

NTT IndyCar Series News Conference

Saturday June 1, 2019

Press Conference

Alexander Rossi

Andretti Autosport

Takuma Sato

Rahal Letterman Lanigan Racing

THE MODERATOR: We are joined by Alexander Rossi, who finished second today. My guess is, not a happy moment for second place?

ALEXANDER ROSSI: Yeah, I guess. Yet again we're on the wrong side of the yellow. It's part of the NTT IndyCar Series. Josef (Newgarden) did a good job, didn't make any mistakes there on the last stint. I think we were definitely kind of on another planet.

Yeah, I mean, I tried to push him into a mistake. We were flat out. But he's a great driver and isn't going to make mistakes. Ultimately with a one-groove racetrack like that, couldn't go offline because it's wet.

THE MODERATOR: Pretty treacherous early on, then when you got to the slicks, as well.

ALEXANDER ROSSI: The slicks, by the time we put those in, pretty much there was a full dry line. Wasn't too bad. Definitely the first three laps of the race on the wets before they came up to temp, I had some pretty big moments.

Yeah, it was tricky. I think the car was great. We could control the gap with Scott (Dixon) pretty easily, manage the rain tires as we needed to. Ultimately just got jumped by Josef coming in a bit earlier before that yellow.

Q. From your standpoint, nothing you could do but blame it on fate. How tough are those to take?

ALEXANDER ROSSI: It's annoying. I mean, it's now three times, COTA, Indy and here. It's part of it. It ebbs and flows. Yeah, I mean, it's out of our control.

I think as a team; we did everything right. We executed. We got on pole. We controlled the race in the wet. Had a great pit stop, huge execution moment for the boys in the pits. They did a good job there to ensure we stayed in front of Scott and Will (Power).

Yeah, a flawless day for the team. Ultimately didn't go our way to be on the top step.

Q. With you and Josef starting 1-2, finishing 1-2 in the reverse order, was it kind of your two races to



lose?

ALEXANDER ROSSI: I don't know what position he was when the yellow came out, so... I have no idea. I mean, Scott and I seemed to be pretty clear of the field in the full wet conditions, so I don't know. I wouldn't say that Josef was there at the beginning.

Q. You were leading until you took the pit stop. Obviously you had to pit stop at some point. Looking back, could you second guess that?

ALEXANDER ROSSI: He just got lucky with the yellow. We didn't do anything wrong. We were waiting until we were in a window to make it on one stop. The wets were just about to kind of be at the end of their life. The track was about to be dry. Everything was working kind of as we wanted.

Just the (Ed Jones) car went into the wall right when Josef was in. Nothing you can do about that. That's just the way races fall sometimes, the way it works.

Yeah, I mean, you still have to go out and finish it. Like I said, we were on a different level compared to everyone else. He didn't make any mistakes, did what he had to do to bring it home.

Yeah, I think the best two cars ultimately were towards the front.

Q. I'm sure there's something in the rule book about when it's a rain race, becomes a timed race. 75 minutes... Almost kind of seems like we still could be racing. Do you wish there were a little more flexibility in that, try to go the distance?

ALEXANDER ROSSI: I think you always want to go the distance. We have to pay attention to the broadcast schedule. This was on a network, was a network race. You want to make sure you get the finish in for the people at home. I think that's very important, especially with the effort NBC is putting in, how good this past month has been for all of us. I understand it.

As a racer, you want to go the whole way. It makes sense. It wasn't that they cut it short because of weather or anything else. It was for a pretty good reason in my mind.

Q. This is the one race of the year where you can make it a great weekend in 24 hours. Weather conditions are going to be a lot better tomorrow. In a lot of ways is that a saving grace?

ALEXANDER ROSSI: I guess. I mean, obviously we

have a really fast car in the dry. We'll go out tomorrow morning and try to execute in qualifying again. Ultimately we came in farther back in the championship than we went in just because Josef won. So that sucks. But also the way it is.

Who knows how it's going to go tomorrow. Obviously they have a fast car. Scott is fast. The Ganassi boys are quick. My teammates are quick.

It's going to be tight tomorrow. It's going to require the normal amount of kind of perfection that we need over an IndyCar weekend to win. I'm not expecting it to be easy, but I think we have a good car. If we have a dry race tomorrow, hopefully we can start up front and have more or less a drama-free day.

