

# IndyCar Media Conference

Saturday May 20, 2017

**Takuma Sato**

**Scott Dixon**

**Fernando Alonso**

**Ed Jones**

**Ed Carpenter**

Press Conference



TAKUMA SATO: Car was super fast. I must say big thank you to Andretti Autosport, the whole 26 car crew, engineers, and of course my teammates. Everything really worked really seamlessly over the past few days in practice. It was a great day yesterday, with Fast Friday. Bumped up the boost. It was great.

All the teammates really working together help me today particularly, because I know Ryan (indiscernible) so he had to take a little bit more downforce.

And following quite impressive Fernando's loose driving, great to see it. And, of course, Alex and Marco's run with all the data helped my engineer, Garrett. We decided to (indiscernible) up and then off until very last moment.

It was great. Car was working good. Usually lapping through the Indy Motorsports Speedway, usually for the qualifying I'm not enjoying. We don't like scrub the car. Means like the car ends up being absolutely neutral. You almost don't want to steer the car because any steer angle is scrubbing the speed.

We go into very trim the car loose, but you have to use the tools depending on the wind direction. In fact, today every single corner I used the tools, of course, back and forth weight jacker.

But car was very, very stable. So one point I was starting to really enjoy after the turn one and green-flag lap. Okay, let's have a (indiscernible) really nicely. Very free off the corner. So I think the car was really good. Tremendous support from all the team effort.

THE MODERATOR: Looked like you were off the wall quite a bit, so the notion is there was still something on the table that you might have been able to get.

TAKUMA SATO: I believe so. I didn't have to use all the road up, particularly on exit. The car rotates very nicely. It was actually beautiful to drive in that kind of

way. I really enjoyed it.

We have still room to improve. We will see all the data today, gathering it. We'll see tomorrow's competition for qualifying.

THE MODERATOR: Takuma, thank you very much for coming in.

TAKUMA SATO: Thank you.

THE MODERATOR: Fernando Alonso, I was trackside. One thing that is absolutely obvious is you have made a lot of fans at the Indianapolis Motor Speedway. There was a tremendous roar. Not only was it a good time, but you put the time up when the conditions probably were not the most favorable. Talk about it.

FERNANDO ALONSO: Yeah, I think the day was smooth for us. I think this morning when the weather came in, definitely put a little bit of a stress on everyone. Obviously you have only one attempt, one shot, so you cannot get it wrong.

So, yeah, we tried to put the run together. I think was not perfectly okay in terms of balance, in terms of driving myself, that I keep learning on this format.

Yeah, useful run today, useful lessons. So tomorrow I will try to do better and find more speed.

THE MODERATOR: Questions.

**Q. Fernando, you have competed against Sebastien Bourdais when he raced in Formula One. I don't know if you had a chance to see his crash. What is your reaction to that vicious crash he had earlier?**

FERNANDO ALONSO: Definitely, that's the most important thing of today, you know, that Sebastien is okay. He seems to be okay. Yeah, definitely I was doing the interviews when the crash happened. I need to see more precise what happened. It seems the car went loose into one, he lost control unfortunately.

But, yeah, as I said, he seems okay. I know him from F1 time, and also yesterday we were talking in the casino, in the event, all together about the cars, about how he feels here, how fast he was on Friday. He was still very fast today until lap two.

Hopefully everything is okay with him. Quick recovery,

and welcome him back here at the track as soon as possible, if not tomorrow, in the next days.

**Q. Fernando, with the rain before the official qualifying started, everything was delayed. How was the grip level? All the rubber was washed away. Was it difficult to drive?**

FERNANDO ALONSO: Yeah, it was difficult. I think the grip was not as high as on Friday, as yesterday. I felt the car a little bit loose today, more difficult. I think it was the same for everyone, especially the first couple of cars.

I think my timing on the qualifying was not the best. I think now at the end with the cooler track, the track was faster. But definitely was better, my time, than the first guys. When I saw Juan Pablo being the second car out there, things like that, definitely I think he found the track quite bad.

So, you know, I was in the middle, so let's say that I was lucky. Today was all about being in the Fast 9. We did it, and tomorrow is the real thing, so let's see.

