

# IndyCar Media

## Conference

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# Simon Pagenaud

## Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: We're joined now by Verizon IndyCar Series points leader Simon Pagenaud, who started seventh and finished seventh in today's IndyCar Grand Prix at the Glen presented by Hitachi.

Obviously your points lead has increased this race after what happened to your teammate Will Power. What's going through your mind after you've had some time to process the race and realize where you stand heading into Sonoma?

SIMON PAGENAUD: It was a very eventful today day. The HP Chevrolet was really good, actually, in race pace. We struggled with a bit of -- we lacked a bit of pace this weekend, but in the race, I was very aggressive at the start, which gained us a lot of spots. We were actually battling for second going into the Bus Stop with Will, and at that point it was going to be a good fight going forward with him.

We basically had the same strategy, so we were caught by the yellow with him, and then on the restart I managed to get around him. Yeah, a couple good fights on the track. Quite a bit of fun.

But then on the second stint, on the black Firestone tires, we had an open gap and could really make a lot of ground, which put us pretty much in I believe top four at the time toward the end of the race, and before the last caution, we were looking pretty good there, but the last caution made it so the guys in front had to save a lot of fuel, and we didn't save enough fuel to start the stint, so the end was very slow.

We made it back in seventh. Championship day is very good, so we collected a lot of point. We have a better cushion going into Sonoma, even though we still have to race hard. It's going to be a lot more comfortable.

THE MODERATOR: How much were you keeping tabs on Will throughout the race, and obviously you never want to see your teammate go out in the fashion that he did, but were you advised when he had crashed out of the race that that had occurred?

SIMON PAGENAUD: So I was basically racing him as much as I could, and my target was really him all day. We were changing positions, so I knew where he was, and then I lost sight of him on that second stint. It's

funny because when the yellow came out, I asked where was he, and they told me, yeah, Will just crashed. At that point it didn't really change anything for me. I still had to race hard and try to make as many points as possible, knowing the double points system makes it very difficult. If you want to be comfortable you need a big gap going into the last one.

You never know. We could have mechanical issues, we could have any outside factors. That's not in our control. That could take away the championship from us. Tried everything to make it so we have the best cushion.

THE MODERATOR: Did you get that gap that you were kind of aiming for coming into the weekend, I believe it's 43 points now?

SIMON PAGENAUD: Well, I mean, the last stint, they restarted the race with 17 laps to go, we can really make only 16 laps on a full tank going hard, 15 maybe, and in that case, a lot of people had to save fuel. Some other people in the back didn't have to save fuel. At that point there was so much fuel saving there was no racing going on for us, it was just about finishing the race in the best position possible, hoping some people were going to run out of fuel.

So the last stint was not very racy, unfortunately, but that was the strategy, and it worked out.

**Q. I'm not asking you to be a medical advisor, but did you see Will after the race, and did he look normal like Power, I guess?**

SIMON PAGENAUD: Yeah. What does that mean? I don't know if he would like that comment. Yeah, I saw him. He's a total normal Will Power like. He seems okay. Glad he was okay. I mean, it's never great to hear any concerns on the head. Just glad he's all right. Like you said, I'm not a doctor, so I can't say what's next. But yeah, just glad he's all right because I want to take this fight to Sonoma.

**Q. Simon, when you're out there competing with everyone and you're running at speed and trying to pass people and then the race strategy changes and you're told you have to save fuel, how does that affect you in the cockpit, because it must be a little boring but yet it's still challenging to meet**

**numbers, especially when they're not realistic.**

SIMON PAGENAUD: Yes. It's very disturbing. Racing around the racetrack like this, and most racetracks it's all about rhythm. You've got to find your rhythm, your tempo, so you can keep going faster and faster and faster, and all of a sudden when they ask you to save fuel, your braking points change, the way you lift the throttle changes, and all of a sudden it's a different rhythm that you need to get into and extract the best out of that new rhythm. It's very difficult to switch back and forth, and especially when they ask you big numbers, like you said, unrealistic ones.

But even my engineer came up on the radio and said, calm down, we just need you to work with us, so I understood at that point that I just needed to stick to the program and get their numbers.

