

NTT IndyCar Series News Conference

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Press Conference

Sam Schmidt

Co-owner, Arrow McLaren SP

Ric Peterson

Co-owner, Arrow McLaren SP

Gil de Ferran

Sporting director, McLaren

Oliver Askew

Arrow McLaren SP

Pato O'Ward

Arrow McLaren SP

THE MODERATOR: Earlier today Arrow McLaren SP announced that two of INDYCAR's rising talents, 2018 Indy Lights champion Pato O'Ward and 2019 Indy Lights champion Oliver Askew will drive for the team in the 2020 NTT IndyCar Series. We're happy to be joined by Sam Schmidt, one of the co-owners of Arrow McLaren SP and McLaren Sporting Director Gil de Ferran and I'll turn the call over to them. So Sam if you want to go first.

SAM SCHMIDT: Hey, welcome everybody, thanks for joining us this morning. Yes, as Arni just realized we have got to all recalibrate our brains here, but Ric (Peterson) and I both are looking at this as an amazing opportunity, we have had several key announcements over the last 24 months, none the least of which is the title sponsorship with Arrow Schmidt Peterson one year ago and now just a few months ago Arrow McLaren SP, which Ric and I just think is an amazing opportunity, not only on the commercial side, but on the technical side, in every effort to win, and to win the Indy 500 and to win the championship, which has been my life-long goal, I know it has been his as well.

And so with that in light you can tell by these announcements we're constantly pushing to win races and the McLaren association is specifically for that and I think this driver announcement for the long-term, we have long-term partners that are major global corporations and these two young guns we feel are the future of the team.

We have got an amazing American star in Oliver Askew and his story is nothing short of remarkable, working his way to the top.

Pato O'Ward briefly was able to show his talents in IndyCar last year and I think these two together could



be our magic combination going forward.

So just really proud of that, proud of what the team's gone down, what (managing director) Taylor (Kiel) has done in just this recent last six months and just really looking forward to the future. So I'll turn that over to Gil.

GIL DE FERRAN: Well thanks, Sam, good morning, everyone and thank you for joining us as well. Well, as you say, Sam, it's certainly very exciting news today. We have been working hard both with the guys at Indianapolis since the last race in Laguna Seca and with the guys in the U.K. putting our partnership together and making sure that we bring our best foot forward into the partnership and I would say that so far it's been a very enjoyable experience, certainly for everyone, getting to know everyone and I think today it's yet another step, an important and exciting step in our journey together.

You know, I think as Sam says, both Oliver and Pato are extremely exciting talents. They have not only won the Indy Lights championship over the past couple of seasons but these are two drivers I think that have proven their worth throughout their careers, have had a tremendous amount of success throughout their careers from carting onwards.

And I think we're proud to have them both onboard and go through this journey together. I wish we could hit the track here quite a few more times than what we will do to try to compete, but I think that we're doing a lot of work behind the scenes to help with our preparation so, both on and off the track. So may the journey begin, I think we're all very excited about it.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you, Sam thank you, Gil. We'll bring in the two drivers and another co-owner of Arrow McLaren SP Ric Peterson.

Ric, you joined forces with Sam in 2013 and you've really built the team into a powerhouse. What opportunities will 2020 bring for the team as a whole?

RIC PETERSON: Well, we are very proud of what we built, we have two probably of the best partners that you could get in racing with Arrow and McLaren and, yeah, I think this 2020 season is going to be very exciting. We hate to set expectations too early, but I think it's going to be a very exciting year for us.

THE MODERATOR: All right, thank you, Ric. Let's turn

to Pato. Pato, you had a taste of Indy Car this season, doing seven races, made your debut pretty spectacularly at Sonoma back at the end of the 2018 season. Coming back to INDYCAR with a full-time opportunity, how special is today's news for you.

PATO O'WARD: I honestly couldn't be more excited. I think it's very big, not just for me but for all Oliver as well. We're just starting our journey into the professional side of this sport and it's something we have been working towards our whole lives, so I'm very much looking forward to the opportunity, I'm very thankful and I think there's no better team to do it than with Arrow McLaren SP. I think the guys have just proven that they have what it takes to win races, to challenge for championships. So I'm very excited to see what the future could have in store.

