

# IndyCar Media Conference

Friday May 18, 2018

**Roger Penske**

**Tim Cindric**

**Rick Mears**

**Josef Newgarden**

**Helio Castroneves**

**Simon Pagenaud**

**Will Power**

Press Conference

THE MODERATOR: We are joined by the founder and chairman of Penske Corporation, Roger Penske.

We also have the president of Team Penske, Tim Cindric. He's the one that steers the ship for the captain.

The oval-meister himself, four-time Indy 500 champion, Rick Mears.

2017 Verizon IndyCar Series champion, Josef Newgarden.

Welcome back the three-time Indy 500 winner, Helio Castroneves.

Former series champion, winner of last week's Indy Grand Prix, Will Power.

The 2016 IndyCar Series champion, Simon Pagenaud.

I mentioned this past weekend that Roger Penske had captured and Team Penske captured hits 200th Verizon IndyCar Series win. A total of 19 different drivers have combined with the win total, with Helio Castroneves and Will Power collecting 30, Rick Mears next with 29. 11 of those drivers are the ones that have combined for Team Penske's record-setting 16 Indianapolis 500 victories.

Roger, you've been coming here since the '50s when your dad brought you and you fell in love with this place, this race. Every year you walk back in here with the same energy and excitement. What is it that keeps the fire and desire burning year after year?

ROGER PENSKE: I think it's the guys on my right and



left here that make the difference. They commit to the team, work all year. One of the goals each of them have each year is to win the Indianapolis 500. What we've tried to do is provide them with the best equipment, certainly the people behind that. I think that makes a huge difference.

To me, this has also been a big brand-building opportunity for our company. To race at the Indianapolis 500 and have success, you think about if you're going to buy an ad on TV, you can lead this race for a half hour or 45 minutes, it makes a huge difference. I think it shows the quality of the company, certainly the quality of our people, the continuity. If you look across here, these guys have been with us, they stay with us, it makes a huge difference. Every year we say we have probably 500 to 600 years of experience that that garage to make us a great team to compete against the other teams here each year.

THE MODERATOR: This is a major branding opportunity. The largest single-day sporting event in the world.

Josef, you go out in your first year with Team Penske and win the Verizon IndyCar Series championship. Now that you've checked that box, this year can the focus be totally on winning especially in this big race here?

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: Yeah, I hope so. I mean, it's always just an honor to be a part of this group. Joining it last year, I was very nervous to be a part of it. Always still a little nervous when I walk in the garages. I feel a lot more comfortable this year. One year makes a big difference, in my opinion.

I think Indianapolis, like you said, is certainly next on the list for me. It's not next on the list for the team, they've won it many times. The good thing is we have four great opportunities, especially having Helio back. I think we have one of the best opportunities in the entire field to win this race.

Feel great about it. Like Roger said, we have the best people out there. You feel that way as a driver, you feel like you have the best of the best. You have the most support you can have. That gives you a lot of confidence to get in the car, try to go fast on a day like today when they turn up the boost, get the job done hopefully.

We're focused, it's early, we have a great car underneath us. Excited to be here with Verizon and all our partners. Hopefully we have a good run this weekend and even better run next Sunday.

THE MODERATOR: Helio, you've shown no signs of rust the last few weeks, winning the first IMSA race, among the leaders all day in the Grand Prix. Someone said, Helio Castroneves, what they've seen in the month of May, is the best we've ever seen him. From the time you stepped out of that car running second a year ago in May, how much have you let yourself think about coming back this year to get that fourth victory?

HELIO CASTRONEVES: I think about it every day. It was one of those incredible ones, I have phenomenal car, the Pennzoil car was really strong last year. Obviously coming back here, first of all, I want to thank Roger and Cindric for giving me the opportunity to be back at the Indy 500. It's such a special place for so many people. Just to be back and able to continue our goal and pursue for the number four, it's incredible.

Having phenomenal guys surround me, that's what you need to succeed. We have that. We have the equipment, we have the people behind, now just got to put all the pieces together. Hopefully for Sunday, as Josef just mentioned, we have four incredible group that it can be able to win, especially with this new car. Racing GP was great to get our rhythm back. You said no sign of rust. Lot of Pennzoil lubricant around here, so basically I'm ready (laughter).

I'm excited. I'm excited because it's great to be in such an awesome place. I got my man here, Rick Mears, beside me, right there in turn three telling me what to do, what not to do. We definitely are going to continue working hard so we achieve the goal.

THE MODERATOR: Will, congratulations on a great run, impressive performance last Saturday. You are the only driver in the field that can win both races in the month of May. That's never happened before. That's pretty special. How confident are you this could be your May, your year?

