

IndyCar Media Conference

Friday May 19, 2017

Sebastien Bourdais Takuma Sato

Press Conference

THE MODERATOR: The first of our two drivers who will appear is Takuma Sato. Pretty good effort. Third fastest overall. I looked at your tow speed. That was good. You got that work done really in kind of a handful of laps.

TAKUMA SATO: It was quite good day. Very productive, I must admit. (Indiscernible) the car over the platform, six cars we have. Working quite seamlessly. So we share most of the data together.

Obviously, oval speed is sometimes a little artificial. Some people get tow. But it was obviously good to see we all up there. Especially non-tow lap, which is a true speed.

I'm pretty happy. It looks like I'm eighth quickest in no tow laps, I take it, concerning the conditions today. Where we are in terms of the car setup, I'm feeling better, actually enjoying the working all together with Andretti Autosport.

Definitely this is the best situation or environment compared to past few years of my experience in Indy 500 close to the qualify. This is a good preparation. It's nicely all coming together.

THE MODERATOR: Again, pretty impressive in those 23 laps. We'll open it up for questions.

Q. Obviously you know all about the challenges of coming from Formula One into IndyCar. What do you make of Fernando Alonso's progress, the speed he's shown? Impressive from the outside. From the inside, you have a better view of things.

TAKUMA SATO: Yeah, I think it's very impressive. Although, it's what you expected, what we expected, to be honest. Obviously Fernando is one of the best drivers in the world. Having had this much oval practice time, all the support from the team and friends, and teammates, of course - we - I think we expected him to be up to speed very quickly. Indeed, he did.

Obviously today is something new for him again. Fast Friday you break 230 miles per hour for the first time. He did drive extremely well, of course. Actually, the feedback, it's proper feedback. So we talk same language every single day after debrief.



Although he's learning, he competed in the same way. His engineer Eric has obviously tons of experience with a big team. We pretty happy. Nice to work with him, you know, in the same team. Extra attention from the team from outside, that's always good for Michael. We are very happy.

THE MODERATOR: We bring in the gentleman who was the fastest overall, picked up an additional \$10,000, and who has been in Victory Lane this year with Dale Coyne Racing. Always good to see you, Sebastien. Much like we mentioned with Takuma, we looked at your speed. Pretty good.

SEBASTIEN BOURDAIS: Yeah, there's never a bad day when you're at the front. Definitely happy with the way things turned out.

Obviously, we had a bit of another issue yesterday. Through a (indiscernible) in the car early this morning, it was on the money right away. That was pretty pleasing. The car felt good. We tried a couple of things and finished the session really happy with the speed and the car balance. Hopefully it stays that way.

It's a tricky place. When you get any sense of consistency through different conditions, sunny, shade, different track temps, humidity, wind, it always gives you confidence. You never know what's going to come at you the next day. I think tomorrow's going to be another example of that.

So Sunday might be pretty tricky, as well. We'll just hopefully be able to deal with those conditions very well and, you know, make it happen when it matters 'cause this is obviously awesome.

I can't thank Dale and Craig and Olivier and all the mechanics and everybody. Craig was the first one to tell me, Yeah, let's do it when it matters on Saturday and Sunday. It's pretty exciting just to be in the mix knowing that we seemingly have a chance to do well in qualifying. Every other time I've been there, I've never been in contention to really be any kind of factor, and that's just boring.

When you're in that position where you know there's going to be something you can do to actually play at the front, then hopefully it happens, because it's a heck of a lot more fun.

THE MODERATOR: It's always interesting for non-

racers to consider going that fast at Indianapolis boring, but I do understand your point. Questions for either of our two drivers.

Q. For both of you guys. Earlier today we heard Juan and Graham mention that qualifying here is not as important in terms of winning the race. Obviously for you guys points are important. How much stock do you put into qualifying? Do you feel if you do all that well, would it matter?

TAKUMA SATO: Yeah, I mean you can win from the back of the grid, for sure. But be in the front obviously minimize the risk, any possible damage early part of the race. It's always advantage. I think it's been third row, let's say top nine, wouldn't be much different. But nice to be in the front row.

I think risk/reward again. Sunday the top nine, looking at that. Obviously last year was very excited. So does every single year. But to go to the pole, you have to have a full commitment as well as some risky maneuver - not maneuver, but risky setup.

That's really driver and teams all just combination. But if you're in top six, top nine, I wouldn't be really bother. If I have opportunity, yes, of course, go for it. Other than that, it would be really nice.

To be in back, huge turbulence at the start of the race. That's very difficult. Working your way, you have 200 laps to do it. I guess everything is possible here.

