

IndyCar Media Conference

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Roger Penske Tim Cindric

Press Conference

THE MODERATOR: We'll continue with Mr. Penske and Mr. Cindric. If you could, let's start with Tim. Let's talk about bringing Josef into the team. You went to kind of a new dynamic, but it seemed to work almost from the get-go.

TIM CINDRIC: Yeah, it obviously wasn't an easy decision when we decided that Josef was available, and Montoya had done a really good job for us along the way and we needed to make a decision if we were going to build for the future or what we were going to do, and we sat down and talked to Juan, and he said, Look, I don't like it, but if I was in your shoes I'd do the same thing; he's the guy that I would pick.

And honestly, we didn't really know what to expect other than we knew how competitive he was and knew that he'd won in everything that he had really raced in and felt like we needed to continue to build for the future, and if we weren't racing with him, we were probably going to race against him soon.

Q. The lap 65 after the pit stop the two cars came together, it got really racy there, and it sounded like you came over the radio and told Josef, don't lose sight of the championship here. How close was that to maybe ruining the whole day?

TIM CINDRIC: Well, I think he knew where he needed to be, but fortunately he listened. But yeah, we intentionally honestly didn't push very hard in those in and out laps. I felt like had it been a normal race, it would have been probably a little bit different and a little bit more dicey because it wasn't going to hurt us for Simon to be the guy that won the race today. We were just trying to keep Josef focused more on finishing where we were because that's all we needed to do, and there really wasn't any need to push there, and we didn't push on the in laps or the out laps, and honestly I expected to come out just behind him, but honestly at that point in the race it was fine.

Q. Mr. Penske, when you look at Josef only being 26 years old, he's a guy you can clearly build with for the future, what does it mean to have a champion that's that young?

ROGER PENSKE: I think if you look at racing today across all of the disciplines, these drivers, these young people are coming up with lots of capabilities. You see it in NASCAR, we see it in our super car. There's no



question that because they start early, we're going to see younger people come to the top, as Josef has, and I think I called him a journeyman where he started in go-karts, the family helped him, he went to Europe, came over here, won in Indy Lights, and he drove for Sarah for a couple years and then for Tony. He's got the perfect experience. He lives and sleeps racing. And I think we've been fortunate when we saw he was available -- we're not used to running five cars in Indianapolis. That would be something we probably would say we'd never do, but on the other hand, I think as we saw the opportunity, and I don't think in business you always have the perfect time for something, I think it's the same thing in racing where it's a crew chief, a chief mechanic, a driver or even a sponsor, to try to have it come in like it is with him, and his commitment to the team -- even though he had maybe a little dust-up with Josef (sic) in St. Louis, I think it made all these guys better because he's pushing, and obviously he knows that -- he did not want to create an accident, but on the other hand, I think he's brought the interest within the team even more, and more important, I think he's got the respect now.

So I see these young guys coming in with the respect. He's certainly from a commercial perspective like the other guys have been great for our sponsors, and it was just something we had to say, hey, come on with us, we're ready to go, and he'll be a long-term player with us, hopefully like most of the drivers have.

Q. You had the driver of your car today, the 3 car, Helio came in here terrific again. He's 20 years almost all with you, and it's been -- whatever happens, it's been just an unbelievable ride for that young man.

ROGER PENSKE: Well, I've been on his car now, I don't know if it's been 20 years, but it seems like it has. It's been terrific. He's the class of the field in the trailer with our guys, and you can see him whether he's up or he's down, he's always up, and I think that's been key, and he's going to be a long-term player with us on the team as we go forward.

Q. What about Helio, just the ride you get with Helio? It's a ride.

ROGER PENSKE: Well, I mean, he is just -- he's always smiling. He's always saying, how can I help you. There's never a time when we call him that he doesn't say, I'm there, I'll do it. He's just a different sort of an athlete and one that he's got a lot of respect in the garage area, too, which I think is important, and

certainly within the team. He's helped us build it -- three of our Indy 500s came off his back, so you have to say that's amazing just in itself.

