

# IndyCar Media Conference

Tuesday May 15, 2018

## Danica Patrick Simon Pagenaud

### Press Conference

THE MODERATOR: We will go ahead and get started with today's Verizon IndyCar Series post practice press conference. Joined now by Danica Patrick, driver of the No. 13 Go Daddy Chevrolet for Ed Carpenter Racing.

Danica, you just completed your first official day of practice back here at Indianapolis Motor Speedway. Got a taste of testing last week or the week before that.

DANICA PATRICK: Yeah, I know, I get confused myself.

THE MODERATOR: All the days blend together. What is the difference between a day like that and getting back to your first official practice here at the Speedway?

DANICA PATRICK: Well, I mean, first off I'm glad the test ended up getting moved to two weeks ago instead of six weeks ago just to be a little bit more fresh from that. But it was good to have all that time by myself for the most part. I mean, I think I drove behind Ed for a few laps at the end of the day when we were here two weeks ago.

So, you know, today it's everybody, especially at the end of the day it's happy hour or it could be unhappy hour if your car's not very comfortable because there's a lot of cars out on track.

I jumped into the back of a group, and then got into kind of the middle of the group, was able to pull away from the car behind, close up a little bit on the car ahead.

I felt pretty good. I'm still not completely confident in traffic. They're trying to encourage me to use my tools and the bars, you know, the weight jacker and things. I'm like, I need to feel the traffic first. Like before we create another variable as to what's going on, I need to familiarize myself and get sharp again with the traffic and just the tendencies of the car.

So, yeah, it was a really -- I mean, I felt like it was a really solid day. I feel like the car has a lot of good natural speed in it. It was very smooth. We tried a handful of things and found some stuff that worked.



But I think that probably anyone that comes in here is probably (indiscernible) better info than me. It definitely feels like understeer and traffic is going to be the determining factor of where you go. You can get a decent lap, but once you get close up on a car in front, you're going to deal with the front getting really light on you.

That's the job at hand, how do you fix that and make yourself feel comfortable alone, find that balance. That's what we're trying to do. Yeah, it was a good thing it didn't rain.

THE MODERATOR: You said you feel like the car has good speed. As you're working through this, you're trying to feel everything out for the car. How quickly does that come back? That's something you have to acclimate to.

DANICA PATRICK: Definitely relearning the feel, remembering kind of the pattern of lifting and sort of the timing of it, where you do it in the corner, where you downshift, when you up-shift, when you leave it, little things like that.

I would say that just driving the car and being distracted with other things, like adjustments and traffic and looking in my mirrors and things like that, I'm getting a little bit more comfortable and almost reminding myself like, Hey, you're not thinking hard enough about that corner there, and you're doing 230, so...

But that's what you need to get to. You need to get to the point where driving the car is very natural and instinctive on what's happening, be able to digest the other scenarios, the cars around you, the adjustments you're making, thinking ahead on the adjustments, timing passes. There's a lot of -- you need to create a lot of room for that kind of stuff out there as opposed to just driving the car. The race is very little of just driving the car and a lot of the other stuff.

THE MODERATOR: We will go ahead and open it up for questions.

**Q. It sounds like you want to feel comfortable but not too comfortable. Is the pace what you thought it would be? Like the old cliché, riding a bike?**

DANICA PATRICK: I was joking about riding a bike, a 230 mile-an-hour bike. That's a different story.

Yeah, at this point, like I said, the very first day I was in the car, it felt way worse than what I thought it was going to feel. Day two was much better than I thought it was going to feel.

I would say for day one of Indy 500 week, weeks, call it a fortnight, right, not a month any more unfortunately, but I would say today went really well. We accomplished what we wanted to. We ran alone. We tried things. We got the car to turn a little bit better. We got in traffic for a good few laps, quite a few.

I'd say today was a really good day, really solid day. I kind of kept the mantra in mind like I had when I came to the test, that it's about building confidence, not breaking confidence.

So, you know, I think the team is very solid and we have great cars. It's a great organization. I don't need to be silly. We can rely on teammates, you know, pace ourselves a little bit here and there.

'Fortnight', that's a British term, right? There's a lot of British people in IndyCar, so...

**Q. Compared to what it was when you were a rookie here back in 2005, what's the difference, even though it's two different sets of cars? What do you remember that you can use with the cars now?**

DANICA PATRICK: The feel or, like, just give me some synopsis of what's different now than then?

**Q. Compared to the chassis back then, stuff like that. I know it's totally different. How will you be able to use what you had back then to now?**

DANICA PATRICK: Do you remember what was going on 13 years ago? It's pretty tough to remember exactly the way that the car felt compared to now. We're talking about 13 years, a heck of a lot of laps in different cars and situations.

