

NTT INDYCAR SERIES

News Conference

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Pato O'Ward

Tony Kanaan

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: Two-time winner here at the Milwaukee Mile, Pato O'Ward. Leading race one well, as well.

PATO O'WARD: First time I win a race and I'm leading another one at the same time. That's a new one (smiling).

Today we fought really hard for that one. We were forwards, then backwards, then forwards. Good thing we stayed there.

Yeah, just fighting hard, determined. I think that was a great showing of just the hunger that we have to turn these ovals around this year. That was second-to-last opportunity. A little bit finish off the last one.

THE MODERATOR: Tony Kanaan, team principal at Arrow McLaren.

Good day today with Christian and Pato.

TONY KANAAN: My thought is I looked extremely nervous on TV and everybody is making fun of me.

Yeah, great result for the team. We came here and test. We were pretty decent in the test. I think was a statement yesterday. Pato is still leading that race. Longest race ever he's probably led for 24 hours.

Great result for the team. Great result for us. We are still fighting for the championship. Let's face it, second and third is really realistic. It's all we're trying to build.

Obviously Christian also did a fantastic job. I think that's why we've been working with him for whole year. I think he broke through. Hopefully that will be something he will carry on. That's all he needed, to get some help I guess.

People either will make fun of me or we're going to go battle the next whole year together.

THE MODERATOR: We'll start with questions.

Q. Pato, the man to your right was a beast here at the Milwaukee Mile. Now it seems like your second win in the last couple of years, you might be able to take over that mantle. What is it about this track that is so satisfying and really clicks with you?

PATO O'WARD: I mean, it's quite different to a lot of the other ovals that we go to. It was one that just sat very comfortably with me as soon as I came to test here in 2024. That was my first race here, that we also won.

I don't know what about it really. It's been a place... I mean, I wouldn't say every race I've done here has been phenomenal because last year I was kind of just... I just know what I needed this weekend, coming into this weekend, in order to put myself in a position to at least feel like I'm back in 2024 here.

That's what I've been searching for. Definitely on the edge, for those of you that were watching. But it's a show, right?

Q. What do you do over the next two and a half hours to get ready to close out a race that you're already leading?

PATO O'WARD: Yeah, got to make the car better. Yesterday was better. Today with the hotter track temps really exposed it. I was struggling with it so much more. Just got to calm that boy down a little bit.

Q. Pato, you talked about the struggles you've had on ovals this year. What is that work, that preparation, that came into this weekend?

PATO O'WARD: Hunger, kind of not taking no for an answer. Putting all our cards on the table really. Even for me, like, to close out this season, there really isn't much on my mind. If we try this, is it going to put us in a bad position? It's like if you don't try it, you probably will just accept defeat at this point.

Yeah, I'm open to just finding something because obviously all year it's been a big struggle. I've never struggled in an



oval. I've always been really strong. Going into an oval weekend for me, even when we have double weekends, it was like we can win both of them. If we don't win both of them it's because one of them went a little bit unlucky, maybe get on the podium or something.

They were always weekends that I had kind of in my pocket as like a savior for my championship to keep on racking up the points. This year it's been the absolute opposite a lot of places, sadly.

Yeah, we've turned it around - at least for race two, while still not finishing race one. But we're leading the other one. I'm confident we're going to make this car better so we can be a little bit more comfortable to not get my engineer and Tony over here some more gray hairs.

TONY KANAAN: I don't have any hair. I don't know what I'm going to lose. Heart attack maybe (smiling)?

PATO O'WARD: Trust me. I was feeling it in there.

Q. What were you able to do after the first pit stop that put you back?

PATO O'WARD: I kept getting stuck after that first pit stop. I was like, Shit! I just waited a little bit. Whenever the other sequences started, the yellows started coming out, restarts. I was like don't forget about your two old pals in between your legs, let's get this show on the road, yeah.

TONY KANAAN: Snap-on, too?

PATO O'WARD: One of these, bro (laughter). I'm sorry.

TONY KANAAN: Ask the question (laughter).

Q. With a long-term extension signed for this racetrack, how important do you think it is to stay in the Milwaukee market?

PATO O'WARD: Honestly, the fans here are great. The fans here are giving some great energy. Every time we come here, it always is such a great atmosphere. I definitely am on the Milwaukee train. We got to keep this on the calendar.

We got to go to places where people are excited for us to be there. We got to go to places where people want to go and see us. We're obviously coming off a weekend that I think showed exactly that, Washington, DC. It's crazy.

What you want to look at is you don't want to see an empty seat out there. You want to see it full of color and people that are pumped to be there.