Q. Roger and Tim, do you see this as maybe being a pivot point in the sport to where this is now the emergence of guys like Josef Newgarden or Alexander Rossi at Andretti Autosport, that we're now starting to see what the next group of big-time stars are going to be in this series?

ROGER PENSKE: Well, look, it's so difficult for these young guys in many cases to get a good ride, but I think the fact that they've driven a lot of these courses in Indy Lights, some of them have done some sports car racing, and the fact that the quality -- if I look up and down the pit lane and you look at qualification, there's maybe three or four or five tenths difference almost between the whole field most of the races this year. The quality of the drivers coming up, we want to see that, and we have to be the catalyst to go out and look for this young talent because we don't want to be changing drivers every year. That's one of the benefits, I think, when we go to Indianapolis, we probably have 600 years of experience in our garage, and that continuity, that low turnover makes it. So we need to hook ourselves into these young people, and I think you're going to see a lot of them.

There's people out there -- certainly Michael has done an outstanding job. He was a great driver. He gets it. The Andretti name is important to the sport, important to us, and one of the first guys that came up to me today to congratulate me was Michael and Ganassi.

We race each other like hell on the track, but we also respect the fact that we're glad each one of us is in the sport because it helps to keep it where it is.

TIM CINDRIC: I obviously echo what Roger said and can't say it better except I think it's all of our responsibility to continue to promote the next level because it's not just on the racetrack. These personalities are the ones that everybody needs to see and understand, and you see the same type of thing happening in NASCAR right now where a lot of the big names, you look at Dale Jr. and some of these guys going away and retiring, and already there's already these guys that are coming up, the Kyle Larsons and the Ryan Blaneys and the Chase Elliotts of the world. That's what IndyCar needs to continue to focus on, too.

Q. (Indiscernible.)

TIM CINDRIC: Without a doubt. We need to figure out ways off the racetrack to continue to build these personalities because they're there. We just need to get the word out.

Q. Tim, another young guy, Brian Campe, comes in here and does a terrific job, as well.

TIM CINDRIC: Yeah, without a doubt. Brian came to us originally from the NASCAR program. He had

worked for us as a NASCAR engineer. He was part of Brad Keselowski's team both on the Cup side and the Nationwide side at the time, and it was a cross-pollination of, hey, let's go IndyCar racing, and he came in and engineered Montoya for a couple years and figured out what IndyCar racing was all about, and now he's sitting there as a championship race engineer. He's been able to be part of an Indy 500 win and a championship now, which is really cool.

Q. Mr. Penske, with only -- even though Josef has only driven for you for one season, he's delivered a championship. Where do you see some

similarities in him of guys that are legends in your organization like a Mark Donohue or a Rick Mears?

ROGER PENSKE: Boy, that's -- I've had so many great drivers, and as I said, I don't have a favorite. I think that I always look at Mears as one of the drivers who made such a difference with us going all the way back. You know, he knocked on the door and was really -- had never really had a lot of success, and he created a tremendous momentum within our race organization. And I think that's exactly what Josef is doing because of his intensity.

Mears was someone that also we talked about it, his credibility within the garage area was something, and I think that -- I look at him, and he's also probably an unsung hero here tonight or today because he's the one that sits down with Josef and sat down with Simon and even Montoya and Power and they talk about what's going on on the racetrack, and he gives them his insight. He's pretty much connected to all these, so I'd have to say he's pretty special.

I think that Josef is kind of a student but also I think he's got Mears in his ear, and that's important.

To me, I can't compare him to anyone exactly. He's an American, which is special in this sport, because many of the other drivers have come from overseas and different parts of the world, and to see Josef kind of take this route and be at the top right now is pretty exciting, and I think that Rahal has done a great job, and you see some of the other drivers out there.

It's going to be interesting as we go forward. And there will be some new names and new faces.

