

NTT INDYCAR SERIES

News Conference

Saturday, July 4, 2026

Christian Lundgaard

Pato O'Ward

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: Good afternoon. Wrapping up qualifying for tomorrow's the Honda Indy 200 at Mid-Ohio presented by the 2027 CR-V Hybrid.

Christian Lundgaard in the No. 7 Arrow McLaren Chevrolet, best start here at Mid-Ohio, second straight front-row start at Mid-Ohio Sports Car Course, first pole since Portland last year, fourth career NTT P1 award. Pato O'Ward will start second, third front-row start here at Mid-Ohio and third of the season.

Congratulations, Christian. Your thoughts on pole position and having the best view of tomorrow's race at the start?

CHRISTIAN LUNDGAARD: Yeah, we've been fast all weekend, so I feel like it was just the goal at the end of the day. Obviously we qualified second here last year, and to do it any better, it was one position.

To have it as a team, too, at the end of the day, if it's one way or the other, I don't think it really matters. We're leading the show tomorrow, and we can dictate the pace. So I think that will be at least our strongest benefit tomorrow.

Q. Pato, just your thoughts on a great day for the team?

PATO O'WARD: Yeah, I think it's a great result for the team. Like Christian said, I think we've got the best view going into Turn 1. I think it's -- well, Turn 4 because we're starting on the backstretch.

But yeah, it's a good look to have an all-papaya front row and the cars have been strong all weekend and they have been in the past, obviously.

It's not a stranger for us to look forward to a Sunday here and feel like we can really have a very strong ending result.

Q. Christian, as a competitor, after what you've been

through the last 24 hours, just how cool is this to be able to pull this off, just from a competitive aspect?

CHRISTIAN LUNDGAARD: Well, at the end of the day for me it's just noise. Once you're in the car, I don't really think anything matters. The talk is for next year, not this year.

I still have a job to do and a job to finish.

Q. Pato, as his teammate, you've probably developed a pretty close relationship with him. How cool is this from your standpoint to see what he was able to do even though it kept you from winning the pole?

PATO O'WARD: No, I think we've had a very strong pairing, to be honest, in the last two years. This is not the first time that we're sharing a front row, and I think what we strive to do every single weekend is just this, right? Like this is what we want to be doing. This is where we want to be positioning our race team and our engine manufacturer, which it was good to see this qualifying session was quite strong for Team Chevy, so thanks to them for bringing a good package for us this weekend for all of us to try and get it done.

Yeah, this is what you want when you have a teammate. You want to be able to push each other. You want to be able to keep striving for the ultimate ceiling, right, which a lot of the times you don't know where it is.

So far, I think we've done our jobs, and we're trying to really maximize the package that we've got.

Q. Christian, you mentioned you've been fast in every session. Do you almost feel like going into tomorrow you might have more confidence than you've had at any of the other races so far this year?

CHRISTIAN LUNDGAARD: I mean, you know, I was very vocal in the beginning of the season that we just had to qualify better, right, and the results would be even better than they had been at the time. We proved it at Indy Road Course, qualifying further up. Road America is still sort of a mystery to me how we ended up where we did. Obviously the car was fast, but we needed some lucky



yellows to just put us back in play.

Here we can dictate the pace. We know the car is fast in race trim. I don't necessarily think it gets me more confidence in that regard. We just have to focus on in warmup tomorrow to be able to produce the best race car, as well.

Q. A couple months ago Tony Kanaan was talking about your contract and said when he drove, he always told owners or whoever his boss was that he wanted them to let him know if he was being fired. Has he or Zak Brown or anybody extended that same grace and transparency to you in the past few weeks?

CHRISTIAN LUNDGAARD: I mean, there's a lot of talks back and forth. At the end of the day, I still have a job to do now. What next year brings, at the end of the day, I still don't know. My guess is as good as yours is from that regard.

But as long as I keep doing the best that I can and keep winning races, I feel like those results speak for themselves.

Q. Pato, you talked a lot about trying to get your first podium of the year. If there comes a situation where maybe you risk -- do you want your team to roll the dice if you have to win versus maybe play it safe or a top 3?

PATO O'WARD: I mean, I don't think we're in a position to be rolling the dice, to be honest. We have a good position.

There's a lot of things that can happen. I've started in the front row other times this year, and we've had some happy pedalers behind that pumped us or take us out. You cannot control that. I cannot control that. I also cannot control if we have a hiccup in the pits. I cannot control that.

All I can do is maximize what I've got inside of the race car, and I truly believe that's what I've been doing this year. I don't think I've driven as well as I have this year. Sadly, the results I don't think are well correlated with that, but I think there's a lot of little things that have been costing us a lot of just much better results in certain areas.

My hope for tomorrow is just to have a clean race. I don't need the fastest pit stops. I don't need the best strategy. I don't need extremely lucky yellows. All I need is a nice smooth race, and I'm more than skilled enough to get the job done.