THE MODERATOR: All right. And Oliver, it was just a few years ago you were at the Formula Ford Festival in the U.K., you had a pretty meteoric rise through the Road to Indy and have an incredible full-time opportunity for your first season in the NTT IndyCar Series. What are your thoughts and expectations for your rookie season?

OLIVER ASKEW: First of all, thank you so much for having us. Yeah, it's been a whirlwind couple of days here and it's honestly a dream come true, I can echo what Pato has said.

And honestly, right now, I don't have any expectations, we're going to be putting a lot of hard work in, in the off-season to make sure we take advantage of the tools that we have here, especially with myself as a pure rookie, only my fourth full season in cars, but I think I'm ready for it with the resources that we have here and the personnel.

Obviously, it's a top-tier team and I'm looking forward to representing Arrow McLaren SPM going into the future.

THE MODERATOR: All right. Thanks, Oliver. Let's open it up for questions for any of our guests.

Q. Two questions. The first will be for Oliver Askew. After the Laguna Seca race, you were pretty confident that you had a really good ride lined up. What was it back then that gave you the confidence to think that, here we are today, you're going to drive for a team that's part of McLaren.

OLIVER ASKEW: Yeah, I mean this, I can't speak on when the details of the contract, but then we were still with my management and the people around me, were still working through our options and making sure that I was in the best place possible to develop as a rookie in the NTT IndyCar Series. So I feel very fortunate to be in the position we're in now. This is what I've been working for for my entire career since I started racing when I was seven years old in go-karts. So it's a surreal feeling to finally be here, but I just can't, I can't

wait to get to work. Like Gil said, I think it's going to be too long until I'm back in the car, so...

Q. And the second question is for Sam, Gil and Ric. When this whole arrangement was announced back in August, it was said that James Hinchcliffe would fulfill the final year of his contract and now he's not going to be driving anymore. What happened from then until today for him to really no longer be driving for the team?

SAM SCHMIDT: I guess I get the pat on the shoulder to take this one, but, you know, I think Ric and I would say that this is one of the toughest decisions we have had to make since we have been team owners, because I personally have known James, (father) Jeremy, (mother) Arlene, his brother Chris for 11 years and love him. And I really appreciate what he's done for the team, tremendous, tremendous investor in the sport and our brand and everything else.

So it's a gut-wrenching decision, but we were faced with an opportunity to pick up these two young guns coming out of Indy Lights that already have 13, 14, 15 years worth of experience and it was just an opportunity that we couldn't pass up.

So everything's amicable, I have all the faith in the world that James is going to wind up in a full-time ride and Ric and I are fully supportive of that.

So it's just a competitive environment and for our partners and everything else that we're -- everybody, it was a group decision, we got an opportunity in front of us, we got to take it, we want to go win races.

Q. And Ric and Gil, if either of you want to add anything to that.

GIL DE FERRAN: No, I'm good. I think Sam said it all.

RIC PETERSON: Yeah, he did.

Q. Sam, the wording today said that James is still under contract, but will be released if he needs to be. What is to stop him from just doing nothing and sitting out all year and collecting money from you guys?

SAM SCHMIDT: What's to stop him is the race driver within him. I mean, I think as Gil, myself, anybody else on the line that's a driver, you want to drive, you want to prove, you want to win the Indy 500, you still got boxes to check.

And so I have no doubt that he and his team are burning up the phone lines and talking with everybody out there, in any series but primarily Indy Car. He's still young, he still wants to win races, so I think that's what's to stop him from doing it. Certainly, it's his option, but I don't think you'll see him do that.

Q. And where does Robert Wickens stand?

SAM SCHMIDT: Yeah, I mean Robert, I mean I think

Robert continues to inspire and motivate and just amaze everybody on a daily basis. Because he's continuing the program, he's continuing to improve, he is a part of the team as a driver coaching consultant and will continue.

