

# IndyCar Media Conference

Thursday May 10, 2018

## Sebastien Bourdais Simon Pagenaud Will Power

### Press Conference

THE MODERATOR: Thanks for joining us on the first day of what will be a busy month of May with the IndyCar Grand Prix kicking things off, two great champions here. The French are on time, by the way. The Australian is on Aussie time.

Simon Pagenaud, Seb Bourdais. Pagenaud has won this race twice, Seb Bourdais has not, but is third in points as we come into this month of May. Kind of an overview, we'll start with the driver who has won two races here on the road course. Talk about the success you've had. You've won the pole, you've won the race a couple times. This has been a good place for you.

SIMON PAGENAUD: Yeah, I really enjoy this track. It's certainly the most advanced and safe, as well, track that we go to. It's a lot of fun here. It's very European-style racing, pretty flat track with very technical corner and medium-speed corners in Turn 4. It's very similar to actually the track I grew up on in France, so I think that's probably why I like this kind of technique, corners technique.

The test was really good. We really found some things that I enjoyed with this car. We're going to test some more things to make me feel it even better tomorrow, so practice one is going to be important for the weekend. From there, it's obviously a pretty quick weekend, so two-day weekend, we try to put all we can into qualifying, and then from there it's usually a race where you want to qualify well. It should be a bit different than the last two years. It should be a bit warmer, as well, so that should change how the race is going to go.

THE MODERATOR: Seb, talk about it from your perspective. Last year's race didn't last very well, a couple-three laps. But this is a race where there's a lot of passing opportunities and you don't have to win the pole, although the last three race winners have won the pole. You don't have to win the pole here in this circuit.

SEBASTIAN BOURDAIS: Yeah, I think I managed 28 laps over the last two editions so I'll try and up that a little bit. We had a mechanical failure two years ago, and last year another mechanical failure. It's kind of weird because we never have really even -- between



the KV and the Dale Coyne, we've never really had any mechanical issues other than here, so kind of strange. But hope that we've got this behind us, and yeah, just a fun track, like Simon was saying, just a lot of passing opportunities, and especially with the new aero kit this year, I think it will be quite an interesting race, and even more so if the weather comes into play, which right now I guess there's some pretty serious chances of rain on Saturday.

We'll see, but you know, regardless, it's always a fun weekend, a great way to start the month, and looking forward to it.

**Q. This is by far and away the smooth he's road course that you race on anywhere. The other road courses have their little quirks and all that. Does the lack of quirks, bumps or anything change the dynamic how a driver approaches a road course race because a lot of times at those other courses you can make the bumps work in your favor?**

SEBASTIAN BOURDAIS: Yeah, I mean, it definitely is the one where -- because you trim and the fact that it's very smooth, you end up running the lowest ride heights of the whole season for sure by quite a bit, so I'd say it definitely negates some of the sensitivity that the cars can have. So yeah, you can get the balance quite close here to where you really want it. And yeah, it's -- but it obviously is true for everybody, so it's kind of a catch. And I think the temperatures being a lot hotter than we've seen compared to obviously the test where it was really cold, we had some decent track temp, but temperature-wise, we had a lot of downforce, so we could trim -- I think we'll end up seeing ourselves putting a lot of downforce back on the cars just to get the feel back.

SIMON PAGENAUD: I think like Seb said, the fact that there's less bumps tightens the gap with everybody. Every car just behaves better because there's less bumps, and as a driver you can also push the limits. So definitely it's going to be pretty tight, I think, this weekend for everybody, like we saw the test. But it's definitely more fun to drive for us, even though it's harder to make a difference.

**Q. You guys both referenced how you think this race might be a little bit different than it has been the past couple years. Can you talk about why a little bit?**

SIMON PAGENAUD: Well, just because obviously it was just really difficult to get to anyone in the last

couple of years really with the aero kit. So I think we've definitely seen the cars a lot less impacted following someone. The draft is still pretty decent. So I think we'll be in a position to put on a far better show than we have in the last couple of years.

SIMON PAGENAUD: Yeah, I think the cars behave very differently, not just the aero. Certainly the aero is a big effect, but the mechanical balance has changed quite a bit with the weight distribution forward. The cars are very different to drive. In general, I think a lot of people haven't found out yet what they need from their car to make it work, so I think we're starting to be -- we're five races in, so people are starting to figure it out now, so I think it's going to get tighter and tighter, and I think being such a universal product, I mean, it's a spec series pretty much, everybody should be pretty close.