THE MODERATOR: Thanks, Alex. We'll see you tomorrow. Joined by Takuma Sato who finished third in today's race. Takuma, we normally say if we see rain in the forecast, Takuma Sato is going to have a pretty good day. Were you excited about that?

TAKUMA SATO: Yeah, I mean, it was actually. Today qualify was tough one for us. Obviously Alex made a really great lap. I think we were second off the pace, Graham and I. I was struggling on the qualify. If it's a dry race, really tough afternoon.

As soon as we saw the rain, like yes, there's always opportunity. Might not turn out to your favor, of course. It's always a mixture of the conditions. When you had an opportunity, you have to make most of it.

I was happy to gain the position under the wet conditions. Even with the dry tire... The guys did a great job, the team did a great pit stop job. We made another position up after few laps of the dry tire.

You should always challenge it. Now dry line, you go to the maneuver, you have to go to the wet patch, which is always challenging. Ryan and Felix both drive really fair. I really appreciate those drivers. I was able to bring another third home, which I'm really proud of that.

THE MODERATOR: You alluded to Felix Rosenqvist, slight contact. Did you know he was there? You had a nice battle. Expound on that a little bit.

TAKUMA SATO: Obviously nobody wants to be overtaken. I think in the restart, condition is always tight after the temperature. There is opportunity after the long straight, hairpin on turn three. Yeah, I made a move into the inside. We both half the tire dry, half the tire wet.

I think Felix did a great job to keep both very clean nose. We were obviously fighting on the podium position. Going to be hard racing, but I appreciate his great driving. Hopefully it's all okay.

THE MODERATOR: Questions for Takuma.

Q. You were third at Indy. That's a great finish even here. Is it bittersweet to be third twice in a row? Is that good or bad?

TAKUMA SATO: No, it's never bad. Never bad. I think it's always great to be on the podium. Of course, as a racecar driver, you always want to win. So big congrats to Josef. He did a great job today.

Honestly, it's a team sport. We have to work together. Great credit to the team again, done a great strategy, pit stop.

The car fundamentally for tomorrow really we have to find speed, significant speed. You talk about one second, which is a lot. I don't know how much we can do overnight. For sure, it's very clever team of engineers at the Rahal team. Hopefully we can find more speed and tomorrow come up again, even if it's dry.

Q. On the flipside, you've had a hell of a six-day period in the points. How important is that to your season?

TAKUMA SATO: I think it's extremely important. If you cannot win, you get a third car, you get a third car. If it's a fifth-place car, you finish fifth. You might be surprised from my mouth to say that.

Always challenging, always trying to get the maximum points as possible. Last year we had a (indiscernible) experience at the 500, Sonoma mechanical failure. We lost a bunch of the points. This year, now is the time collecting valuable points. Even if it's third, I'm really pleased.

We have to hang onto every time opportunity. Hopefully by second half of the season, we will be challenging for the top three. That would be my ultimate goal.

Q. How difficult were the conditions in the first part of the race?

TAKUMA SATO: Extremely difficult. A, the visibility is issue because of the water spray. Secondly, incredibly slippery conditions. Once we get into the rhythm after the second lap, it's all okay. On wet tire, you can place wherever you want to, to be honest.

The most difficult part is the restarts with the dry tire, cold tire, only single-file dry line, a lot of wet patch. Particularly for Detroit, which is also unique and challenging, probably one of the bumpiest tracks behind Toronto, the surface difference and the colors, it makes you even more nervous when getting drier. It's difficult in turn one and two, we can't see which is the dry and the wet line.

I think all in all it is part of the racing. It is part of the job to be as hot as possible but as safe as possible. I think

as an IndyCar Series driver, we did a great job.

Q. How important is it to back this race up tomorrow with another result like this?

TAKUMA SATO: Oh, extremely pumped up, extremely important. It's great credit to the team. The boys, as well. Day and night is working on the car all the time.

Tonight, obviously I want to go to the bed and take shower, but I think we have tons of things to go through with the engineer. We have to make the car faster tomorrow. That's a great challenge. But we will try, whatever happens, right?

THE MODERATOR: Thank you, Takuma.

TAKUMA SATO: Thank you.