But, you know, I think the over-sweeping feeling every time I come to this track is that you have to be humble and respectful of it, and that you're going very fast, things happen very fast. You can go out from one run to the next and not change anything and the car can be different. You just need to keep your wits about you.

I mean, for the very beginning of the month of May compared to my very first month of May, in general I'd say I'm humbled by the fact that the car has a lot of good, natural speed. It's really just a matter of making a good racecar then.

Of course, back in those days, at this point in time, we weren't running in a pack at all, we were only working on speed. The whole first week was really just about getting ready for qualifying. Yeah, we're not in that scenario now.

**Q. First time you came here in a few years, the business side of being a driver is just strictly business side of being a driver. Did you ever imagine that you would be involved in as many business ventures as you are now, how the Danica brand came about?**

DANICA PATRICK: Definitely not all at once. I mean, I am interested in many things. But for a book, a clothing line and a wine to all launch at the same time, over 12 months, it all was happening.

But, hey, you know, Bobby Rahal gave me great advice before I was an IndyCar driver, when I was signed on to do Formula Atlantic for him. That's that you need to save your money, don't spend it all, and think about when you're done racing. The fact for him, he wanted to be able to live the same lifestyle after racing as during, even though of course your salary goes away. What else can you do to provide that? What can you do to build a financial structure to do that, to live the same lifestyle?

That always stuck with me from a very long time ago. That was probably, what, 2002, '3, that he told me that. I've always kept that in the back of my mind. I think that's to some degree some of what has motivated me to remember that there is going to be a lot of time after racing. Here I am a little younger than probably what I thought I'd be when I retired.

At the same point, what year did I start, I was -- 2005, so I was 23. I mean, I remember thinking to myself, I don't know, maybe I'll do it for 10 years. It's not that far off (laughter).

Anyway, I guess I wasn't so far off with two different series. Yeah, I've been very fortunate in my career. I'm excited about the next phase. I know that racing has given me everything I have, it's given me every opportunity I have. It really all started here.

**Q. Earlier today you went and shared some of your racing experience with a group of local high school girls. On a day that is so hectic for you, you have so many things going on, why is that something that was important for you to take time to do?**

DANICA PATRICK: I mean, ideally it would be nice if it wasn't on the very first day on track when I had to do, you know, lengthy interviews. They let us go out at 10 or 11, do a leak check. That wasn't in the plan. I know they had to wait around for my original time.

They're just good things to do. I mean, it was quick. It wasn't very long. But it's still your presence. I'm not shy about my message. So that to me is the next phase of moving into, you know, life after racing, is I want to spread that message of empowerment and dreaming, setting big goals for yourself, and finding what it is that you love to do so you have the motivation to do it past when it's challenging.

**Q. Obviously your goal is to win this race. You came close early on when you started here. If you would win this race on Memorial Day, would you think about coming back and doing it again?**

DANICA PATRICK: No, absolutely not. That would be the perfect way to never come back. Don't you think? Yeah, don't you think? Just mic drop that thing. That would be the perfect way to go out.

I have to say, I mean, if you talk to anybody in the last five years about, Am I going to do Indy? Personal, like family, I said I'd never do it again. No way. Like, I'm not going to -- just not going to do it. It's been too long since I've been in the car.

The way that it all went down with being able to have time to prepare and be really focused, like, I watched Kurt do the double. I really tried to do the double the second year I was gone. But I watched him do it, how much back and forth you have to do.

I mean, look, you can do it, but that to me, based on the fact that I had done so well here so many times, had so much fun history here in my own memory, like, I didn't want to come back just to do the double. I felt like I could within the first two years I was gone and still do a really good job. But after being gone for three, four, five, six, seven years, I was, like, I didn't think I'd ever do it again.

I have to say that only just because you never know. But, look, if I win, I really don't think I would come back. It would be perfect. It would be perfect just like that.

THE MODERATOR: Danica, thank you very much. We appreciate your time.

DANICA PATRICK: Thanks.

THE MODERATOR: We'll welcome in Simon Pagenaud, driver of the No. 22 Menards Chevrolet for Team Penske. Fastest of the day in today's combined sessions in practice for the Indianapolis 500.

Simon, how did the car feel today? You obviously got some great speed out of it.

SIMON PAGENAUD: Yeah, the 22 Menards car is looking really, really fast. It was a very productive day. So, yeah, felt pretty happy. We obviously still learning a lot about the aerodynamics of the car. It's quite different to what we had the past few years. There's still a lot to learn for everybody, I believe. But we're on the right track.