Q. About those new names and new faces, beautiful day here in Sonoma, a race to the finish. Can you talk a little bit about the future of IndyCar? Everything seems to be at least angling in the right direction.

ROGER PENSKE: Well, there's no question that I think the quality -- I said earlier, the quality of the teams, the sponsors, I know they're tough to get, but when you look at the cars and the names, there's Fortune 500 names on the sides of a lot of these cars, which is very important. And one of the things that I think Mark Miles and the teams have done, and Jay, we're keeping

these costs in line, which is important to us, and we're not changing rules and all of a sudden put a lot of burden on the teams, and I think that's important.

I'm seeing the attendance go up. I know that we have more people calling us wanting to get involved with the sport than we've ever had, and I know from my own, I guess, business space and our employees, there's more interest today with social media and the connection and speed has made a big difference. We're not NASCAR, we're IndyCar racing, and there's only one race in the world like Indianapolis, and as long as we put our arms around the Indianapolis 500 and have the ability to go and come back each year, we've got a great series, and I think the media is starting to pick that up. I think the television commentary has been good. I think Tracy and some of the people that are up there today are pros. They've been in it. They've been knocked around a little bit and they've had success, and I think that makes a big difference. TV is good, the social media. The tracks -- one of the things I like about it, we're coming back to the same tracks in most cases, so what I call date equity, so you can count on the IndyCars being back here at this time next year, if we're going to go to Detroit or we're going to go to St. Petersburg or these different tracks, going to Toronto, that makes a big difference, and that's how NASCAR built its strength, because they had that fan base, and we need to grow that base geographically in areas that will support the track and also the teams.

To me, I see it on a very upward motion today, and we're going to do everything we can in order to support that from a Team Penske perspective. I think the drivers, they sit out here and sign autographs. How many other sports do that, sit out before a big game and start signing autographs? Those are things that today maybe we take it for granted, but that's a big step forward in communication with the fan base.

Q. Talking about the product on the racetrack, any opinions about how different the car next year will change the look of IndyCar on the track as far as quality of racing?

ROGER PENSKE: We don't know. There's people say that one aero kit is better than the other. Someone says one engine is better than the other. Well, next year we're going to find out because the good news is we're going to have a brand new car utilizing probably 75 percent of what we already have, so it's going to be the body work and aerodynamics. The cars will look different. It'll be exciting, and we're all going to -- there will be no excuses on who's got a better wing or doesn't have it. It's going to be the same, and I think that's going to be quite positive. Then it's up to team strategy, it's up to the quality of the drivers and certainly the way they conduct themselves on the racetrack. So Tim, you might want to comment. You've seen the cars, and what's your thoughts?

TIM CINDRIC: I think the testing -- especially on the

ovals, it'll help with the car back in the drivers' hands, and I think whenever that happens, the cream rises to the top. We've seen that maybe we're too much on a string at some of these tracks and have a difficult time passing at tracks that we've had great races at. We've had great races at Phoenix in the past, we've had great races at some of these other venues, and as you continue to put the racing back in the drivers' hands, and I think the key to that, and Mears will tell you, if they can save it, you've almost got it right. If it steps out and you can't save it, then the racing is probably not going to be very good.

I think that what we've seen so far, depending on what the final specifications are for the different tracks, is that hopefully these cars will put the driver back in the place to where they can pass each other, especially on the ovals, and if we can make -- any time you can make the braking section longer at the road courses, you have more passing. Anything there I think is more exciting, and yeah, I think they're going the right direction, it's just a matter of taking the right steps at the right time and not -- and having a good balance with what the costs are versus spec because at the end of the day, IndyCar racing is something that you want to be in a place to make a bad decision because if you don't have to make any decisions before you go to the racetrack, then I would say that the racing is probably not going to be that good. But if you have an opportunity to make a bad decision, then some guys make it bad, some guys make it good, and you end up with passing, so that's what we need to have.