**Q. You said there's more to come tomorrow. What do you actually need out of the car? Just a question of trimming it back more? Is there a balance improvement do you want to get? How aggressive are you going to be in shooting for a pole position tomorrow?**

FERNANDO ALONSO: I think both. We need to review the downforce level. We adjust anyway the downforce level to the conditions. So today, definitely when we run, it was quite hot in that moment, quite sunny. So we see tomorrow what the conditions exactly are at the time we are running, and we will decide on which level of downforce.

On setup change, probably I think we can do small tweaks to the setup to make the run a little bit more comfortable, a little bit more consistent hopefully. And also my side. You know, I need to now get back to the office with the engineers, listen to Takuma, to Marco, to Alexander, what they feel, what they do corner to corner, how they prepare the tires on the warming lap, et cetera.

Useful things that I will learn today, tonight, and I will put tomorrow on the track.

**Q. When you compare this qualifying attempt to other races where you've qualified in Formula One, other forms of motorsports, how does the difficulty of what you did today compare to what you've done in Formula One and other forms of motorsports?**

FERNANDO ALONSO: I think similar. All qualifying are tricky, you know. I go to my go-kart place, when I have put new tires. I have 15 kids watching me with a timer on the hand. Is very tough, you know. So every qualifying you do, you go against the physics of the car

and the physics of the circuit in that particular moment.

It gets stressful. It gets difficult, tricky. But at the same time, you know, huge adrenaline when you cross the line.

THE MODERATOR: Congratulations, Fernando. We'll see you tomorrow.

Scott Dixon joins us. I was taking a look at the nine who are going to move on. Obviously you join the ranks of former winners. Fernando is a world champion. We have a couple of drivers who absolutely right down to the last lap almost won this race. There's some pretty normal guys. Was that the group of drivers you looked at when you thought, Here is who I have to beat to get in that top group?

SCOTT DIXON: I think it was a lot more of the unknown. You see big numbers during the week and people that are fast. The one that obviously stood out for me during the whole week was Bourdais. Thinking of him, hoping he's okay. It was definitely a big hit. Hopefully he should be fine.

But I think he was definitely going to be the one that had a clear advantage I think over the rest of the field. So I feel bad for that.

But, yeah, you know, I expected maybe Hunter-Reay to be a little better, some others to be a little better. Some got in that maybe we didn't see, as well.

Today doesn't mean a whole lot. Tomorrow we'll come back. I think we were in the tougher kind of conditions. Track temp was definitely very high when we did our attempt, the sun was out. Definitely cooled out with the ambient and the downtime with the crash. Hopefully that will help us close the gap tomorrow when we run at similar times.

But definitely the usual suspects in some ways that I think we saw out there. Yeah, we'll see what tomorrow brings. Hopefully the weather holds off and we can get to run it.

THE MODERATOR: Questions.

**Q. With the team's shift from Chevrolet to Honda, were you surprised by the fact that Carpenter's guys and Will were the only guys up front with Chevrolets?**

SCOTT DIXON: We're always surprised by the Carpenter cars. They run a very odd configuration. It runs very fast. Almost race-level downforce. It's quite interesting to watch.

You know, Ed is fantastic around this place, has been on the pole many times. They do a hell of a job at this place, actually a lot of the tracks that we go through throughout the season. Definitely happy for him.

Hopefully we can overcome that tomorrow.

But I think we only really see it from the side we're on with Honda right now. We know this is a track, at least with the aero kit, we're on more of a level playing field. Whereas the short track ovals and road and street courses we have a hefty disadvantage that we have to make up.

Honda HPD have been pushing extremely hard. So far it's been decent. But the thing that we're all gunning for is obviously in a week's time. If we can start closer to the front, it will definitely help.

**Q. For the shootout tomorrow, will there be any changes to your car to get it faster?**

SCOTT DIXON: Obviously once we get closer to running time, we'll understand the ambient conditions. At this place, I think trimming is a big advantage. If you can run a little more trimmed out, you'll pick up speed. But it's a fine line with degradation and falloff that you get throughout the run.

I imagine aero configuration will change quite a bit tomorrow if the conditions are a little cooler.

THE MODERATOR: We are joined by Ed Carpenter and Ed Jones. Ed, close, close, close.