**Q. First road course race since Mid-Ohio for you; how physical was it? How did your back feel? Was there anything you did, like did you need anything in your headrest, extra padding?**

SIMON PAGENAUD: It felt good. My back was fine. It's really back to 100 percent now since I would say Texas, so that's really good. Pretty happy about that.

Physically it was very demanding, especially if we had to run the whole race 100 percent. But I think it was great. I think it made a bit of a difference at some point. Physical aptitude was very important, abilities was important. Certainly the neck suffered in the Carousel and the arms were burning quite a bit, but training was good enough for it, so I'm pretty happy.

Yeah, it's all good. I think it's the most physical racetrack we go to for sure.

**Q. Simon, in case you win the championship in Sonoma, in the past during the Champ Car time, Europeans winning the championship, how is it following in your country, and do you think it will open doors for other teams over in Europe for you to drive somewhere else besides IndyCar next year?**

SIMON PAGENAUD: Listen, it's no secret I've always been super interested in the 24 hours at Le Mans. I finished second there. Unfortunately it was the closest margin in history, so I've got unfinished business. But right now I'm pretty focused with Team Penske to run in IndyCar, try to win this championship and then try to win the Indy 500. That's my goal. It's always been my dream since I was a kid.

I've got things to accomplish here before I can think of anything else.

**Q. You were talking about Ben Bretzman. Is he as**

**much of a psychologist to you as he is your engineer?**

SIMON PAGENAUD: That's a good point for sure. He's very positive. He's an incredible guy. Even in a dark day, he's very positive, always uplifting. And he definitely -- we've known each other since 2010, so it definitely changed -- not changed my life, but he definitely made me look at things differently since we've been racing together. I used to be very intense and always very anxious, and now it's a lot easier because he's basically shown me that I can be positive. There's always a silver lining, so yes, he's been very important psychologically, as well.

**Q. Simon, you started seventh and finished seventh; clearly you wanted to beat Scott, but do you feel satisfied with that finish, or do you kind of feel like you left something out there on the track?**

SIMON PAGENAUD: I had nothing for Scott this weekend, so no. Some days it's not your day, and some days -- actually on days like this, that's how you win a championship is when you're not having the best day but people don't realize you're not having your best day. That's when you're doing well.

In my opinion this weekend I think we were fighting for podium results, and then strategy came into play. We ended up where we ended up. It was more strategy than skills at the end of the day.

Yeah, nothing for Scott. I think Scott was in a different league this weekend.

**Q. I was just wondering, are you at all nervous heading to Sonoma despite the points gap?**

SIMON PAGENAUD: You know, you can always be nervous about everything, right? Outside factors take me out. You could worry about that, but I can't control it. It's stuff that I can't control. I think we're going to be competitive there. We were last year. We have really good cars with Team Penske at this track. It's a little easier now because we can just mirror whatever Will does. If he gets caught by yellow, we'll get caught by a yellow. We can just do exactly what he's doing. That's really easier. But that doesn't mean that everything is done. There's a lot of road to cover still. There's a lot of points going into the last race.

I'm not nervous, I'm eager to finish this championship, finish it off.

**Q. Kind of more big picture, you had the four wide at Texas last week; is a moment like that the kind of moment where you think, if I win this championship, that'll be the kind of moment where I made a really good decision, or is there some other point in the season where you think, boy, that**

**was a really -- I got more out of the car than it should have?**

SIMON PAGENAUD: Well, yeah, I think there's been some good moments. Indy qualifying for me, Indy Grand Prix qualifying was very good, got us up there. First win at Long Beach where those laps before we pitted made the race. There's been a lot of moments. I think Iowa was very strong, as well, and Phoenix. A lot of good moments.

Unfortunately we had some bad moments, too, with some bad luck and mechanical issues, but yeah, Texas -- it's a shame I had to get back and get out of it for sure, but I had no choice. This one today I think is probably my best, considering that I didn't have the pace I expected. I think that was my best race of the year, especially the restarts, getting ahead of Will. I think for those reasons it was a really good race.