

IndyCar Media Conference

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Patricio O'Ward

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: You grabbed a top-10 finish. Talk about the downside sliding, then building your way back.

PATRICIO O'WARD: It was a very eventful race. In the beginning, it's really hard when you haven't really done a stint on the tires that you don't really know, that you're not really familiar with. I tried to do my best, but I think by lap eight or something, the stint is 22, I was having a lot of trouble controlling the traction. I saw Rahal started to catch. I had like a whole group of people trying to attack in the back.

The beginning was just hectic, it was nerve-wracking. I think in the beginning I did a good job to stay in fifth. But the tires didn't last with me so long. I just got shuffled back.

In practice I didn't do any passing, so that was something I had to learn during the race. After my first pit stop, I stayed for a whole stint behind Kanaan. I could not pass him. Then after the second pit stop, I just decided to send it. Once I got by him, it was a lot easier for me to know how to get around other people. I think by then we were 16th or something. I'm not going to finish here, let's put our head down and start passing people.

I made my way to I think 10th or so. After my third pit stop, we got around Hinch or Jones, Pietro Fittipaldi. We got around them, settled ourselves into ninth. I was following Newgarden.

The end of the race, it was a very long race, I'm pretty sore. My back is pretty tired. My neck. That safety car kind of saved me a little bit so I could rest my neck.

But I think for a first weekend, for a first IndyCar race, when I came here my optimistic expectations was a top-10 finish. I achieved it. I'm really proud of the team, myself. They gave me a really good car. I think the more races I do, I'll start to get the hang of how things are. The first race is just so hectic and so crazy. I don't know how people are going to be racing, how restarts are. I have a really good idea now. I think I would expect myself to be way stronger the next time.

THE MODERATOR: Did you anticipate a busy first couple corners and did you get that?

PATRICIO O'WARD: I did, yeah. I saw Power was

trying to get around Pagenaud, Rahal. I had a bunch of people behind me. Just tried to keep them there. Like I said, everything is just so much faster. The aero wash was pretty big. When you're right behind someone, the car did not stop. I had a few scares. But I was lucky not to hit anybody.

It was just a completely new learning experience, something new. Honestly something I haven't been close to.

THE MODERATOR: Questions.

Q. When do you go to Brian Barnhart and ask him for a full-season contract?

PATRICIO O'WARD: I told him today, I said, Hey, how was that? He seemed pretty happy. Maybe I get a call soon (laughter).

Q. You were calling in begging almost to pit early on. They told you no.

PATRICIO O'WARD: I was begging. I was on my knees, man. I could not handle the rear of the car. Once Rahal got by me, I sunk. I said, I have to pit. I'm going to lose, like, 20 seconds if I don't pit now.

It's just really hard when you first go on those reds, they're so soft, you really have to know how to manage them. For the second reds that I got, I did a way better job. Like I say, it's just things that you have to learn in the moment. I learned a lot of things today. I know a lot more than what I came into the weekend with.

I think if I get another chance you could see a way stronger O'Ward.

Q. Did they start giving you some hints telling you what you could do to help the car a little bit?

PATRICIO O'WARD: He told me, like, maybe lap five, lap seven, Okay, 10 more laps.

I said, Okay.

I think I did, like, eight laps. In the eighth lap I said, I need to pit.

He's like, C'mon, buddy, I need 10 more.

What? No. You told me 10 laps like eight laps ago, it should be two.

I could not hold onto the car. I said, I'm pitting. I don't

care where I end up. I am pitting now.

Pagenaud dove in. If someone is diving in, I'll be okay.

I guess it's because the concrete of the racetrack was just hot. It was greasy. I was pushing pretty hard not to get passed in the start. You obviously have some moments whenever you're fighting with people, just think that's what caused the reds to go off a lot quicker.

Q. You said earlier you have to learn to pass. Does it mean you don't know what is the behavior of your rival is when you try to pass them?

PATRICIO O'WARD: What?

Q. You said you couldn't pass Tony Kanaan. Does it mean you don't know how he will behave when you try to pass him?

PATRICIO O'WARD: When you move up in a class, usually it's a lot harder to pass. I didn't pass anybody in practice. I didn't know what to expect if I dive bombed, I didn't know what to expect on the situations until I just got frustrated and I just sent it and it was fine. Now I know the car will stop (laughter).

Q. What surprised you, what did you not expect that you learned? What do you think you're coming away with in terms of a learning experience?

PATRICIO O'WARD: Learning experience? I think I learned how to fuel save. I learned how to take care of the tires. I learned how to be patient in a way. You can get pretty frustrated. If you start so far up, you can get pretty frustrated if you look at yourself and you're, like, 10 positions worse.

But then with just pit stop sequences and stuff, sometimes that can happen. In my case, it was the hard way, it wasn't pit stops, it was just me getting passed. So I knew the only way I would get around people was to pass them back, so I passed them back. Some, not all of them.

Q. There's been a lot of good drivers coming out of the Indy Lights. Seems like your first race debut is really opening a lot of eyes how good the talent is that comes out of Indy Lights. How do you feel about that?

PATRICIO O'WARD: I feel really good because a lot of people started complaining about us this area. Oh, there's seven cars, blah, blah, blah. It doesn't matter, it only takes two cars to have a competition. I think we proved that the level was good. In the past years they've been, like, 15, 16 cars.

I don't know what more people want, but I'm really happy that I could show some speed this weekend because the Road to Indy is very competitive, and it really helped me prepare for IndyCar in a sense.

I think the Indy Lights is a great series. Getting

scholarship really opens doors to what my goal has been my whole life, I think for other drivers as well.

Q. What do you feel about your first IndyCar race?

PATRICIO O'WARD: Just a lot of learning experience, a lot of things I didn't know. I think the speed has always been there, but I just had to finalize some details within myself to race better. I think next time I get a chance in an IndyCar race, I should expect from myself to be way, way stronger.

I think we lost a lot of time when I was struggling with the people passing me. But if I cannot let that happen, just focus forward, I think the results are going to come by themselves.

Q. (No microphone.)

PATRICIO O'WARD: I'm tired (laughter). My back. I got out, I can't even carry my bags to go home. I'm really tired. That safety car really, really helped me.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you.