SEBASTIEN BOURDAIS: Yes, same thing. I'm just going to echo Taku. I think when we saw Ryan, he started at the back, something like that. He just went through the field on the first stint.

When the car is awesome in race trim, it doesn't really matter where you're qualifying. So it's great if you do qualify at the front 'cause it's exposure for your sponsors and your team, rewarding for all their hard work. Like you said, there are points involved. It's almost a race win when you're on pole.

It's been hurting us pretty good for the last few years. You know, hopefully we can collect a few good ones on Sunday. But, yeah, as far as the race is concerned, it's pretty irrelevant.

Q. Seb, how have you maintained a positive attitude with all of the setbacks you've had in the past few weeks? How have you been able to stay positive going into qualifying?

SEBASTIEN BOURDAIS: Just have days like that. It's what this season has been for us so far. We've had really good days and really pretty terrible days. But the good thing is, you know, when we're given the opportunity, we seem to make the best of it. The car is quick. We're having a good time.

It's racing. You are always going to have ups and

downs. You just keep plugging away and just do your thing. Eventually hopefully it all averages out and you get more good days than bad ones.

Q. For both of you. (Indiscernible) said the drivers work very hard at getting a good racecar for Sunday. Once you start the race, how many options do you have? Are you pretty limited?

TAKUMA SATO: Yes and no. Fundamentally, you can't change the springs and stuff like that. You still have some tools, which is (indiscernible) front and rear, and weight jackers in terms of the cockpit side point of view. But, of course, front wing adjustments. Some teams does rear wing adjustments.

Aero-wise, once you set up the right height correctly, it should be corrected by Sunday, but then you can pretty much do everything.

Plus the tire pressure is one of the other tools, not only for the maximize the grip, but also you can (indiscernible) pressure the right and left, making not artificially but physically making different cross weight not only because the weight jacker.

You can still play the pressures, front wing, rear wing. Pretty much that's the only things you can. That's the way I think we have to live with, right?

SEBASTIEN BOURDAIS: I've been with bad cars and I've never turned them into gold during the race. Either it's good or it's bad. You can get a bad car to being drivable and average, but you can't turn it into a good car.

It's got to be close.

TAKUMA SATO: But also I have to say, there is some track (indiscernible), too, as well as wind direction change, or wind pickup or dying. You know, the temperatures overshadow.

These are extremely sensitive. Some cars working better, some cars not. So we have to really, you know, think about like forward thinking, that we have to make it last 30, 50 laps, or make it last a stint, make the best out of it. First few stint is just getting (indiscernible) out the car, even if you dragging too much downforce. Then just comes to you. That sort of a strategy is probably what you need.

Q. Sebastien, you talked about the weather, the things we've dealt with. I know it's not fun for a driver to have to deal with some of the things. But to prepare for the race, if you've seen so many different conditions, in some senses is that a good way to sort of get yourself set up for the race?

SEBASTIEN BOURDAIS: Yeah, I think, you know, the best car is the car that doesn't go away from you when the conditions change. You cannot predict everything. It's always different. The last time you're on track is

Carb Day. It's a quick time. The real last time you're on track, it's Monday. Between the Monday and the Sunday, you know, everything can change: the wind, the temperature, ambient on track, wind, sun.

So really a good car is a versatile car. It's just something you can be competitive and then adjust from there. But if it's just in a little box that it works, then as soon as the track temp goes up, you're just nowhere. It's pretty difficult to make it work.

It's also usually the car that allows you to be pretty good in 10 deep, you know, in traffic, and between that car and the car that's only good between behind or two cars.

There's a lot of variables in the race. The better car, the car that usually wins, is the car that goes through all these conditions better than others.

TAKUMA SATO: Yeah, I agree. I mean, we all in the same boat, same box. What you get is what you get. And we going to be pretty hot in the car anyway.

But I would choose rather like 80s temperatures for the spectators. If it's over a hundred, I know it's going to be hot for them to watching three-hour race under the sun. It would be nice to be a little cooler, breeze air, then you enjoy the race.

Q. I know a lot of the fans want to see the full show of qualifications. If weather dictates it ends up being one time through for everybody, are you okay with that?

SEBASTIEN BOURDAIS: If we're P1, yeah. You know, I mean, that's the thing, right? You always happy if the thing is in your favor. If you have a miserable first attempt, you're not making the Fast 9, you for sure want to get another shot. But that you don't always decide.

That's why I said, we'll take whatever comes at us. You can't control much with the weather, so you'll just have to make the best of that.

TAKUMA SATO: Well, nice to have some options, for sure. You know, is nice to have a second attempt. Having said that, I never done a second attempt. I'm okay with that. You know, everybody is in the same condition, I believe.

THE MODERATOR: Congratulations on a good day, guys.