WILL POWER: Yeah, I mean, it's fantastic to have that opportunity. Obviously very focused on this weekend, next weekend. I feel like we have a really good opportunity to win this year. I mean, I think Chevrolet has brought a really good engine. I feel like we're really fast. Running in traffic and such, I felt like we've been pretty strong, especially when you get to the front.

Yeah, just really, really working hard. Obviously this is the month where everything was different. There were some big changes to the car. Having four really good drivers has helped that process, definitely eliminates some (indiscernible), kind of zero in on some pretty good setups. Looking forward, I think we're going to be

pretty strong.

THE MODERATOR: Simon, the Twitter world lit up, Simon was walking in the garage yesterday and walked a little fan who had almost all the autographs of the Team Penske drivers except Helio, walked the fan into the garage, all the way back to Helio to get the autograph. That's what it's about, reaching out to the fans and do that. You've worked as hard as anyone to become a really accomplished oval track racer. How would you describe the preparations that you've made for the month of May, especially for the Indy 500?

SIMON PAGENAUD: It's such a preparation every year. Obviously we're all looking forward to the Indy 500. It really is our number one goal. In Roger and Tim's heart, it's the most important one. We prepare really hard. The team does a fantastic job at just understanding every bit and component of this new aero kit, trying to extract the best out of the equipment. Like Roger said, that's really key to performance.

On the driver side, there's a lot you can do obviously to review the past races, try to focus yourself, try to put yourself into the race before it happens, try to just improve. That's what we try to do every day. That's the goal. That's why this group is so good. We push each other so hard that you always try to push the limits away.

Quite frankly, it's a pleasure, an honor to be part of this group. To me it's a Dream Team, so I really enjoy it.

THE MODERATOR: We'll open it up to questions.

**Q. Helio, how have you adjusted so fast to this new car? On the track with speed, you're putting it together pretty well.**

HELIO CASTRONEVES: Well, definitely it's not my first rodeo. I have a lot of experience. Just trying to find the database in my head here to see which car in the past that I ran before with these kind of conditions.

It's not only about that. It's about team effort. Everybody is working together to find the best setup. I cannot do this on my own. Having not only myself but Josef, Simon and Will working together with the engineers, we all trying to eliminate the scenarios, trying to find a solution as quick as you can.

At this point the car is different. No question comparing to last year. Everybody was used to a lot more downforce, so you can really step on it, flat out anyplace you go. Now you got to drive. You got to be a little more finesse with the car. It certainly takes a little bit of adjustment.

As I said, when you have a good team behind you, it makes this transition much more smooth.

**Q. Back in Rick's day, we used to hear the term**

**'knife edge setup,' the setups were so narrow, it was like being on a knife's edge. Have we returned to this on the track?**

HELIO CASTRONEVES: Yes. We have a little bit of a beginning of a feeling to start running qualifying setup. Especially with the boost that we're going to increase today, we'll find out as well. Everything is new. Every day it's something new that we start building up.

So far, we went out yesterday, it was actually not easy.

WILL POWER: Yeah, I mean, that seems to be the deal. You push off, try to fix that, you'll be loose in. It's very tough to get the balance exactly right. The racing in the front to me, honestly, is going to be more intense than last year. You can pass someone on the front straight, they'll re-pass you back on the back straight. I think the changes for lead will be more than ever. As you get back in the pack, it's always been tough to pass. I don't think it's ever been easy to get by. I think it will be great racing, yeah. I think the fans will enjoy it.

SIMON PAGENAUD: Yeah, the car is sensitive, but it's a very sane aero kit. It's very enjoyable to drive around. It doesn't surprise you like the old aero kit used to do. It's really, really fun to drive.

The adjustments are good. Just takes time. Takes time to understand it all. We've only had three days at this superspeedway here. We're getting there. We're improving every day. Every day we're finding new things, making the car better. I think hopefully by race day our cars are the best.

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: I think you have more predictability with the car. We've seen that with this new aero kit that kind of progress, when it starts to move, it's in a progressive fashion. In order to make the car work in traffic, you still a lot of times have to run it right on the edge of being uncomfortable. That's just sometimes what you have to do to make it fast, make it work. These guys, the best at doing it.

Really everyone in the field, they're working a lot harder than you realize sometimes. It is on a knife edge every now and then, but you just try to make that edge a little bit duller so it doesn't cut you as deep.

**Q. Helio, don't you miss oval racing in your new environment, the sports car racing?**

HELIO CASTRONEVES: That's why I'm here, you know. I do miss it, especially big ones. That's why I'm thankful for Team Penske to give me this opportunity. It's still very fresh with this sports car. A lot of fun having, again, a great program with the folks out there.

