

NTT IndyCar Series News Conference

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Press Conference

Felix Rosenqvist

Chip Ganassi Racing



THE MODERATOR: Joined now by Felix Rosenqvist. Almost a first victory, yet a career-best finish in the NTT IndyCar Series, so mixed emotions today from you?

FELIX ROSENQVIST: Yes and no. I think we have to keep the perspective. Had our first podium today and also a one-two finish for Chip Ganassi Racing. Obviously tough when I think we really had the right strategy and the pace to win the race. With those five lap cars in front of us it was going to be difficult, and I was really frustrated on the radio, and Barry (Wanser), my strategist, tried to really keep me calm and tried to pick off one by one, so I used a lot of Push-to-Pass to get through (Max) Chilton and Marco (Andretti) and whoever was in front of me.

I think it's a bit of a shame because maybe at times we were missing out on a good battle when you had to race cars that were fighting for P24 (P15 actually). But anyways, that's what it is.

I really want to credit (team owner) Chip (Ganassi) for letting us race. The last lap, I think everyone really enjoyed that. We were enjoying it. We were banging wheels in Turn 2 there, was a bit exciting. But Scott (Dixon) is always going to fight you hard but fair, and I think I did the same, and maybe one more lap we could have got him. But yeah, it was awesome.

Q. Turn 2, did you expect to be that close to him when you arrived there on the last lap?

FELIX ROSENQVIST: Yeah, I was, and I thought he was struggling both with fuel and especially tires, and he braked kind of early into (Turn) 2 and I thought he actually kind of let me go because he was going a lot slower at the time, and then he kind of veered in at the last moment and we hit a little bit. Yeah, just kicked up a lot of dirt on my tires. I couldn't really make the attack I wanted for the last couple of corners. But yeah, he's clever and he's never going to be easy to pass even when he's running out of tires.

But yeah, it was a good day. I want to thank Honda and Clover and NTT DATA for just putting together an awesome package from qually onwards. Actually we struggled a little bit in practice and then we just came out on top with a one-two finish.

Q. I haven't seen (team advisor) Dario (Franchitti) this happy in a long time. He was in your pits, I

think, for most of the race or the entire race. Can you give me a little bit of feedback about what he was helping you with, how helpful it is, and exactly what maybe his -- well he's happy as all get-out, but does it feel like his success and your success are going hand in hand?

FELIX ROSENQVIST: Yeah, definitely. He was really happy, and I think he likes when I'm going for it, you know, when I'm not playing it safe and not thinking about too much ahead, just trying to attack and be aggressive. It was the same at the Indy 500 when we started in the back and I was fighting my way forward, and even if we had a crash in the end, he was just super happy, and it was like, you could see he's over the moon when you have a good performance. Then actually in the race he doesn't talk to me, but during the weekend, he's a great support, and I think both on the road courses and especially the ovals, he's always there, and he's been to almost every session I've done in an Indy car. So yeah, we really have a good relationship, and he's also to thank for this good result.

Q. Felix, you just said a couple of minutes ago that it really was exciting, but should it not also be a risk to lose your second position?

FELIX ROSENQVIST: Well, it's always a trade-off. If you play it too safe, you're never going to win the race, and I think -- I mean, if the team tells you to go for it, you go for it. That's also an instruction. The instruction was not to take it easy and not pass Scott. They said, try to get him, but think about he's your teammate.

You know, it's kind of a mixed call. But in INDYCAR you can touch, and we see all the time that you can touch, and we can always bang wheels, and I think that's one of the great things for the sport is we can actually go really aggressive against each other without spinning or losing parts. I actually had a touch with Chilton once. He kind of brake-checked me in Turn 12 I think it was, and I ran into his rear wheel and my car was fine, and I think that makes up for a lot of the good racing we're having in the series.

Q. Felix, they mentioned on the radio, you just mentioned that they said, 'Remember he is your teammate.' Did that play into your aggression level going against Scott at the very end there?

