

NTT IndyCar Series News Conference

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Press Conference

Takuma Sato

Rahal Letterman Lanigan Racing



THE MODERATOR: We bring in race winner Takuma Sato. I've seen a lot of things in my career, you have, too. Six days ago you know what happened.

TAKUMA SATO: Yes.

THE MODERATOR: Week has been a little difficult.

TAKUMA SATO: Yes.

THE MODERATOR: I saw you go to last place in this race, but somehow here you are. Congratulations.

TAKUMA SATO: Thank you very much.

THE MODERATOR: Not the preferred path but we'll take it.

TAKUMA SATO: Yes, absolutely. First of all, I'd like to say thank you very much to all of you in this room. You saw what happened last week. Just a lot of opinion, for sure, I take it.

Mostly you guys supported me. I can't thank enough all. As pure journalism, find the fact, find out what was it. Don't just judge one fact.

Obviously, after that was significant support. All of you come here. The fans come in here, this distance, hold on. Everyone was support. Like I said on the podium with Mike, when we go along the drivers parade, I think generally speaking St. Louis we have so much enthusiastic fans. We've seen it last few seasons.

This year the cheering, screaming my name so much. I just can't find the word to thank you to all the support. Was special, particularly like you said, after the difficult circumstances, come here, strong qualify, which I really proud of the team. A difficult start. I was sandwiched, then go backwards. Was difficult to get away the first stint.

Head down, do our job, believe in ourselves, take the moment for the chance to come back. We came back. We made a lot of good pace over the next two stint and stretch the fuel what we needed.

Yeah, yellow came in. Of course, some lucks maybe be happen. I think this is the whole effort of the team completely behind me, support. So happy to bring the

car to the win for them. I'm very, very happy.

THE MODERATOR: The last restart you had Tony Kanaan behind you. I'm not sure which driver was more determined.

TAKUMA SATO: Yeah, absolutely. Being an A.J. Foyt driver, very, very privileged to beat them. I like 14 car, T.K. a lot. I think everyone know he one of the toughest competitor. I have to make sure don't give any space or showing any mistake.

The last restart, perhaps it was really slow but consistent speed obviously. I had to take all the advantage just to control the pack. After that we just drive away beautifully, I would say. Excitement for the race, tire degradation. Tony and I had similar difficulty for the last 20 laps where Ed seems to be hooking up very, very good speed.

I'm sure that the night of the show made very exciting for us. It was tough for the last five laps. Especially for the team and sponsor waited with very, very tough circumstance. I just wanted to bring the car home, which we did. Very, very happy.

THE MODERATOR: Aside from the Indianapolis 500, the most gratifying win of your career?

TAKUMA SATO: Yes. I'm sure. Win pole for Barber very significant. Just the domination of the weekend is always great credit for the team, and satisfaction. But this win is so special, like you said, beside Indy 500, obviously nothing like it. This is just so emotionally. Gave me unbelievable boost.

For sure some of the difficulty now we can have a little bit consistent with it. Next two races going to be exciting one. For sure the championship going to be very exciting. Hopefully I can climb a few positions up towards the end of the season.

THE MODERATOR: Questions.

Q. Can you give some information about the car at Pocono? Was it a repairable car or brand-new car for this race after Pocono?

TAKUMA SATO: Yeah, car is repairable. There's obviously some damage. The car we use at Pocono and this weekend is different car. Everything is fine. I think that car is going to repair, put in for next year's windscreen, halo, driver protection system. Everything

should be ready.

Q. During the coverage of the race, the camera showed some tires blistering. How much was the tire wear for you?

TAKUMA SATO: Like I said, I think first of all the most importantly the Firestone is always bring the tire for the safety number one. We never seen anything concerning for the tires in terms of the safety, which is a great tire.

Of course, they try to be best all the time. They brought the new softer compound on the left-hand side. Of course, under the circumstances, unfortunately they grained them. That's only just a performance issue. Make race very, very excited.

Some of the team get on really well, some couldn't. It was very narrow sweet spot, for sure. Not easy tire for everyone. I had some difficulty, too. End of the day, I think finish again, that makes IndyCar very attractive. Thank you for Firestone.

Q. That was a blast from the past podium up there. Two of the oldest drivers in the series and a 38-year-old Ed Carpenter, who looks 48.