And I think that's one of the major assets we have that Oliver was talking about in that he will be there at a majority of the races next year assisting these young guys to get acclimated as quick as they can.

So he's part of the team, but also he's got a major focus on his rehabilitation and he's hell-bent on driving again and I wouldn't bet against him.

Q. My first question is for the drivers Pato and Oliver. The opportunity to be able to join up with a driver that's kind of on a similar timeline and has somewhat similar experiences in your guys' success in Indy Lights, how did just your guys' I guess similar trajectory play into the excitement for both of you guys to be able to team up with Arrow McLaren SP and really kick off your guys' full-time Indy Car careers together?

OLIVER ASKEW: That's a good question. I'm very excited to be partnering with Pato for 2020. I think we both get along very well and we have a very, like you said, a very similar driving background and very similar driving style coming from the Indy Lights car and working with Andretti Auto Sport as well. Our -- we have the same drive to be successful, as does the team, and we plan on working very closely with one another to help each other grow and help each other get better in the series.

PATO O'WARD: Yeah, I mean, I'm with Oliver in this. I think we, I think we're going to make a really good team. We're both hungry for all the success. I think at this point both the team and we are growing, we're starting a new chapter in our careers and I think the sky's the limit. So we're going to be pushing, pushing, pushing and I know that with hard work and really dedicating lots of time and thinking into our future and into our season we should be, we should definitely be up there.

Q. This question is for any one of the three, Sam, Ric or Gil that want to speak on this. You all three talked about just the exciting opportunity to grab these two young up and coming stars and these drivers to add to Arrow McLaren's kind of fresh start and spark into the NTT IndyCar Series going forward here for 2020. Specifically, just with both of their youth relative to the NTT IndyCar Series, what have you seen from their driving history and anyone else who's been really dominant in Indy Lights and then made the jump to Indy Car that made you guys feel like this two, one rookie and one close to rookie driver would be a solid pairing and affective successful pairing moving forward in 2020.

GIL DE FERRAN: Sam, why don't you go first and then I'll go after.

SAM SCHMIDT: Well I think it's a different time. When Gil and myself were coming through the ranks there was no sort of clear path, A, in what we're seeing recently with the Road to Indy is nothing the short of amazing. If you win you advance. If you win you advance.

And the other part of it is these kids aren't coming in with three and four and five years of experience, as they mentioned, we're talking 13, 14 years of racing experience and so they're coming in a lot more advanced than the rookies of days of old.

So we saw, it's no shocker, I mean what Colton Herta did this year was nothing short of amazing and these guys come from exactly the same background. So we're hoping we'll have the same type of results. So a lot of people have said that it's really risky, it's a gamble, but we really don't think it is.

GIL DE FERRAN: Well, I think what I would add to what Sam said is something that I alluded to in the beginning of my opening statement. You know, these guys have been racing for many years and so although they are young, certainly a lot younger than I am and even younger than I was when I first joined the NTT IndyCar Series, these are guys that have been winning throughout their careers. Like I said, I know Oliver a little bit better than I know Pato, but I know Pato's history as well and I recall like it was yesterday watching qualifying for the last round at Sonoma and then he puts it in the top-6 if I'm not mistaken. But that to me was an extremely impressive feat, particularly as it was the last race of the year and everybody's all tuned in and been racing the whole season and you got a guy that comes in the first race and has such an amazing performance.

And with Oliver, you know, I remember going here to West Palm Beach as a guest judge for the USA Scholarship when he was just coming out on the car scene and watching his performance driving small single-seater cars for the first time it was nothing short of impressive. And I've seen him with his career develop since then.

So you come to these observations not just because of one thing, you build a picture over time and I think you get to the point where you say, well, what else do you need to do to prove that you are one of the best prospects out there. And I guess that's the conclusion that we all came together.

And, you know, we embark on this journey which, certainly with a lot of promise, but at the end of the day we have to focus on our preparation, execution, review, preparation, execution, review, and just work hard, keep our heads down and work hard and go through

every twist and turn of this journey with a lot of focus and determination, but with our arms tied together.

