

# IndyCar Media Conference

Sunday July 31, 2016

## Simon Pagenaud Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: Let's welcome the winner of today's Honda Indy 200 Mid-Ohio. His eighth career win, fourth of the season. It's your IndyCar race win 185 in the history of Team Penske, most by any team, and extend your championship lead to 58 points over your teammate, Will Power. Pretty an exciting day. Tell us about it.

SIMON PAGENAUD: Yeah, I thought it was an incredible race, actually. The first part of the race went really well, and you know, came out, I thought it was going to be like Toronto again. But fortunately we had to the pace to bounce back after the yellow came out. And on the Red -- On the Black tires, we saved a bunch of fuel and tried to stay in contact with the guys that were going to pit next.

Will got us on the pit sequence, which was a bit of a surprise because we had quite a gap on him, but he managed two more laps.

And then my only chance, really -- I mean, actually before the next yellow came out, he was struggling, yeah, and I was about to get a shot to trying to pass him, and the yellow came out. So then I knew that my only chance was really going to be on the restart.

So I got the tires ready, my car, the PPG car on the Firestone Red was just incredible. I knew that was going to be my chance. And I tried to set him up in four; didn't work out. Tried for five, and six, didn't work out. And again, he made a little mistake on nine.

So then it was my chance for 11, which is a very tricky corner to pass, but we managed to make it side-by-side. And then I crossed him in 12, and that was it for the pass.

It was an interesting lap, too. I was out of breath at the end of the lap. But it was great racing. Will raced me hard and fair as usual, and I thought it was really good for the fans. Thanks to Penske for letting us race like this.

The biggest thing here I found, I was really impressed with the crowd today. The infield was packed. And on the crew down lap, it was incredible to see the enthusiasm of the fans.

And I think obviously Verizon is a big support of us, and they are doing the right things for the sport. So I'm just super proud to see what's happening with IndyCar and to see it on the rise, is pretty cool.

THE MODERATOR: You said you injured your back Friday in practice. Was it an issue at all during the race today?

SIMON PAGENAUD: I tell you, it's incredible. The doctors, they did an incredible job. They were by my side the whole weekend. I didn't get to be debrief much with my engineer this weekend. He pretty much did everything on their own and my goal was to get as good as I could for the race.

Luckily, the Mid-Ohio doctors and IndyCar doctors managed to -- found me exactly what I needed to get for the race and during the race, I didn't have much pain. It was much lower compared to before. So it didn't bother me at all. Only on turn nine, it was every lap, it was a little difficult to brake and turn. But it didn't really bother me, so that was great.

Pain is coming back now but it doesn't matter because we won the race. (Laughter).

THE MODERATOR: We are three-quarters of the way through the season. How do you approach these final four races?

SIMON PAGENAUD: Well, I think what we did today was exactly what we needed to accomplish. This was a road course where we knew we could be competitive. We knew Dixon could be really strong here. He had a bad day, so we need to capitalize on that, and then it was clear it was going to be Will and I in this race.

I was calculating in my head, if I finish second to Will, I lose ten points, and that's only 38. You don't know what's going to happen in the next four races. So I thought this is my time to go because I didn't have much to lose. It was my time to be aggressive. The car was just fantastic to drive on the attack more and I took a chance and it worked out. So that was the right approach, and when it works out, it's great; it's just one of these days.

I think the approach, it stays the same. Unfortunately and fortunately for the fans and the sport, IndyCar Racing, is you never know what you're going to get, right. You never know who is going to win. You can start last and win the race; that's the beauty of this sport. It's also at times frustrating for guys running up front. But that's what makes it so interesting. You just have to accept it. So when you have a chance to win, you have to get it.

**Q. In one way, that pass that you were talking about with Will Power, it pretty much out-powered him in many respects.**

SIMON PAGENAUD: It was a game on Will's name -- (Laughter).

**Q. I mean, after that happened, Will was -- I'm going to back off. What was your thinking in doing it that way? Some guys may have been overly safe if it was their teammate.**

SIMON PAGENAUD: Well, I thought, you know, we're battling for a race win. We're battling for a championship. It was hard racing for sure. It was close racing but it was clean, to the limits. I think at the end of the day, we didn't crash. We did what we were supposed to do as top drivers. I thought it was a great battle, and it was fantastic for the fans, I think what happened.

I just saw a chance and I went for it, really. Didn't think much more of it.

**Q. And secondly, do you have an appointment back in the city to work tomorrow or on Tuesday for some more work on the back?**

SIMON PAGENAUD: Yeah, that's going to be the key -- I was going to go on vacation, but time on the plane is not a good thing. Sitting down is not a good thing I'll be lying down for the next week and try to get better. We have four more races and of course the championship, and that's my main priority, so I might have vacation at home.

**Q. Do you have a guy you work with at home.**

SIMON PAGENAUD: Yes, actually my guy is here on every race. It's unfortunately it comes from my dad. He's having the same issues. Unfortunately that's how I was born. I've had this issue since I was a little kid, and it can happen. One time it happened when I was cleaning my car at home. It's just one of these things you've got to deal with it.