**Q. In passing, three of the four races we've had somewhere near twice as many passes as there were with the previous last year, the old aero kits. Do you anticipate that kind of being the case this weekend?**

SIMON PAGENAUD: Yeah, I think the drafting is pretty good here. The drafting in general with this car. It's been strong on the straightaway, so you can certainly get sucked up really well, like Sebastien said, you can follow closer and not get as affected as before. So there's more opportunities for sure. Now we'll see how many restarts there is because here is always very exciting on restarts because it's such a long straightaway. There's a lot of action into Turn 1.

**Q. Exciting?**

SIMON PAGENAUD: Yeah, I get excited.

**Q. Simon, does the two wins here at this track for you make you feel like this could be the race where your season kind of turns more towards how it's been the last couple years for you?**

SIMON PAGENAUD: Well, I hope I can repeat, yeah. I definitely need it at this time. But yeah, it's unfortunate we haven't had a good start of the season. Performance is there anyways, it's just we've got to turn things around a little bit. I don't want to go into details about what happened at every race, it's just what it is. It's racing. Sometimes it works, sometimes it doesn't. But certainly here has always been a good place for us, so we've got also some evolution coming that I should be more comfortable with, and I'm really hopeful that it would be the weekend where we can start showing our strength.

**Q. And you mentioned that this was similar to the track you grew up on in France. How exactly is it similar to that track?**

SIMON PAGENAUD: The braking zones, where to brake, the technical aspect of the corners, how tight it is. I found it quite similar to my home track. There's also the Turn 4 complex requires similar techniques to

a corner that I know there. Just reminds me of my home track. I don't know, you know, sometimes you just can't explain it.

**Q. Simon, with your home track, you think it's an advantage that you know already your home track compared to here, very similar, for the race?**

SIMON PAGENAUD: Like I said, sometimes you can't explain it. It's just you feel comfortable because of the nature of the corners, and it's easy for you to repeat and be consistent with it, so I think that's the reason.

**Q. I'm curious what your opinions were of the GP when it started five years ago and whether those opinions or feelings have changed or remained the same now that we're heading into the fifth edition of this.**

SIMON PAGENAUD: I think it's fantastic. I think, you know, it's fantastic to start the month of May with this event. I think it just shows the true nature of the Verizon IndyCar Series. We race road course, street course, oval, superspeedway, short ovals and here. We're demonstrating what the series is all about and what IndyCar is all about. With the big wings to start the month and using the road course, and then we're going to go the other way with the speedway wings next week, so that's -- to me it's exciting because the fans can really see what IndyCar is all about in one month. So kicking off the first race at the speedway, at the road course here is always special, and for us to demonstrate our skills on both is important.

SEBASTIEN BOURDAIS: Yeah, I think that's pretty much it. It's always a fun weekend, a good place to start the month. I think there's less of the need, obviously, to have days -- less days of testing at the speedway. There's not as much advances technology. There's not a new track record every day as there was a long time ago, so I think we need to show what the series is about and explain and share more, and I think it's a great way. There's obviously an awesome facility on the road course, which we put on a really good show. It was a shame not to do that before, and I think it's a great thing that we do it now.

**Q. Is it difficult to concentrate on the GP when you know you've got the big one coming up here in a couple weeks?**

SEBASTIEN BOURDAIS: Yes and no. I mean, at the end of the day, we don't need 10 days to concentrate for the 500. You know, the Grand Prix is a two-day event Friday and Saturday. It's just hard for the teams more than for us really, just turning the equipment around. Obviously the car configuration is very different. For the smaller guys, it's always a big challenge to get a 500 car set aside, especially this year with the new kit and all the parts that you have to get. It's been a bit of a challenge. But for sure it's much harder for the teams than for us, I think.

**Q. I'm curious with such a long straightaway for the**

**road course, and you said you can now suck up much easier to the car in front, what about passing with the Push-to-Pass now that it's just so many total seconds, like 200 seconds? Was it better when you had a limited number of pushes so that the guy in front doesn't defend, doesn't cancel out what you're doing?**

SEBASTIAN BOURDAIS: I'll tell you what, I honestly don't have an opinion on this. I use whatever I've been given. You know, the problem is somebody is going to say -- a driver is going to say it was better before, and another driver is going to say it's better now, then where do you stand. At the end of the day, it's whatever IndyCar decides, we have to deal with it. Whatever. I mean, if it was better before, if it's better now, it is -- what we have is what it is, and you've got to deal with it the best you can. Maybe I don't answer your question, but it's just -- it's a difficult topic because drivers always have different opinions.

