. The first run is lengthier after that. After that it's three- to four-lap stints.

Unfortunately with Detroit, with the rough winters, you have no idea what hole is going to show up. The storm grates are hopefully still in the same location.

Q. Based on what you've seen from your team and car so far this season, what are you expecting your best tracks to be?

SANTINO FERRUCCI: I would say I'm expecting Road America to still be good for us. The rest of the ovals. I know we're testing as a few road courses. I'm expecting to have some pace there. Some of my Achilles' heel tracks are out of the way now, so it's nice. I really like the second half of this calendar. I think our biggest struggle on the calendar might be DC. We're in the same boat as everybody there.

It's funny, all my tough tracks are at the start of the year. I go into everything I like after this.

Q. I want your thoughts on the uniqueness of the Detroit Grand Prix circuit, which is the double pit box. Do you believe the double pit box helps you with strategy or creates better racing compared to other street circuits that you experience on the INDYCAR schedule?

SANTINO FERRUCCI: Of course. The one great thing about the double pit box is the pit distance. You don't lose time. Honestly, that's the worst part about our racing, when we're trying to defuel, tire races, when we have these long, slow pit lanes, especially on ovals. Like I said, I'm a huge proponent to this. I hate this dual stage limiter that we do. Drives me nuts. It puts you two laps down. If the yellow comes out at the wrong time, your race is over. I

think it deteriorates all the racing.

The best thing we've ever done is the dual-sided pit lane. It is chaotic, hectic. It's still safe, it's so wide, it's short. You don't have to worry about losing a ton of time.

If it was up to me, I'd go back to 60 miles an hour speed limits just about everywhere that's a big track, 45 for the street courses. Unfortunately I almost stand alone in that opinion.

Q. Do you or your crew have a preference on which side of the pit road you like to work on?

SANTINO FERRUCCI: I think the best side is for the fueler. That's kind of what is most important. Fueling is really good on the left side. That's the kind of side you're going to favor for the pit lane. Right-handed guy, it's the easiest way to watch him come and plug in. That would be the ideal scenario.

Q. How does it feel to move on from the 500 to Detroit? How does it reset you physically and mentally after the event?

SANTINO FERRUCCI: Yeah, I would say you're going from a high mental stress race to a very physical race. It's kind of weird 'cause, like, the cars in my opinion around the Speedway are quite easy to drive. I think going into Detroit where your body gets a little bit more beat up before you get up into the swing of things is quite interesting.

No, mentally you have two, three days to rest and recover, kind of go through the emotions side of thing, basically reset, which is nice.

Q. Obviously back on a street course means we're back to the one-shot Fast Six format in qualifying. Your take on some of the pros and cons there, whether it's something you like, should be more widely adopted?

SANTINO FERRUCCI: I wouldn't say more widely adopted, but I think for street course racing, it's pretty cool. When they initially rolled it out, I was like this could be really dumb. After doing it and witnessing it, obviously the way that they do it now I think it pretty awesome. I think it's fun to watch for the fans.

Yeah, I kind of like the one-shot qualifier for the street courses. I think it's rather fair. It's not something I think you can do on the road courses just 'cause the way the tires are, temperature buildup is so different.

The street courses, the tire is nice and soft, has

degradation, all those things which is really good. I wish we carried the same tires street course to road course. It would make it very fun.

Q. Finally is it clear the push to pass rule change, finally you understood all that modifications, all that changes. Was the dynamite question for podcast two weeks ago.

SANTINO FERRUCCI: The rule book is very unique here, to say the least. I kind of always understood the push to pass rule. Yeah, I was one of the people that used it in Long Beach. No, I'm not mad about it. No, I still don't feel bad for the other circumstances to which it was used previously.

I think what INDYCAR did was good. I think that that change is easier for them to regulate. It's kind of funny to me how when the series makes a mistake like that, I don't know, a decade since we've had push to pass, everybody harps on it. Instantly negates a rule change.

I don't know. I think mistakes happen. If they want to change the rules because the public opinion wants to see the rules changed, then we change the rules, totally fine. If it benefits the racing, I'm all for it. If it hurts the racing, I'd probably be against it. I think it benefits the starts and restarts. I think it spaces out, or it puts more people together. I think we're going to find out in Detroit.

I think for the road courses, it's a great thing. I think for the street courses, it's a mistake. But hey, we'll see.

Q. What need to do different to catch a best result than last year in Detroit?

SANTINO FERRUCCI: I think we just need to unroll a little bit better with the car. I think we really struggled last year. I thought our race car was really good.

We had terrible qualifying cars and fantastic race cars, which is mind-boggling to me. This year we focused so much on qualifying car, I don't think our race cars have been quite as competitive. Working with my race engineer, we've been trying to understand that.

A lot of it is the tire change year after year. Firestone always changes the tires. I think we had a really happy race car. If we could figure out how to get back to that, we'll be good.

THE MODERATOR: Santino, are you driving up to Detroit in the motor coach?

SANTINO FERRUCCI: I will be. I'll be leaving here shortly

after this call. I might bring my truck back. I got to go over to engineering. Maybe I'll go pick up lunch at Working Man's Friend and bounce back up to Detroit.

THE MODERATOR: You should pick up the crew, what they're going through right now, trying to get you a win at Detroit.

SANTINO FERRUCCI: That's why I'm also going over there. I don't know if they're there anymore. I think they might be home today.

THE MODERATOR: I saw the truck on 465.

SANTINO FERRUCCI: I imagine they loaded up last night and are taking it today.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you.

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