TAKUMA SATO: Three of us added I think is 150 years old for sure (laughter).

Q. Just to show the old guys can still gas it around here.

TAKUMA SATO: I think that's the beauty of this sport, with motor racing. If you're talking only in physical terms, might not be able to do that. With the combination of experience and the team behind it, the race craft, all the things, I think age is sometimes something, but it is not everything.

I think we can still perform like this. Today was a great day for three of us. Three of us is very happy.

Q. You said something about cars being retrofitted for the new driver protection system. Have you been able to sit in a car where the driver protection system was in?

TAKUMA SATO: No, I haven't. My teammate Graham went and sat. He tried a lot of executions, all things. It's a very positive feeling, very positive. Obviously once again, safety is the first thing has to come. We all very excited with the new thing.

Now, of course, all over the world the halo is a standard. In IndyCar, it's going to take beyond of that. We have a windscreen system which I don't know yet how it's going to work out.

There's a few concerns, the wet situations, and when are a car got upside down, how we going to do that. If driver unconscious, how we going to get it out. I'm sure the safety team will do a lot of exercise. Firstly they protect everything from debris.

I think it's fantastic news. We all excited about it. Hopefully we can do a great test and there is no problem blending into the new season. That's what we hope.

Q. Are these restarts as crazy from the cockpit as they appeared to us?

TAKUMA SATO: Yes (laughter).

Q. Earlier in the race wasn't there a real close battle where you on one side, Hunter-Reay, Rossi was close? Were you aware are of that? Were you sitting there saying, I've seen this movie before?

TAKUMA SATO: Yeah, there's such an exciting long night. I think the conditions give us a different taste. From first stint to the last stint, you can see the pace is different. The guys who shining is different. Strategy worked out whatever you call it.

But my car balance was not necessarily great on the first two stint. But we build it better and better all the time. In the end I got a great tool. Thank you to the teammate for making this happen.

Yeah, also, Ryan, we get close racing again today. One stage he looked like a little bit struggling. At that time I was very strong pace. So, yeah, I think it was just generally speaking a good race.

Q. Earlier Josef said your comeback this week is professional sports, sometimes you're a hero, then you're a zero, then a hero again. Your team backed you, put out a statement. You backed them. How gratifying is that?

TAKUMA SATO: It is just unbelievable support from the team. I'm so happy. So proud to be a part of Rahal Letterman Lanigan Racing. Why they did that? Some people say they never seen team do that kind of statement.

Last week, it was very difficult to judge. A lot of people judged from only TV one angle. It looked like I turn into Alex, which wasn't true. Nobody wasn't sure. They just only one little fact.

After that, the team got logging system, onboard footage, that shows very clear evidence I wasn't move. I hold my line, I drove straight. That not necessarily doing right because end the day we had accident, whatever the reason.

As I said, I feel sorry for that. I apology for the situation, especially Alex involving for the championship possibility. However, there was a seam, actually very clear that other drivers moved up. As a consequence we had an accident.

I think we can all learn from that. We try to give each other more space. Once you're side-by-side or three-wide, you can't just depart your lane, that's the bottom

line. Of course, I could have probably give more space moving to the right. Perhaps that I should have done.

But I start racing, I thought I was correct going to the straight. That's what happened. Which just later a lot of people analyzed from Alex onboard and Hunter-Reay's onboard, my onboard, and there was very clear evidence that people can see what happened.

After that I don't need to say anything. Eventually it will come back very strong here with the support of the team. The team needed that statement be done because so much information wrongly in the world. That's why they backed up.

I really appreciate it. Really call home for the Rahal team. Especially Mike and Bobby. Bobby came to my town, we had a great lunch together, just two nights ago. Team is fully behind. Don't worry about Taku. Just get focused and (indiscernible).

I appreciate Mike, Bobby and David as well. The whole team.

Q. Did you think Ed might have passed you there at the end? It was closer than maybe we expected at the finish line.

TAKUMA SATO: Ed?

Q. Yes.

TAKUMA SATO: It was close. It was close, yes. For me everything was under control. If he passed me, that's it, that's racing. He had a great moment. That's fine. But if I finish cross the line ahead of him, that's another form of racing, which I love it. I love this sport.

Thank you again for your support and thank you for IndyCar fan made this very exciting moment. I love this.

THE MODERATOR: Congratulations.