

# NTT IndyCar Series News Conference

Saturday June 8, 2019

**Press Conference**

## Alexander Rossi

Andretti Autosport

## Graham Rahal

Rahal Letterman Lanigan Racing

THE MODERATOR: We are joined by Alexander Rossi.

Alex, some really close finishes for you in the past couple of superspeedways. I know you wish you would have ended up one spot higher. Thrilling battle with Josef (Newgarden) at the end of the race. Take us through the fight towards the finish.

ALEXANDER ROSSI: I think we had a good car, could obviously get a good run on him off of (Turns) 3 and 4. Lane two was really never there for me. We could get halfway around the outside, would have to bail out.

Could have maybe took a bit more of risk. Yeah, it was pretty low percentage. I didn't think a lot of guys were making it happen. Ultimately then it became about trying to beat him for the line. But we took out a lot of the tire life going in lane two there, so we just didn't have the rear tires there at the end to stay close to him.

That sucks. I mean, I didn't see him up front all day. All of a sudden he appears in P1, so... Obviously they're doing a good job. He had a fast car once he got in front.

Ultimately I think Scott(Dixon), myself and Colton (Herta) in terms of fuel mileage and where we were going were looking pretty good there till the end.

THE MODERATOR: Questions for Alex.

**Q. You put on a great show towards the end, also a show towards the middle. What were the fights with Colton like? Quasi teammates, same sponsor. A little concerning at times?**

ALEXANDER ROSSI: Why would it be concerning? It's just another car. Ryan (Hunter-Reay) led most of the race. I think Ryan obviously had a great car, as did I. It was pretty cool for the sponsor, for GESS / Capstone to be able to have two cars at the front. That's what they want and expect. I'm glad we were able to do that for them.

**Q. If you could have gotten around (Josef), do you think you could have held him off? Lap after lap you were making the challenge.**



ALEXANDER ROSSI: Oh, yeah, for sure. Because it's all track position here unfortunately. It's a superspeedway. But the current package that we have, I mean, we saw it at Indy, we see it here, it's really hard to stay in touch, being the car behind, to be able to carry the throttle that you need to.

Just the dirty air has a really big impact on the car. It's really hard to get a good run on a car. It's not hard to pass cars that are struggling, cars that are off sequence with different tire life, whatever.

When you have a Penske Chevrolet driven by someone as good as Josef, there's only so much you can do, right? Yeah, it sucks. I mean, we're always there, but we're always playing the bridesmaid as of late.

**Q. Do you think the fact that Josef had 11 laps newer tires made the difference in that he was able to hug the inside line, forcing you to go outside?**

ALEXANDER ROSSI: I think where that difference came in was kind of the last four laps. I kind of fell off with him. So, yeah, I think that was really ultimately the biggest issue for me, was I couldn't keep the challenge on him.

But I don't know that the end result would have been any different. I would have kept trying to go high in (Turns) 1 and 2. I mean, I tried it like six times and it never worked, so I doubt it would have worked if I tried another three or four times.

The fact of the separation, we weren't able to kind of challenge him to the stripe was a difference in tire life. Probably didn't affect the end result.

THE MODERATOR: Alex, congratulations.

ALEXANDER ROSSI: Thank you.

THE MODERATOR: We welcome in Graham Rahal, who finished third in the Fleet Cost & Care Honda for Rahal Letterman Lanigan Racing.

Graham, I would say we didn't hear your name too much throughout the race, but it just seems like a very solid and consistent day. You took advantage of that. How much do those days mean to you when they come along?

GRAHAM RAHAL: Here that's a good day. Four top

sixes in a row for us at this track. I think if you can have a good, quiet day, it's a good thing here. You don't want to be part of making noise unless it's winning.

We're pleased with our result today. I think our guys did an amazing job in the pits. The strategy was great. We set out to do a three-stopper from the get-go. The fuel mileage was phenomenal, the car balance was very good.

All things considered, we weren't quite good enough I think to go to the front tonight. We did have some issues with rear grip as the run went on and stuff.

I think our guys did a great job just putting us in a good position. The stops were really solid. Yeah, just good, quiet night.

THE MODERATOR: Questions for Graham.

**Q. It's been a quiet day. This is your first podium since the beginning of last season. How crucial is it to get one for your race team?**

GRAHAM RAHAL: Well, it should be my second, but we'll just leave that there.

It feels great. I think at this point we feel like all year we've worked hard, we've been close, but we just haven't been able to knock the door down. Obviously I'm referring to Long Beach. That one still irks me. You have to move on at some point.

Our guys have done a great job this year. I think we rebounded well. Old (Allen) McDonald, my engineer, has done a heck of a job bringing life back into this organization. You can see it, he and (Sato engineer) Eddie (Jones), work so well. With Takuma (Sato), you're seeing that as well. It's unfortunate what happened on the 30 car this evening. I hope everybody's OK there. Obviously I haven't been back over to the pits yet.

