

IndyCar Media

Conference

Saturday May 19, 2018

Helio Castroneves

Ed Carpenter

Simon Pagenaud

Danica Patrick

James Davison

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: Joined now by Ed Carpenter. Sitting second fastest right now in the Fast Nine Shootout tomorrow. Your thoughts on the day, what you're looking forward to tomorrow.

ED CARPENTER: I'm always looking forward to the Shootout. It's a fun format. Really excited that we have all three of our cars represented with myself and Spencer Pigot and Danica. That's exciting.

It was a weird day. A long day. I knew it was going to be a long wait with us drawing the last number. Then with the two rain delays, it just made it even longer. It's hard. This place can play tricks on you the longer you sit and wait. It was nice to finally get out there, albeit maybe not the best time of the day. But really happy to be in the position we're in as a team, looking forward to tomorrow.

THE MODERATOR: Joined also by Simon Pagenaud, who visited us earlier today. Currently sitting third fastest, also in the Fast Nine Shootout tomorrow.

Simon, you said earlier you felt pretty good, weren't sure if you were going to get another shot. How excited are you to make tomorrow's Fast Nine Shootout?

SIMON PAGENAUD: I'm super excited we managed to get into the Fast Nine, especially towards the end of tomorrow where the track is going to be the best. Ed just had a super fast lap at the end there, super impressive. Helio, myself, Josef, Will, we all have good cars at Team Penske. A pretty good sign for tomorrow. Here comes the speed king. It's been a great day. What an emotional day.

THE MODERATOR: Joined by your teammate Helio Castroneves.

Helio, you went out fairly early and you sat on top for the day. Is that what you were expecting heading into

the day?

HELIO CASTRONEVES: Well, I always expect that, but never happens. This time it did, so...

ED CARPENTER: How did you get your nickname?

HELIO CASTRONEVES: I guess it's some sort of a sports car.

It was a great event. Very tough. Now having the Bump Day, what a stressful day for everyone. Yeah, it's tough for Hinch. Sounds like that car should be in the grid, but that's the name of the game. You got to understand the rules. Especially the Fast Nine, as well. So many people taking chances to be on the Fast Nine.

For me and Team Penske, I have a phenomenal teammates which helps the program keep going forward. Obviously my run earlier, the weather was much more consistent. When you have that kind of scenario, helps a lot.

We all work together to obviously find the limits. We did. We have to do it again tomorrow, the Fast Nine, and let's see what happens.

THE MODERATOR: Questions for the drivers.

Q. Ed, some of us watching were astounded between the gap between your warmup and first lap out. Talk about what your strategy is there, when you really start to give it all it's got.

ED CARPENTER: Yeah, I mean, you know in conditions like that, it's going to be a hard lap around. Being the last car to go in the regular line, you get to see a lot of people go, see what people are doing, some of their struggles. I was really just trying to do the best I could to have the best four laps, which I had too big of a spread over my four laps. Hopefully we can get that rectified tomorrow or at least be in more similar conditions to everyone else in the Shootout. It's definitely going to be fun. I haven't been a part of this format in the past. It is a lot of fun.

I think in a lot of ways today is the most pressure because you've got to get in there today. There's a lot less pressure and risk tomorrow in a lot of ways, knowing there's 35 cars here this year, when you're putting in a lot out there to get in the Fast Nine, you're also putting yourself in a position to maybe not be a

part of this race, which you also don't want to do. It's really tough.

You're trying to find that balance. So tomorrow should just be a fun day to have all three of our cars.

DANICA PATRICK: Tomorrow is fun?

ED CARPENTER: Tomorrow is fun.

DANICA PATRICK: Thank God (laughter).

ED CARPENTER: Worst you can start is ninth.

DANICA PATRICK: I want to be loose tomorrow.

THE MODERATOR: We'll welcome in Danica Patrick.

Danica, it does seem like you're breathing a little bit of a sigh of relief almost. With all the drama and all of the emotion, here you are in the Fast Nine Shootout. Did it match your expectations even?

DANICA PATRICK: This exceeded it. I have high expectations for doing well here. That's why I was fortunate enough to be able to drive for Ed. They always have great cars, especially here at Indy. They're always very strong.

But to think that I was going to come back and be in the Fast Nine right off the bat. I mean, I'm going to tell you, I was doing 208 at the test the first day and thought, I might not be able to do this. 228 is much better.

I definitely am relieved. The tough thing is that I feel like there's so much race running as well as qual sim running. There's not that much qual sim running, mostly race running. It's hard to tell exactly where everyone is at. It used to be easier back in the day when the first week was dedicated to qualifying. Got a good feel for it. There's a bit of a question mark how fast people are, at least from my perspective, also getting familiar with the new combinations and drivers. I didn't really know.

I think after yesterday, having done 228 with three quarters of the track ahead of me open, I got that feeling like, All right. At the end of the day was very stressful. So I'm looking forward to a fun day tomorrow. I was just getting familiar.

We run once, that's it?

SIMON PAGENAUD: One run.

HELIO CASTRONEVES: Is that it? I thought there was more.

SIMON PAGENAUD: Only get one, Helio.

HELIO CASTRONEVES: Just one, so you got to hang up a little bit more.

DANICA PATRICK: Hang it out a little bit more?

ED CARPENTER: But the worst we can do is ninth.

HELIO CASTRONEVES: That's right.

ED CARPENTER: Make it a little easier. You haven't been in a lot of the drivers meetings. That's one of the things I miss most, is Helio asking questions. They've added a lot of pictures to the drivers meetings for Helio. Hopefully IMSA is doing that for you, too (laughter).