Yeah, right now it's just to be here and ready to focus on this month.

**Q. Roger, that guy down there to your left was the**

**youngest champion last year since 2003. This year you have an influx of really good young drivers coming into IndyCar. To what do you attribute that?**

ROGER PENSKE: I think the continuity of the rules and the costs that have been I think capped to a certain extent. Instead of building an all-new car, costing us 400 or 500 thousand dollars a car, we've been able to take chassis that have been around for one, two, three years, and the aero kit is very reasonable. You see people coming out of the other open-wheel series, good teams, certainly makes a difference. I said that to someone the other day, the fact that we have 35 or 36 cars here to qualify will make it a very different Saturday and Sunday for us. That shows you that the sport is going up, not going down. I think IndyCar has done a good job, on the kit, lots of good testing. To me people see this is a big race, and it's attracting a lot of teams. These are teams that have kind of hung around the series, but always the cost to get in, you can see someone can come in, buy a car, be competitive. I think that's pretty exciting. You have diversity in the field with Pippa and certainly Danica coming back. This is a great time to be part of the sport.

**Q. Helio, do you foresee electric and hybrid technology improving at a sufficient pace we might see you back here in 2023 in a electric or hybrid submarine?**

HELIO CASTRONEVES: I don't know. Automotive industry, no question they're pursuing that direction. At the moment I don't see we are going that direction. Could be, but IndyCar has a plan probably for the future. I hope I will still be here when that comes.

**Q. Josef, when you look at qualifying, how tough do you think it will be to get either into the Fast Nine, if you're borderline Fast Nine, is there a risk?**

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: That's a good question. I think like Roger said, when we have more than 33 cars, you have bumping going on, it changes the way you calculate risk. I think we'll still very much try and get into the Fast Nine if we have the capability from the car, we'll do as much as we can to get it out of it. You will look at it differently than if the field was going to be just locked in. You have to worry about the risk of being bumped.

I think that makes it exciting. I think it will change the dynamic for a lot of people. We have great capability. Like Will said, we have a very strong Chevy engine. I think they've done a lot of good work since the beginning of the season to put us in a position to succeed this month. Our guys are working very hard to get the most out of it.

We're going to do everything we can. I'm not going to say we're just going to do one attempt, we might have to have a couple. I think we have great racecars underneath us, feel really confident in our group. I

think for sure we can get in there in the Fast Nine for Sunday.

**Q. This year the points for qualifying has decreased dramatically. Is that welcomed in your group, qualifying not shaping the championship this year?**

SIMON PAGENAUD: The rules are the rules. You can't really do anything about it. Whatever the decision was on the points, it's the right one. Certainly last year in my position, I (indiscernible) want the big points for qualifying. This year being far back in the championship, it could have been really good.

You can't look at it selfishly like that. It's just a decision from IndyCar. To be honest, I just go with it.

**Q. Will, knowing what you know right now about the handling of this new package in traffic, for race day if you could pick one of the following, which would you pick, the fastest car, best handling car, the best strategy or the best luck?**

WILL POWER: All of them (laughter).

I mean, you need a combination of all that. Definitely the best handling car is what's going to win the race. You can't lead and pull away. It's not like the old days where if you have a fast car, you can't trim out enough, you can't take enough drag off to actually pull away. I feel like a really good handling car where you can be right on someone's gearbox on the last lap at the right spot, whether that's the back straight or the front straight I'm not sure. But, yeah, that's what will make the difference to win the race.

**Q. Graham Rahal said when you see the speed guy, Helio Castroneves, run one lap on new tires, put up a number, then come in the next lap, you realize how hard these cars are to drive in qualifying trim. Helio, describe the intensity and pressure of qualifying for four laps versus what you do on race day.**

HELIO CASTRONEVES: As my man right beside me always said there, are two kind of races, the Pole Day and the Indy 500. I say, it is four laps, it feels like sometimes 500 miles. It's so difficult to go out there. It's so difficult to be right at the limit. In the past you used to go out there and do only one, where now you have to do three times. Basically whatever it takes to try to keep yourself up there.

It's becoming even more challenge with the new format of qualifying. So it's very, very tough. It's very difficult. That's separate the boys from the men.

**Q. Roger, you will be calling Helio's race as a strategist and team owner, in the final laps if your guy Helio is leading, the other guys are running third or fourth, how difficult is that for you?**

ROGER PENSKE: I think we've told the guys before, we need to take care of ourselves. If it's the last five

laps, six laps, two laps, let the best guy win. We don't have any team orders when it comes to Indianapolis that say, Hey, back off for anybody. I think these guys work together. You see they raced hard last year. I would expect them to do the same thing here.

THE MODERATOR: We thank you so much for being here today.