SIMON PAGENAUD: Yeah, for me I like it better because I think it's more tactical. You can get someone to use it and run out pretty quick if you're being smart about it. You can get right in the toe and force him to use it and stop it and have him wear it off. I mean, I think it's -- I like it quite a bit better that way. I mean, the total time depends on the track and how much you can use it. I think the fact that we're not using it on starts and restart is a really good thing. Definitely tends to avoid some mayhem. So yeah, no, I like the new system.

**Q. Will, are you excited about the weekend? They were just asked the question, do you come into the month thinking about the GP, or do you think looking ahead too much, do you catch yourself looking ahead?**

WILL POWER: I do, actually. I have caught myself the last few days thinking about the 500 because the car is so different, so you're really thinking about what is going to make the car work. But today you'll be sitting down with your engineer, focusing on tomorrow and Saturday. Yeah, I think you'll kind of forget about the 500 for a couple days and then put 100 percent into being quick on the road course.

**Q. Simon and Sebastien, because of its history with the 24 hours, Daytona has probably got the most successful speedway road course in America, but is this the best speedway road course in America that you've ever competed at?**

SIMON PAGENAUD: I mean, yes. Yeah, I mean, how many is there? Yeah, I mean, personally, I really think so. It's definitely different events that we're talking about, but it's definitely a beautiful city, beautiful road course and speedway. I think we've got the best of both worlds here. Very positive about it, yes.

SEBASTIAN BOURDAIS: Yeah, I would agree, definitely. I think it's -- the site is big enough that it really allows you to come up with an interesting layout

and really maximize the use of the straight, and the oval for us is obviously -- like Daytona wouldn't be a usable option anyway. Yeah, it's much more of a technical and interesting layout, I think, for us.

**Q. With the two-day event, does that take a lot to get used to from a driver standpoint, and do you like it?**

SEBASTIAN BOURDAIS: Well, I would say I would have liked to have an afternoon session today instead of 9:00 a.m. practice which is going to be somewhat useless because it's too cold compared to what you're going to get, and we're here anyways, but that's just me saying.

SIMON PAGENAUD: Agreed.

WILL POWER: Yeah, I think, yeah, it's -- yeah, it's the same for everyone. It's the same for everyone anyways, but yeah.

**Q. Will, how do you think the race and the performance of the cars is different this year at this venue, given the aero changes and so forth?**

WILL POWER: Yeah, we don't know how it races yet here, but everywhere else, it's been better. It's just easier to follow. You don't have a big, dirty wake from all the winglets and stuff that was hanging off the old car. I can see it being -- especially being such a hot day on race day, it being pretty good racing, tire degradation, and people might struggle to come on to the front straight here a little bit, so yeah, it'll be absolutely better racing here than last year.

**Q. Do you have a favorite part of the racetrack?**

WILL POWER: I love this track. It's probably my favorite road course because it's so technical and smooth and European like. But man, they're all corners that lead into complexes. You've got Turn 1, 2, so there's give and take there, and then you've got the 7, 8, 9 complex, which is really technical. Yeah, they're all -- all the sets of complexes are all equally fun and interesting.

**Q. Will, with the new car and the new aero kit, can you take something over from last year's car, or is everything totally different now that you can more or less throw your data away?**

WILL POWER: It's quite different, quite different. I mean, at some of the tracks where you would run max downforce in the old car, the car is so much faster on the straights. It's a very different aero characteristic the way it behaves, so yeah, I'd be -- I don't think there's going to be a track that we turn up to where the setups are going to be the same. They're all quite different actually.

**Q. Will, having had RP on your box now for a few races this year, how much of an adjustment has that been, and how excited are you for May to have RP for this month?**

WILL POWER: I actually don't have him on my box this month, but it's been a very easy transition. Obviously Roger has been doing it a long time, and he was a driver, so he just gives you all the information that you want to hear, and yeah, he's very good, very clear. So yeah, it's enjoyable having the boss on the radio.