Q. Obviously coming out here with two races, how are you going to take this little gap between races and reset?

PATO O'WARD: Not much of a reset. Kind of like an extension of closing out this year strong. We want to keep it up later today with race one that we haven't quite finished.

Going into Laguna, it's also been a track where personally I haven't had my Laguna weekend ever. I've had good qualifying there, but in the race I just haven't really found my way. I'm determined to find that because I want to close it out on a good note.

Oh, my God, we have this bad-ass livery on the 5. My livery is always the same all year, except maybe Indy that we do the white. We have this really cool livery and suit which I'm not going to tell you what it looks like, but it's definitely better than the one I'm wearing right now.

Q. Tony, you said that Christian was eventually going to figure out the ovals. Today he figured it out, in your words. Are you worried about competing against him next year?

TONY KANAAN: If I'm going to worry about things that I can't control, I'll go crazy.

I've always said that he was going to be a threat. The question was not that he could win on the oval, the question was when.

In my opinion, when I made the decision, I wasn't sure. I think if that was what took him to come up and bring himself to the next level, obviously we didn't give up on him, 'cause look what he's doing right now.

Hey, life is full of tough decisions on both ends. If that actually is what he needed, we're going to give him a hell of a fight next year, and likewise. The sport is going to be better. The fans are going to watch it.

Like I said, they're going to have a jab at me, then that's the way life is all about. I'm not going to dwell on my decisions. I'm not the person that I regret things just because.

I'm happy for him. He's a human being, also race car driver. Deserves to be in INDYCAR. Deserves to have a job. We agreed to disagree on my opinions and his opinions. That's quite normal.

Was really proud of him. That's when you show. That's



why I say, if that's what he needed to do what he did, good for him. What can I say? Maybe in a way I helped.

Q. Pato, physically how are you doing? Is the next race going to be more difficult?

PATO O'WARD: I mean, obviously won't be as long. I'm just going to hydrate, get some food in my system. Should be good to go.

Q. Pato, how much momentum does this give you going into next season, given you're going to have a couple changes within the team?

PATO O'WARD: I mean, I'm not unfamiliar with change, so... I don't really think it does much. Every year is starting from zero.

If we compare what last year was versus this year, it definitely doesn't look like we built off of it. Every year's different. Every year we change the tire. What we learned from a previous event usually doesn't translate. Aka, one of them was actually here. So glad we had the test to actually find what this year's tire was going to do.

So yeah, you just got to treat every year like it's a new one. Obviously the experience of the races under your belt is what ultimately allows you to make maybe wiser decisions.

Yeah, just because I did well here previous year doesn't mean it's going to be good the next. Also vice versa. You might have done very badly, doesn't mean you're going to do bad again.

Q. Tony, from the team perspective, does that give you any excitement going into next season knowing you've had a strong end to the season?

TONY KANAAN: If Zak gave any excitement to me?

Q. No. Does it give you excitement the end of the season that you've done really well going into next year?

TONY KANAAN: I think you guys know me enough, I'm plenty excited every day when I wake up.

Yes, my motivation hasn't changed. I think I made a lot of changes to the team. It's going to be up to us. There's a lot of work to be done.

Yeah, I'm working with the people I wanted to work. I have a lot of friends actually inside the team, people that have worked with me with all my victories in INDYCAR. Now some more.

I'm pumped. I'm ready to go. Still have a race to win today, though. Let's worry about that. I can come back to Zak that we won two races in a day. That would help me a lot.

PATO O'WARD: That's one for history. That would be a pretty cool day for the rest of our lives. I mean, in INDYCAR history.

TONY KANAAN: The last guy that did it was your future teammate.

PATO O'WARD: Dixie?

TONY KANAAN: Yeah.

PATO O'WARD: I'm going to buy him a goat. I'm going to deliver it to his front door. Have a goat. Kids probably going to be like, Yeah, we got a dog (laughter).

Q. Pato, it's rare when a driver has a long relationship with an engineer like you do with Will. When you do have long relationships, it usually means you have a lot of success. You're still achieving at such a high level after many years. Tell us about what makes the relationship so strong.

PATO O'WARD: I mean, one thing with Will is he really try to understand, like, my language and how I express what I need from the race car. I think that's very, very important whenever you're working with an engineer, they not have to read your mind.

But I'm a very vocal person and I show a lot with my hands. I immerse you into the car with me. He actually used to drive cars, so he knows a little bit of what I'm talking about. When I'm screaming on the radio, I'm sure he doesn't take it personal because it gets tough out there, gets tough.

Yeah, I mean, it's been a hell of a run so far. We've got some pretty strong Indy 500s together. We've got a lot of oval wins together, podiums. Obviously road and street courses, we've basically won on every and anything.

Yeah, definitely someone I enjoy having on my side.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you.

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