Q. One more for the three of you before I let you go. You guys make this big decision putting a lot of faith in these two young yet experienced drivers here and we're talking 2020 obviously, but do you guys feel like this is a partnership that you guys will have to kind of let develop over a hopefully a multi-year period? I know you guys have had a handful of drivers that have driven here or there for this team even before McLaren was added but do you feel like this is something where this is a long-term plan hopefully for Arrow McLaren SP?

SAM SCHMIDT: Yes.

GIL DE FERRAN: Yeah, I guess as Sam said, the short answer is yes. You know, every journey starts with the first step and there's certainly a hope that it goes on forever.

Q. Sam, let me start with you. What does success look like in 2020 based on going in with two young drivers?

SAM SCHMIDT: It's a pretty fresh situation here right now and I think each year we do go in with some goals for the team in KPI's as we call them, key performance indicators, and I just think because it is a fresh situation we really haven't had a chance to sit around the table and develop those for next year. But we will and right now it's just, as Gil said, put your head down, prepare, focus, got a lot of things we want to accomplish before the first test in January and I think we just got a great, incredible team assembled between the McLaren guys in England and our guys on this side and everybody's just, frankly, chomping at the bit to get to go. Next week we're actually going to do the Aeroscreen test at Sebring right out of the gate. So just really looking forward to it. But nothing's been established as far as goals yet.

Q. Oliver, going in without a veteran teammate coming in as a rookie, does that give you any trepidation?

OLIVER ASKEW: No, not at all. I believe in myself and the team as well, they have plenty of data and onboard from years past and I believe that I'll be plenty prepared going into the first race of this season. The goal is to show up in St. Pete not feeling like it is my first race weekend. So I think we have the resources to do that and we have a couple of test days before that first race in St. Pete, so it's all about front loading the offseason now and just getting ready for it.

Q. Pato you've been in several new situations in 2019, you bounced around quite a bit around the world, frankly. How do you think that has helped you develop your skills and the skills you're going to need for 2020?

PATO O'WARD: I think more than anything I think it's just so much experience. Obviously, it's not easy

walking into a championship that you know absolutely nothing about, but I think everything that I got to do this year and so much change and, honestly, I mean, a driver's career doesn't get more challenging than that. So I think more than anything it just helped me grow, it helped me grow as a person, it helped me grow as a driver, and I think it just helps to prepare you for future circumstances and future situations, good or bad, so I think it only helped to what we can build on next year.

Q. Pato, Sam didn't have any KPI's defined yet, but do you have any, do you have any goals?

PATO O'WARD: I'm just going to take everything one by one. I think that's the most important thing, just making sure I do my job perfectly, no mistakes. I know the team is going to be giving me their 110 percent every single week and every single day and I know together we can achieve very good stuff. So I'm very much looking forward to getting started.

Q. Congratulations on today's announcement. My first question and I joined about 10 minutes late so I apologize if this one was already asked. Have car numbers been decided for the two drivers yet for next year?

SAM SCHMIDT: I'll jump right in and just say no. We have obviously got our hand on 5 and 7 and holding 6 for Robert to come back. So, yeah, bottom line is 5 and 7 and it hasn't been allocated yet.

Q. The next question is for Gil or Sam, I know Fernando was involved with the team last year, of course, trying to make the Indy 500. I know he wants to do it again. Is it pretty safe to assume that you guys are going to try to run him at the 500?

SAM SCHMIDT: I'll jump in and say it certainly remains an option, but nothing's been confirmed.

GIL DE FERRAN: Yeah, I mean nothing has been confirmed there.

Q. But the team is capable of running three cars at the 500, correct?

SAM SCHMIDT: Yeah, I mean we have, in the deal came all the McLaren equipment, which means we have plenty of equipment and we have historically always ran a third just because of our commercial partner demand and we expect to do that again this year.