FELIX ROSENQVIST: I mean, if it was someone else, obviously you would have gone a bit harder. But being Scott, you know he's going to fight you fair. I mean, I know a couple other drivers in this championship who I wouldn't go even as hard as I did with Scott because

there would just be an accident. So yeah, I think he's always on the right level of aggression and safety at the same time. And I really enjoy, every time I fight against him, it's actually impressive how clever he is, not only when it comes to his speed but also the way he races, and when you race side by side, he rarely takes the wrong decision, and you could see that today. He was on four tires, low fuel, and he still came out in front. I'm sure we would have got him with another lap, but the race is what it is. The lapped cars is what it is, and he won the race, so credit to him, and maybe next time we get him.

Q. What did he teach you on the last lap there with how close you were battling?

FELIX ROSENQVIST: Well, I mean, he never gives up, and I think that goes with what Ryan was saying. When you're on a three-stopper, for example, you have to push every lap. You just have to -- every tenth counts, and how close the series is right now, you can't afford to just play it safe at any time. Even with the lapped cars, I used probably 60 seconds of Push-to-Pass just to get through lapped cars. Yeah, it's just tough all the time, and sometimes you feel you're wasting tires, wasting Push-to-Pass to get through the field, but in the end it's actually worth it because whenever you pass someone you just take off. Like your lap time is one second quicker. It's a tough form of racing.

Q. Were you affected at all in that battle by the fact that if you got it horribly wrong, Hunter-Reay and Newgarden will close right back up to you, so if you'd had a scruffy moment they would both -- and the Chip Ganassi one-two would go out the window?

FELIX ROSENQVIST: I think it was pretty safe because we had those lapped cars behind, and I mean, they didn't make it easy for me, and I don't think they made it easy for Ryan, either, so we kind of had a buffer in the back, and as long as they were there I thought it was safe. But obviously if we had two, three more laps it's going to be a real scrap to the end there with maybe three, four cars.

Yeah, but I think it was -- at this time it was all good.

Q. A little bit of symmetry here that this finish came at Mid-Ohio where we did a story on you earlier in the week because this is where it all started for you?

FELIX ROSENQVIST: Yeah, it's always been a place I liked. I never actually raced here, but there's always been a good flow for me at this track. Maybe it reminds me a bit more of the European tracks, kind of flowing, pretty smooth. It's not as bumpy as most of the tracks we have here. Yeah, it just keeps bringing me good memories here at Mid-Ohio. It's an awesome place, and I also want to thank all the fans for coming out. Like it's one of the races you really think about fans when you're in the car because you can see them everywhere. Yeah, it's cool that everyone comes out to

this race every year.

Q. And also the value of having Dario work with you for the most of the season and also what did Chip say to you?

FELIX ROSENQVIST: He was over the moon. I think he was happy with the one-two. Dario was also over the moon. I think everyone deserved -- we had a tough year. I think even Scott has had a tough year. He's been excellent. I've been struggling a little bit mid-season, had sort of flashes of speed all the time, never managed to put it together, but this weekend everything just came together for both of us, and yeah, I think everyone just -- it's a big relief, especially for the 10 car crew to get that podium. It's been a long time, and you can see they're hungry for it every weekend. Yeah, big credit to them. They did an awesome job the whole weekend.

Q. Were you surprised that he was able to make the reds last that long? I was thinking you might have had a shot at him sooner. Were you surprised he was able to stretch them that far?

FELIX ROSENQVIST: I thought I was good on my reds, as well. I think we could have done a two-stopper if you wanted to, but I think we decided to split the strategies on the two cars because if you have the opportunity, you kind of want to -- if you have two cars running one and two, you don't want to go the same strategy in case something goes wrong. So obviously Scott being the master of fuel save, I think they decided to go with that strategy for him, and I went for a three-stopper. But I thought the reds held on well, and actually the further the race went, the better they held on because the grip improved on the track all the time. So I saw a bunch of cars being a lap down on reds and they had good pace. So yeah, I think the further a race goes, the better the reds go, as well.

Q. How much does it damper you, I don't know, your aggressiveness when you see it's your teammate between you and victory?

FELIX ROSENQVIST: Well, it's always playing with fire, you know, when you see that orange car. Chip's first rule is always don't take out your teammate or we're going to have a serious discussion. He always says that before the race, and that's going to stick in your head for sure when you're catching up to Scott. As I said before, I trust him to give the room when it's needed and to be aggressive when it's needed, and I didn't really feel worried about it. I mean, when my team trusts me to go for it, I trust them that that's the right call and I do what I'm told, go for it, have fun.