Yeah, I mean, our guys worked hard. This is a great way to go into an off weekend. Would rather have it be a win, but all things considered, we're going into an off weekend on a high note.

Truthfully, I think we're eighth in points now. We've been there every race this year. It just hasn't come together for us. It's just nice to finally have a good, clean one.

**Q. So the speed is there in the cars you feel like? Technically you have it together, you have to get the strategy right or some results to come your way?**

GRAHAM RAHAL: Yeah, it's a combination of a lot of things. Racing smart. Lady Luck is always a factor in racing, we all know that. Good strategy.

Our guys have done an amazing job in the pits lately.

They've really turned up the heat. Tonight in that first pit stop sequence with (the) in lap, out lap, we gained five seconds over the leader. Pretty good. Pretty good.

I really do think it's not the in and out laps, I think a lot of it is the guys in the pits have stepped up their game. I'm proud of them for that. Particularly towards the end of this string that hasn't been so easy.

Do we have speed in the cars? Yeah, we have speed in the cars. Do we need a little more? We do, particularly on the street courses. We're not quite there yet. I think the Andretti cars are very good. Obviously Penske, Ganassi.

We're going to keep our heads down, keep working through this. We've closed the gap a long way. Your pal sitting right behind you said we wouldn't be competitive this year. I'm not going to let that go. I'm going to keep saying that all year.

We definitely closed the gap. We're headed down the right path. So I'm proud of everybody, for sure.

**Q. Talking with Simon, he felt like maybe he got bumped on that late restart.**

GRAHAM RAHAL: He did.

**Q. Take me through your perspective.**

GRAHAM RAHAL: There's no doubt. The brake checking from the leader was obscene. We were well past the start zone, yet the brake checking persisted. We'd go, then bam, everybody is on the brakes.

No doubt, I did touch him. Luckily it was nose straight to the right rear, which didn't cut his tire or anything, I don't think.

There's nothing you can do. I mean, that needs to be addressed, in my opinion, by the stewards. We've had issues with this before. It was clear. Accelerate, brake, accelerate, brake. It's ridiculous. It's dangerous on these things.

**Q. Was that the only time tonight you felt like that was happening, stacking up on restarts?**

GRAHAM RAHAL: For sure. For sure. If I'm not mistaken, it was the only time he was leading, too. Hunter-Reay's restart was great. Good, consistent flow. Good speed. It was just nice and clean.

The last one I thought was ridiculous.

**Q. Other than Takuma's incident in pit lane, which took him out of contention, this team has been on a pretty good upswing the last month or so since Barber. What is it like to be able to know either of you or your teammate have a chance for poles and victories in any race?**

GRAHAM RAHAL: Like I just said, I think we're not there yet. Obviously you have to have that mentality.

We got to keep our heads down, push hard, keep working hard. But we're definitely a player every weekend. That's a great feeling.

To go to a track, to come here, to fly down here on Wednesday night knowing I've got a chance, that's a great feeling. There's been years where we didn't have that. I'm definitely appreciative of the times that we're living right now.

While everything hasn't gone totally smoothly, I'm definitely happy with the progression of the team, of my team. Takuma Sato has done a great job. Hopefully we can just keep building from here.

Everybody has done a great job. Everybody. Hopefully we'll build upon this, go off to Road America, run that cool livery. I'm going to try to grow a moustache. We'll see. Wish me luck. I've already had a three-week, four-week head start. You guys probably can't tell. My chances are slim, but we'll see.

It does look cool, though. We'll see.

THE MODERATOR: Takuma is going to grow one. That will be fun.

GRAHAM RAHAL: I don't think he can (laughter).

**Q. Any surprises tonight other than the brake checking restart? Relatively clean race.**

GRAHAM RAHAL: I was very surprised that first run. I mean, at the start is when the track is at its toughest. I was very surprised almost 150 laps or thereabouts without a yellow. I was surprised.

It was a physical race tonight. I don't know who has been through here before me, but that was a freakin' physical race. The first 150 was a long 150. I thought everybody raced pretty clean. I knew at the end it was going to pick up. Always does. I was going to sit back and watch.

To be honest, I wasn't quite good enough to win. I was getting pretty loose on the long runs. I had to kind of baby my tires in the early phase of the stint.

But I knew it was going to pick up. I thought the racing in general was pretty clean. I thought that the tire was a massive improvement over last year. I thought the aero package was a massive improvement. I also think the track is going to get better.

I called Jimmie Johnson before we came down here. Jimmie said, Man, we can't run two lanes around there either. As of their last race here, they couldn't.

I think tonight we saw a glimpse. They used VHT, all these other sprays. I passed Pagnaud along the outside. A little bit of grip there. First time I saw there's a little light at the end of the tunnel there. Over time,

more races come down, more rubber gets laid down, I think that's going to continue to improve, as well.

THE MODERATOR: Graham, congratulations. Thanks for your time.

GRAHAM RAHAL: Thanks, guys.