Q. Question for Pato. You being from Mexico, I know in the past well when the series with CART they had a great success down in Mexico City with crowds as large as what we saw this past weekend for the F1 race. Would it be something that you would try to help to facilitate where INDYCAR might get back there someday, to race in Mexico City?

PATO O'WARD: I would love to race in front of my home crowd, that's definitely something that I want to be able to do during my career, not just once, and it

would be great to do it in Mexico City. But would I be happy to do it? Of course. I think it's something that I hope is in the talking points of the future of INDYCAR, and in any way that I could help I would love to because it definitely would be a dream come true for me.

Q. Figured I would double dip here. Sam, a decade ago when you were an Indy Lights team only you were kind of a champion of that series and turned out a lot of drivers. But at that time it seemed like once they got through Indy Lights they didn't really have much more of an opportunity. Now here you are with the last two Indy Lights Series champions as your two drivers in the NTT IndyCar Series. How much has that series grown to be able to develop talent capable of getting into IndyCar more now than it was back when you were in Indy Lights only team owner 10 or so years ago?

SAM SCHMIDT: Yeah, I mean obviously I've been a fan of watching the youth come from karts to through the Road to Indy and a very big supporter of that. I think if it just wasn't for our overwhelming partner associations and everything to do with that and driving the SAM Corvette on behalf of Arrow, all those commitments is what, unfortunately, has got us out of the Road to Indy as a team, but I'm still a big supporter of it, big fan of it and that's what sort of groomed our team for 12 years.

And to your point, very proud of the fact that I think at last year's Indy 500 of the 33 starters we had about 13 or 14 drivers that had come through our Indy Lights program in the past. So just very proud of that as a team owner and what that says as far as the capabilities of that Road to Indy.

So, you know, with this situation it truly is amazing what has happened to be able to allow these two past champions to be a part of it and I think if you look at the recent five- or six-year history, most of those guys are still competing in IndyCar and it's a bit of a changing of the guard, you know, so it's great to be a part of that as a team owner and to be able to participate in the opportunity.

Q. And by plugging it in with the ladder system, the Road to Indy, the way the system is set up now where drivers pretty much graduate up to the next level, is this now where we're finally getting to see a cohesive path for drivers to be, we're now getting the best drivers advancing, it's now doing exactly what it was supposed to do originally?

SAM SCHMIDT: Absolutely. I think the fantastic thing is we're keeping them, right? Because 10, 15, 18 years ago we had midget, sprint cars, F2000, Atlantic, and all those combinations and ultimately when they got to us, got to that top level of open-wheel, they let them go into either IMSA or NASCAR for whatever reason, and primarily NASCAR, probably for financial reasons, but I really like the fact that the last four, five, six years we

have been able to keep these guys and keep them in open-wheel racing and further their careers, which was the ultimate, the ultimate goal in the first place, just really proud to be a part of that.

Q. A final one for Oliver, to be able to get to an IndyCar ride based on your talent not on lining up any, you know, bringing money or anything like that, I know it was mentioned earlier in the thing, but Sam called you a success story and to be able to kind of do it the route that you've taken to get there, if you could just describe that and also how satisfied are you that you know this is something that you were able to really kind of come in and do it the hard way.

OLIVER ASKEW: Yeah, that's how it should be, right? It's an honor, a couple years ago (the NTT) IndyCar (Series) looked so far away, let alone Indy Lights. So it's been a whirlwind couple of years. It's a testament to the people around me for sure I mean starting with Cape Motorsports and USF2000 and Indy Pro 2000 and then and Andretti Autosport this year in Indy Lights. I've been surrounded by a lot of great people and have been given tremendous opportunities. And I've just based my success off of a lot of preparation beforehand, before the season, before the races, and I've dedicated my life to racing and I've sacrificed a lot to get to this point and it's definitely an honor and I still, it's still just sinking in, so...

Q. I just wanted to ask one more follow-up. This could be for Sam, Ric or Gil. Any of -- one of you I think mentioned the Aeroscreen testing coming up here next week. Have you guys decided yet who will be testing that at Sebring for you guys?