Q. For either of you, it seemed like yesterday it was so hot, you could really get a good gauge on the softs. Did you get a good gauge today, and did they react the

way you expected them to?

CHRISTIAN LUNDGAARD: Well, I think considering all qualifying laps was done on lap 2, I feel like that is a pretty good indication.

Q. Christian, starting on pole, how much does that mean to you to get that spot, especially with all the noise?

CHRISTIAN LUNDGAARD: Yeah, I mean, it doesn't really make a difference, right? For me, I'm going to continue to do the best that I can. It's not like I've had more motivation this weekend than I've had any other weekends. I continue to show up and do the best that I can.

Some weekends are better than others, and that's life. That's racing. Obviously to get a pole is great. It shows that we figured something out from our qualifying package, which we're going to try to bring on to the rest of the season.

Q. To continue your run of dominance on road courses, I feel like Alex Palou has been able to circumvent that into many championships here in INDYCAR and you're pretty good on the street courses, as well. How does it feel to prove that, as well, or continue to prove that?

CHRISTIAN LUNDGAARD: You know, right now I'm taking it a day at a time. Of course I'm focused on the race tomorrow. I feel like there's races coming up as a team where we'll be strong, and that's really where we have to maximize on the 10. We have a better chance of winning tomorrow than obviously he does, and I feel like I can speak for Pato, as well. We're fourth and fifth in the championship; this is a good opportunity for us to score more points and catch up.

But again, we can't really keep thinking that way. We need to be doing the best that we can and win races, and then the rest will take care of itself.

Q. How much does it mean to you guys as a team to get one up on Alex Palou this weekend?

CHRISTIAN LUNDGAARD: I mean, I don't really know. This is what we're here to do. It hurts losing, and at the end of the day, he's done a tremendous job for such a long time. Still is. Just wasn't his day, I guess.

PATO O'WARD: He's still leading the championship. Today means nothing. I'm not focused on Alex. I'm trying to maximize my weekends. I think when you do that, that's what's going to take you to have a chance to win the



championship, whether it's going to be against Palou, whether it's going to be against Newgarden, whether it's going to be against Malukas. You don't know.

But I think it's important to really focus on what your packages are because a lot of the times you might get pretty close in points. No one has in the last few years. But you can be pretty close in points at the end of the year.

The good races for each of you can look very different. I think it's just all about knowing what's under you.

Q. Christian, with the delay and the rain, did you feel any difference grip-wise on the track? And earlier today your driving colleagues from INDY NXT said it's very difficult to overtake in a traffic situation. What's your opinion about that?

CHRISTIAN LUNDGAARD: I mean, on the rain delay, I love driving in the rain, so even if it was going to be wet, I wouldn't really have cared too much. I feel like all of us would have enjoyed it.

I wouldn't really say there was a big difference, in all honesty. I feel like the lap times were relatively similar. I think we're all expecting a bigger speed gap compared to P2, but again, the temperature is warmer, so that slows us down.

Going into tomorrow, we have strategy as well. It's between a three- and a two-stop, so there's plenty of opportunity I feel like.

Yeah, it's going to be difficult to overtake if everybody is doing the same thing, but I feel like we'll find our way.

Q. Pato, you mentioned at the end of Detroit that you felt like the Chevy was a little bit behind the Honda and you mentioned a couple of minutes ago that you feel like that gap is kind of closed. Obviously five of the Fast Six were Chevrolet powered. Where has that gap been made up between the two engines for you?

PATO O'WARD: Everybody at Chevrolet and GM have really put on a board really what we needed, right. They're very aware of where we've been lacking or where we've had to improve. I mean, every single -- after every single weekend they're always trying to give us more tools, more of everything just to be able to get us to that position, whether it's a feeling, whether it's all around just better drivability. They're hitting every single angle, and I feel like they've really tried to cater, not just to all of us in the Chevy camp, but also to what the teams are specifically asking for. It's not always what we ask for is what Penske is asking for and stuff.

I think they've been great to work with all this time, and obviously we put all this time and effort telling them what we need from them.

They're doing as they should and like we are. We're pushing each other, and we're telling each other what we need to just have better chances at the end of the year because it's definitely been a tough one.

Q. Christian, you mentioned on Friday that it's just been business as usual for you in the cockpit. But you've had so much success this year, particularly on the road courses. Was there a change in the off-season? Did you do anything differently to prepare? Is there any kind of a mindset change, or is it just, as you said on Friday, business as usual?

CHRISTIAN LUNDGAARD: I kept playing golf. (Laughter).

No, in all honesty, I feel like we were gaining so much momentum throughout last year. At the end of the day, we had two great races in Portland and Laguna last year, two road courses, and again, they're still yet to come. What can we do there at the end of this year.

But I feel like our road course package has been really good on Sunday, and we've definitely struggled in qualifying. I don't think that's a secret. I think that's why today feels better as a team to be one-two because I feel like we definitely have struggled in qualifying.

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