

IndyCar Media

Conference

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Simon Pagenaud

Press Conference

THE MODERATOR: We'd like to welcome our third-place finisher tonight and the reigning series champion, from Team Penske, Simon Pagenaud. Simon, a pretty wild night; how was it from your perspective?

SIMON PAGENAUD: Yeah, I don't think I'm going to get any sleep any time soon really. It was pretty nerve-racking out there. But the NTT Technology car was phenomenal. Just we did a lot of teamwork, really, to get that win for Penske. Was really awesome to work with Will that way. It was really hooked up, and we decided to try to break away from the pack by NASCAR style a little bit to try to draft each other and forget about the others. But it was more difficult than we thought. Cars create such a big hole in the air that it's actually difficult to break away, even with a great car.

Overall I felt like -- I feel pretty happy we finished third because so much could have happened. Obviously Sato was pretty excited out there, and I'm glad I didn't get into that mess. But yeah, getting some good points here was very important for the championship. I guess we'll get back to second. So very happy night. I wish I got two guns and a cowboy hat, but maybe next year. I'll pick up one at the airport actually. I don't know, I've got to get my face on those pictures.

THE MODERATOR: It seemed like for quite a while you were kind of content working with the team to ride behind Will and try to pull away.

SIMON PAGENAUD: Yeah, there was one moment I asked the team, can I pass him, and he said, it's no team order, it's just us working the strategy, but they said, no, it's better you stay behind because for the long run it's going to help you. And ultimately the rules about the tires happened, which really didn't help us because we had a tremendous car on the long runs. But yeah, it was -- wow, there's so much going through my head right now, it was pretty exciting. There's so much going on up here. But yeah, it was all right. I don't know what else to say. I lost my train of thought. Choo-choo.

THE MODERATOR: Are you remembering any particular events or anything that happened tonight?

SIMON PAGENAUD: There were a thousand events, so no, it's all a blur.



Q. Simon, I guess a two-part question. Do you think that this style of racing was maybe a little bit too crazy for this track, and I guess the next question, obviously as a side note, your countryman and former teammate Tristan Vautier was having a really good run. Do you have any thoughts about that?

SIMON PAGENAUD: Yes, after qually I actually talked to Brant James and we talked about how the race was going to play and exactly what I thought was going to happen. We were able to run second lane on a dusty track already, so I thought it was good fun. I thought it was good racing. Yes, it was some pack racing. You didn't have to pedal the car all that much. You still had to chase it with the setup, but you couldn't get away with a good car. That's the only disappointing part, but I thought for the fans it was a great show.

Now it's our responsibility as drivers to respect the others and not unplug the brain completely at times. It's our responsibility to know that someone on your side -- not to crash into them. To me that's where I would leave it at. That's the bottom line.

Q. And about Tristan?

SIMON PAGENAUD: Oh Tristan. Tristan did a great job. I was very happy for him. Man, it's incredible, he came back three years later and got back in the car, qualified fifth. He was running up front all day. I think he got caught up in that crash; I don't think it was his fault. I saw on the big screen. But he was doing very well. I hope he gets more outings because he's definitely showing how much he's grown as a driver and that he has the intellect to be a frontrunner. So I'm very happy for him. He's a good, good friend, and yeah, he just showed a lot of talent this weekend, I think.

Q. At what point did you realize that whatever we're seeing in qualifying in terms of Honda being, whatever, occupying first four rows, when did you realize that Chevy could match Honda tonight?

SIMON PAGENAUD: I thought after practice, practice last night, I thought, we'll have a good car. We passed the pack twice. I didn't get to see Dixon unfortunately. I wanted to run with him and see how good he was, but I didn't have a chance. But I ran with TK, I ran with Hunter-Reay, and I realized we were strong. I think we picked up the right amount of downforce.

I also think it's a testament to our team, how much development they're doing on the contact patch and

how good the chassis was I think is really what happened tonight, so thanks to them and thanks for the hard work. I think all that research and development they're doing really helped us tonight.

Q. With four to go, did you want to see them red flag it so you'd have another shot at it?

SIMON PAGENAUD: No, no, especially on restarts, I had such a good car, I wanted to go again. The road was clear without Sato and Dixon, so I thought maybe I have a shot. I could run the high side, I could run the low side, so I knew -- that was a bit more trim than Will, so I thought maybe I could do it, but it would have been pretty intense, but I thought I had a shot, but you never know. But yeah, it was a shame, but the rules are the rules. 248 laps, that's it, that's the end.

Q. You may have already mentioned this, but at the end, what was your view of everything that kind of happened in front of you on that last crash?

SIMON PAGENAUD: Last crash I didn't see. I saw sparks. I saw Sato sideways, and I thought that was going to happen. That's all I thought about. I just saw a hole and I went for the hole on the right, kept my boot in to make sure I was going to clear the crash, and that was it. But Sato was all over the place and was going to crash someone. I don't like to bash on people, but he was really out of control tonight. It's unfortunate because he's a tremendous racer, but yeah, glad it wasn't with me.

Q. (No microphone.)

SIMON PAGENAUD: No, it was cooking, and it was a shame because what I saw when he came in the mix, he really started chopping things around and that was when I realized it was too late. I should have been leading at that point. But it's racing.