I tell you what, feel pretty confident already, which is a big step forward. It's definitely important to be already ahead of the game if we have some weather this week. I think that could be very important.

THE MODERATOR: Drivers talk a lot during test

sessions about how they have a checklist of things to run through. Even though this is official practice, you do have several days of it to get an opportunity to get the car ready for qualifying and ultimately the race. What does a first day checklist look like? How does it differ from things you'll do later on in the week?

SIMON PAGENAUD: It's exciting. It's the first day of the month. Usually in the past, especially when you're a driver that doesn't have much experience on ovals, you take your time. Throughout the years, I learned you shouldn't take your time, you should get going pretty quick. You never know, tomorrow may be raining. The day after that you may have some mechanical issues. Take your chance when you do.

We worked on understanding how the aerodynamics worked on the car today. That was our main goal, try to take things to extremes and see the limits. We think we have a good mechanical package to start on the car. Then we could work on the aero. That's what's interesting.

There's obviously a lot less options than what we had in the past. With all the winglets we had, it was very complicated. Now it's more simple, but it's a different way to make the car work.

You got to keep an open mind, that's for sure. But tomorrow's going to be a different checklist, different items that we're going to try, probably more mechanical. Today was more an aerodynamic day.

THE MODERATOR: You're always going to be a series champion, but not an Indy 500 champion yet. You are driving for Team Penske which has more wins than any other team here in IndyCar history. What does it feel to drive for a team like that knowing you have a pretty good shot driving for Penske?

SIMON PAGENAUD: Yeah, I think this year we have a pretty strong opportunity. Chevy has done a tremendous job, so we feel like we have a lot of power. You know when you come and you feel you have a chance, wow, it's an early Christmas, I tell you.

We'll see. I really feel like this year could be a really good one. We've had some good ones before here. Let's make it happen.

But, you know, when you drive for Roger, that's definitely number one goal. For us this year, it was clear from the beginning of the year, that's number one goal is to win Indy, then the rest will come next.

So we put all the effort we can in it. The team's done a lot of work on understanding the car and trying to extract the best out of every component on it. So far it's working.

Helio was fast, Will was fast, Josef as well. All four

together we worked well today. We got so much information tonight to share that it makes for a dream team.

THE MODERATOR: Questions for Simon.

**Q. You're feeling really confident today. Day one feel like this last year or...**

SIMON PAGENAUD: No, I haven't felt like this yet, I would say. That's a big leap forward. 2015 was definitely a great year for us. We had a really good racecar. It took us time to get there.

Now on an oval I know what I need better, more. I have to say today I felt like we're pretty close to where I want to be. It's not there yet, but at least we have a really good baseline that I know will be enough to be in a good position anyways.

We can now take some chances on setups, try things, try to just fine-tune it. It's quite fun actually when you get to that point because it's the last little details. But we still have quite a bit of work to do. It seems complicated to get the right balance on the car.

**Q. Questions on the schedule. You talked about having a daily checklist. When you look at the forecast this week, it could always change, is there some consideration that you're going to have to start accelerating the schedule to get more things in? On the same note, there are some people who are not familiar with the tradition and history of running an entire week. Is it important that you have an entire week to go through all those different checklists?**

SIMON PAGENAUD: I think like in Pocono, for example, we race 500 miles. We show up Friday, and we still race. It would be possible to just show up two days before the race and race.

But, you know, if you want to get your car perfect, these kind of testing days allow you to get it closer or more perfect. Yeah, it's just a different mindset to any other races we go to.

I like it, but you could get lost by thinking too much, overthinking it. You really have to be disciplined about what you do and your priorities. Like you said, you look at the weather ahead. You also talk to your teammates, try to share the workload.

For example, Will was on a different schedule today than I was. We're going to share that tonight and try to create the best package we can. So all four of us together obviously can do that. That's a big help.

**Q. I know Helio is pretty good here. What do you make of him being so quick in his first time out here today?**

SIMON PAGENAUD: Well, it's Helio. We call him the Speed King. That's his nickname in the team.

Helio, you know, he lives for this. That's what he lives for. It's his passion. He loves Indy. He's been very, very focused on trying to get his fourth win. So he's back here. He's been working on the simulator. He's been studying everything, listening to what we have to say about the car. He's fully ready. He's very aggressive already. I think he's just like a fish in the water.

I wish him good luck. I just hope he's going to be just behind me. If I don't win, I want him to win his fourth.

THE MODERATOR: Simon, thank you very much. We appreciate your time.

SIMON PAGENAUD: Thank you.