

# NTT IndyCar Series News Conference

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**Press Conference**

## Takuma Sato

Rahal Letterman Lanigan Racing



THE MODERATOR: We are joined by Takuma Sato. Takuma, a very start-and-stop kind of day.

TAKUMA SATO: Yeah.

THE MODERATOR: Any day where you have delays is a little challenging. How do you and the team handle a day like today?

TAKUMA SATO: It is unfortunate today by weather, so the program was interrupted and stopped a few times.

Having said that, today is meant to be shakedown the car, just check all the functions okay, feel it out. From that point of view, I think it was a very smooth day. I think Indianapolis Motor Speedway did a great job in terms of, what do we say, new coating?

THE MODERATOR: The sealing.

TAKUMA SATO: The sealing was a little smoother, as well. Felt all around the grip level was very consistent. I think we're happy.

In terms of the car, I mean, the condition is far from different from the end of May. I think it might be a lot hotter, of course. Today is a little bit artificial. We have more downforce because it's cooler condition, the engine pulls really well with getting cool air. I think it was a very fast day.

From that, I think we brought the new package over the course of the winter, engineers really go through all the details. Of course, every single team does. I think the Rahal Letterman Lanigan team did an amazing job for the preparation of the car.

The car performed out of the box, so I was very happy and enjoyed a few laps.

THE MODERATOR: Over the off season, IndyCar made a few small adjustments to the superspeedway package. Were you able to feel those out or will time tell?

TAKUMA SATO: I think honestly we have to wait a little bit more because I think IndyCar did some experimental front wings and stuff back in last October, right? My teammate Graham joined that test. He was positive.

We already briefed from the technical side, what it's going to be. Ideally, I think it's less balance shift in traffic, out of traffic. Hopefully, that works out.

But today, I mean, I got a big tow. The air was falling all around, but I'm not particularly following very close. The car is getting understeer when you get to the tow. Other than that, I don't feel massively different from last year. I think it's a bit too early to say.

THE MODERATOR: Questions for Takuma.

### **Q. How were the new tires? Were the conditions too bad to tell?**

TAKUMA SATO: Again, I think these conditions like new tire a lot. Obviously cooler temperature, more downforce. From the tire's point of view, they having happy time.

But I say the tire also helping for the balance, as well. I mean, today the car worked extremely well. The tire wear also much longer than expected, because usually very fast day, green track, bits of rain, so not really rubber down. This can be like within 20 laps, it's going to be worn out the tires. I think we did more than the 20. We did 20, 25 laps, and still feels very positive. I think Firestone brought a really good tire.

### **Q. Did the AFP impair your visibility at all?**

TAKUMA SATO: I must say just safety is first. I think all the R&Ds, experiments, over quite long time now, I think IndyCar made a great progress. Might not be the perfect scenario today, but I think at least in a week or something, very strong one before come to the superspeedway, which is very important for all of the drivers.

Of course, it is distracting from the visibility point of view. Better not to have anything, of course. I think things you just get used to.

First time jumping in the car, I wasn't sure how is going to be. Out-lap, first few laps, sometimes it was difficult. Imagine, basically you block one eye. Then you go watching an apex on your strong side of the eye, which is broken. So now the brain has to shift to the left eye to see it.

At the same time, you go into the wall, close to the wall, you are usually watching on the right-hand side, but supporting the left-hand eye. Now left-hand eye

completely broken by this.

Eventually, we will get used to, but this is a necessary modification. Compared to the halo in Europe, I think it's junior formula here, I think still there is a steps we need to move on. I think INDYCAR did a great job for that.

**Q. Do you think it's enough?**

TAKUMA SATO: I mean, I don't know honestly. I think nothing is enough in this world, right? In this situation, it's very difficult to predict. But at least it's supposed to be obviously doing a great job when you have a heavy debris coming to the cockpit. I'm sure it's going to work better, of course.

Not only for that, but it is interesting today because a lot of driver feels different airflow coming into the cockpit. I could feel that, too. Some driver having a little bit helmet lifting or things that come into the cockpit. You can feel the airflow, it's very different from last year, which is quite interesting.

But, again, in a worst-case scenario, if something happened in front, if debris comes, for sure this definitely protect us.

**Q. For a test like this, every team will have a checklist that they'll want to work on, try different things. Because it was interrupted today, the shakedown, from this morning you would have a big change in the afternoon, how many items were you able to check off and how many are left?**

TAKUMA SATO: Well, I would say probably 50% today. I think we've done half the checklist. I mean, we didn't expect tons of the work. I think all the program based on today's work. I think everything is domino effect. Everything going to be bigger later on.

Today, like I say, meant to be shakedown day. We shake down the car, everything function well. Some sweeps, we did it. It all worked well. Items on back-to-back week, we couldn't do it because of the weather. That's a shame.

Like I said, 50% is done. Things went very smooth considering the weather was like today.

THE MODERATOR: Takuma, thank you very much.

TAKUMA SATO: Thank you.