ED JONES: Yeah, it was obviously very close to the top nine. We just missed out. It's frustrating to have to be the second to last car out. We waited for so long, staying up there. I think the conditions obviously changed at the end. I think the track got better. So it was frustrating.

Yeah, at the moment we're just hoping the best for Seb after the crash. Hopefully we hear some better news soon.

THE MODERATOR: Ed, pretty exciting run for you. You've been on the pole before. Talk about your run.

ED CARPENTER: It was exciting, a little surprising. I felt like we had a good car all week. I felt like JR, myself and Will Power had the most speed in the Chevy camp.

Last night when we did our qual sim, I was falling off a little bit. I thought I could run 230 for a lap or two, but I wasn't sure if I could run four.

I think my seven-year-old son Friday when we were drawing for numbers, he was drawing. I was like, If you could pull, I told him five. Someone drew five. I was like, Let's shoot for six. He drew 60. I was trying to be positive. Good job, son, you got one number right.

He was the first person I thanked when I got out of the car because the conditions helped us there.

THE MODERATOR: Questions.

**Q. Ed, I notice you ran without either of the winglets on the rear pod, similar to what you did with Josef last year for his similar strong run. What was the decision that went into taking off that much downforce?**

ED CARPENTER: I mean, it's a process. I think every team has their own process, whether it's the Ganassi guys, Penske. We've had a lot of continuity in our team. As we've gotten older and started to get stronger, our development grows, you build up experience.

I think part of the reason I was really happy after that run, and it doesn't mean anything yet, we haven't won anything but a chance to win the pole, but it's really a credit to the team and all the work they do. It's hard to make cars fast around here. It happens all during the wintertime, preparation coming in. So it's fun to get runs like that, to be able to give them thanks.

**Q. Ed, how much pause do you take when you see something, a crash like Sebastien's, on a day like this? Even as a veteran driver, does it make you at least second guess for a moment anyway?**

ED CARPENTER: It takes your breath away. I was watching it in the garage. That's one of the biggest single-car qualifying crashes I've seen around here. As soon as I saw him correct and the angle he was going in at, you knew it was going to be big. I'm hoping he's okay. It was good to see him moving around the amount we did see him moving around. Hopefully we'll get some good news tonight.

But things like that happen. I love doing this. I love being here. I'm sure Scott is no different. When you do it for this long, you see a lot of things happen, it's something you talk to your family about, and you're all committed in together.

When you get in the car and put your helmet on, it all goes away. We're out there to do a job, to entertain the fans, do the best job we can for our team and sponsors.

It does take your breath away when you see it. When you get out there and get into battle again, it all goes away.

**Q. Ed, concentration on the run after Sebastien's accident, in turn two there was a spot covered with this white stuff. Was it difficult to concentrate not to hit the spot?**

ED CARPENTER: I was trying to avoid it just to not get the oil dry on my tires, to not hurt them at all. Other than that, like I said, you have got to block that stuff out and focus on the job at hand. It's hard enough to run four consistent laps here when you're just thinking about that. You just got to zero in.

**Q. Ed, Hondas have had the speed all week in practice. Given the circumstances of the day, aside from having a Chevy engine, the rain, where you were in qualifying, did you think you would have a chance to get yourself in the Fast 9?**

ED CARPENTER: I thought we had speed for the Fast 9 most of the days. Last night I wasn't so sure, mainly because I wasn't sure our dropoff was going to be good enough.

We kept at it. I was here late working last night with my engineers. Even through the afternoon, so... You just got to keep chipping away.

But the team did a good job. The car was great. The conditions played a factor, but that's the way it goes sometimes. We'll see what happens tomorrow.

**Q. Ed, because it rained pretty hard, did that make any difference in the car when you came out?**

ED CARPENTER: I don't really worry about the rain here. Some tracks I feel like when they get real green it makes a bigger effect. But here for short runs like that, I don't think it's that big of a difference. Maybe if it's a totally green track and you go out for the start of the race, the first set of tires maybe wear a little more.

But, you know, for runs like this, especially as nice as the weather was today, it's not something you really think about. Don't know.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you very much for coming in, gentlemen. We'll see you tomorrow.