**Q. I wanted to ask you yesterday and I didn't get the chance, but one of the things you've been able to achieve this year is bonus points. You've been getting a lot of bonus points in pole, a lot of laps led, a lot of most laps led. Do you think about that**

**at all; the fact that you've been able to extend your points lead by the way of all these extra bonus points you've got?**

SIMON PAGENAUD: I don't really think about fastest lap of the race, because you never know, someone have an issue, and they may go for one point by doing the one fastest lap and you can't fight that. When one guy goes on a light fuel load with new tires, he's going to do a faster lap, there's nothing you can do about that.

Pole position is just an advantage you are going to get at the start. Like here, it was a huge advantage. So just work as hard as I can. I just think we have a really good understanding of what we need now for the Red tires, for the Red Firestone tires with Ben, my engineer. And I think that's why we've been able to be so strong in qualifying lately. But certainly six points we got in qualifying, so that's tremendous for sure, and at the end of the year, it's important.

THE MODERATOR: Just to clarify, I'm sure you know that there is no bonus point for fastest-race lap. I think you meant fastest lap in qualifying, bonus point for leading the lap, for winning the pole and two points for leading the most laps.

**Q. You mentioned earlier this week that you thought this was your best year as a racer. What's different? What's working so much for you?**

SIMON PAGENAUD: I drive for the best team. That helps a lot when you have the best car. I've got a lot of knowledge with Ben, my engineer, throughout the years. We've worked together since 2010. So there's a lot of knowledge there, what we need to do. He knows exactly what I need. And actually, he knows, because my attitude sometimes, what I need, more so than what I say.

So these kind of things is priceless. I also think I'm more and more comfortable in the IndyCars because I've been around since 2012. So each year, you master the tracks. You try to work details here and there. It's very much a detail-oriented series where it would make it very difficult for someone to step in, coming from any other series and win. It take time to perfect. Everything about IndyCar is specific. So the Red tires are very specific. We don't get to test with it. So every time you go to the Fast Six, that's an advantage you learn for next year and you've got to keep it in your data bank.

So I think all these notes that we take and all the work we do at the shop, and certainly driving for Team Penske makes a big difference.

**Q. You described the pass a while ago, and in the**

**middle of that, are you thinking -- are you thinking about the jeopardy at all as you make that pass?**

SIMON PAGENAUD: No, I didn't think about anything else than passing.

You know, you've got to -- that actually answers your question on all sorts. With the success that I've had this year, I'm gaining confidence and I'm believing more in myself, and it's showing by being a little bit more aggressive at times. I'm not someone that crashes a lot, so I'm starting to believe that is really the case. And the more you believe in it, the more you can do things like that and it works out.

**Q. Tim Cedric told me, this should be the time when you're coming on. Do you feel like a more mature racer than you were even two years ago --**

SIMON PAGENAUD: Absolutely. It's the whole package. I have the best car underneath me so I can really work my own details and keep improving, every time I'm on the racetrack, I feel like I'm improving from the previous race.

This was my best race this year. And although I thought Indy GP was a great race, there were a lot of other good races this year, but that's the thing, you want to win the championship, you have to step up your game every race; you have no choice.

**Q. Will talked about the physicality of today -- and he jokingly or seriously said he would like to see power steering added to the car. But you then talked about the way we do it over here in IndyCar makes it harder for newcomers. Where do you kind of fall on that? Do you like differences? Is that to your advantage or would you like to see power steering added to make it easier to drive these cars?**

SIMON PAGENAUD: That's a great question. It's a tough answer, because yeah, you could look at what you like and what you don't like and give you an answer.

From what I know, the open-wheel, we have the most downforce of any open wheels in the world. So we certainly have the heaviest steering wheel of any race cars.

I don't mind it, really. I spend a lot of time in the gym, I feel I'm the fittest I've ever been. So yes, I feel like it's an advantage right now because I can go flat-out like this. Now if we had power steering, I wouldn't have to spend as much time in the gym. That's what I'm thinking about.

But you know, it depends. It's a very tough call on that one. I think on some tracks like Indy, the Speedway,

it's fine, because we don't have as much downforce. But when you have max downforce like a track like here, like it's going to be at Watkins Glen, it's doing to be hard for sure. I don't dislike it. I don't mind any other way. That's not an exciting answer, but I'm sorry, it's the way it is.

**Q. Do you have a better feeling for where you are in the points race now? Can you afford to have more confidence than you had three days ago?**

SIMON PAGENAUD: My confidence hasn't changed. We've been super strong all year. We've had bad lucks. We had a mechanical issue at Road America where we were fighting for the win again; one at Indy where I believe we would have fought for the win, as well. That was a double-point race. There was a lot the points that went away from us. At Toronto we got caught up by the yellow fighting for another race win.

So there were a lot of instances where it didn't go our way, and I think when it goes our way, we need to maximize it and that's what we're doing. So I do feel good about it leaving here, because to me, that was a stamp on the championship.