SAM SCHMIDT: I honestly don't think so. We have just made the announcement and I believe we're reaching out to INDYCAR, reaching out to Chevrolet and those key stakeholders. Probably make that decision in the next 24 hours, obviously.

Q. Congratulations. I wanted to ask, the partnership between McLaren and Schmidt Peterson, how have you kind of like formatted exactly how that's going to work? I understand there was a delegation from the team that went over and I think it was down in Mexico City as well and possibly this weekend, but how many people, for example, from McLaren will be working on the INDYCAR side this year and like what are the crossovers in terms of wind tunnel work, that kind of thing, how will it work?

GIL DE FERRAN: I can speak to that. Joking aside, I think as I alluded to earlier, we have been working together with Taylor and all the guys at SBM, including all his engineering and operational staff to try to understand where the opportunities are and where I think we can be most impactful, most effective and really developing a plan and an organization that goes together, together with it.

And as you can imagine, I'm not ready to discuss details, operational details of how these things are developing, but at the end of the day that's the whole idea is how do we bring value to the partnership from a technical and an operational basis. These guys already do a great job, they know a lot of stuff that we don't know, they understand their operation really well. We know where our knowledge gaps are and what we need to do. So we have been working together developing a structure together with SPM, getting aligned on the priorities and timeline.

And what I'm able to report is actually this journey is also going extremely well.

To your point, a whole bunch of guys went to Mexico, you know, we have had several visits where many of our guys went to Indianapolis, we had several long conversations and meetings and so on and so forth. The opposite has also happened, where a lot of guys went to the MPC. So it's a journey that takes a lot of conversation and a lot of integration and we walk on this journey together.

Q. Sort of a two-part question. I don't know who is best to answer it. This team has expanded for the Indy 500 in the past. Are you considering expanding to a third car for Indy and if you are, would Fernando Alonso be a candidate for that?

SAM SCHMIDT: Yeah, I think it was briefly touched on before, but we absolutely have had a history of 12 years of running a third car at Indy and still plan to do that and Fernando remains an option but nothing's confirmed.

Q. My first question is for Oliver. You won the Indy Lights championship with Michael Andretti's team. Was there is no -- not that this is not a good opportunity, I'm just asking, did you also negotiate with Michael for a possible role or was there no room at the inn, so to speak over there with a full house?

OLIVER ASKEW: I can't speak on that too much, all I can say is we kept our options open and made sure that we were in the best place to proceed into IndyCar for my rookie season, so, yeah, that's all I can say.

Q. I guess the question is for Gil, a little bit of an offshoot, but McLaren builds cars for the road, they, of course, have been in Formula 1 for a long time. With the new IndyCar contract going to be put out to bid I guess in a couple years for the new car, is there something that McLaren would look at possibly bidding on, do you think, or do you think they would just stick to F1 in terms of building race cars?

GIL DE FERRAN: Well, I have to say that sincerely it's something that we have not discussed at this point. So I'm afraid that I have nothing much further to add, but perhaps that is something that we should discuss going forward.

Q. Correct me if I'm wrong, but doesn't McLaren still do the ECU's for the IndyCar? Is that true or some or some part of the electronics?

GIL DE FERRAN: Yeah, McLaren Applied Technologies is one of the companies of the group and they provide value services and products to several series, both within motorsports and outside of motorsports, it's a very huge technology provider and you are correct, they provide the ECU's to IndyCar.

Q. One last question for Gil and/or Ric or for anyone. As far as the delivery on the cars, is the plan to combine, I guess, the Arrow livery with McLaren and come up with a combined look and when do you think that will be revealed?

GIL DE FERRAN: Sam?

SAM SCHMIDT: Stay tuned. I think there's a plan and I honestly think it's in the probably next 30, 45 days, so.

THE MODERATOR: All right, thank you and as we have no more questions we will wrap up today's IndyCar media conference call. This conference call will be available on a digital tape replay approximately one hour following the conclusion of the call. A transcript and MP3 audio of today's call is available. Thank you, everybody, for joining us today.