HELIO CASTRONEVES: They already are.

DANICA PATRICK: It's not open practice for us tomorrow, we run at the end of the day for one run?

ED CARPENTER: We can run in the practice.

HELIO CASTRONEVES: We have practice.

DANICA PATRICK: In the morning? But you can't run when everyone else is running, like during...

ED CARPENTER: ...qualifying.

THE MODERATOR: More questions.

Q. First time we've had bumping in a couple years. What is your take on the return of bumping? Good, bad, indifferent?

ED CARPENTER: I guess I'll go first.

It's obviously been something that's been talked about. I think any time there's this many cars, the question is asking, Should they just start everyone? To me, I'm definitely a traditionalist. As tough as it is to watch a guy like Hinch, who has had great moments here, really tough moments, I feel for him, I feel for Pippa. We've all worked very hard to be here. I really feel for them.

At the same time, Indianapolis, that's part of the lure of what makes this race so special and important to all of us. Growing up around this event, seeing years where Team Penske struggled and missed the race, Bobby Rahal missed the race one year, it's happened to great teams.

Someone asked me in Long Beach who is going to miss the show. I'm not going to answer that question because who knows. I definitely feel for those teams because we all work just as hard to be successful here. I can't imagine what they're feeling right now.

HELIO CASTRONEVES: That's the name of the game. Very tough. This year we came with a little bit of different plan. Obviously if you would have been not

making the Fast Nine, would not take the time out. That was actually something that somebody already predetermined before we go in, because we want to be in this race, not all about be Fast Nine and show how fast we can go.

Penske, as just mentioned, been in that situation before. It's tough, but that's why we make this race so important. Everybody wants to be in it. Only 33 cars that are able to do it.

Q. Helio, I think you're the only driver that had two laps of the four in the 229-mile-per-hour area. Do you think you can repeat that tomorrow? Do you think it's going to be 228, 229 for the pole?

HELIO CASTRONEVES: That's a very good question. I think I can go 230 tomorrow.

SIMON PAGENAUD: 231.

HELIO CASTRONEVES: C'mon, are you kidding me?

Listen, we have a good car. We have a good team. We know we can do it. We got to wait and see tomorrow to go for another fun day, for sure.

Q. Danica, you adapted very well again to open-wheel racing. What was the biggest significant difference to this car the last time in IndyCar? How identical is your setup to Ed's?

DANICA PATRICK: The car from seven years ago to now? I'm getting so old, I can't even remember. I mean, honestly, there's been such a gap in time, to come back to downforce just feels the same to me. It's hard to remember the finite details. I think that a lot of people are dealing with sort of new nuances of the car, even just saying how it handled in the past in traffic versus now.

I would say, if anything, it was about getting the rhythm back with lift points, downshift, up-shift, just little things you can do in an IndyCar that I wouldn't have done in a stockcar. So those things come back.

As far as setup goes, yeah, I mean, we all start similar, then we adapt to whatever our driving style is.

Q. What happened to the youth movement in IndyCar?

ED CARPENTER: Like he's saying a lot of old people up here.

HELIO CASTRONEVES: We're still young.

ED CARPENTER: How old are you?

SIMON PAGENAUD: Ed is 34.

DANICA PATRICK: Helio, you're 37?

HELIO CASTRONEVES: I'm 34.

DANICA PATRICK: I'm 24 then (laughter).

ED CARPENTER: That's why I cut my hair short now, because the gray goes away.

HELIO CASTRONEVES: That's why I have a PPG pin here (laughter).

ED CARPENTER: What was the question?

SIMON PAGENAUD: Basically we all very old, that's what he said. What do you answer to that?

ED CARPENTER: I think the youth movement is alive and well. I think the talent in this field is really strong and there's a lot of good young guys. But I think especially when you go through times like this with new cars, I think it can be helpful for us old guys. We've driven more different types of cars, different aero, different downforce.

I think at times, even though it's hard to teach old dogs new tricks - is that how it goes - I think sometimes past experience helps when you can remember it.

HELIO CASTRONEVES: That's a good one.

DANICA PATRICK: I can't even hear very well (laughter).

Q. Helio, you came here a lot of years ago and won as a rookie. Now you're again at the top. What are the odds to see you come to the fence again?

ED CARPENTER: What year was that?

HELIO CASTRONEVES: That was 2001.

ED CARPENTER: I wasn't even here yet.

HELIO CASTRONEVES: Look at this guy. So I have more experience than you guys.

SIMON PAGENAUD: I wasn't even racing (laughter).

HELIO CASTRONEVES: All right, very good.

DANICA PATRICK: Keep it coming.

HELIO CASTRONEVES: We'll see who is going to be last the end of the race (laughter).

Yes, hopefully that helps a lot. I've been here before. I understand the race. But every race is different. Every race, the rhythm could be one way or another, especially with the new car. Through practice we've been seeing it's interesting.

I do believe it's going to have a lot of passing, especially when you're in the front. You're still searching, still searching to improve the car when

you're in the back of the pack.

Like was last year, I was in the back of the pack, we were able to manage well and go to the front. All of this, it's always depend at the moment, depend how your team runs. I do have one of the best teams in the business, especially in Indianapolis. It seems to bring the best out of everyone. With that, also bring the best out of me. Looking forward to not only good qualifying, but most important, the race, the 500.

Q. I remember when Fernando Alonso came here last year, did his test. He looked at the track, I think he said it's only 50 feet wide, how can you have three cars wide at this track. We've seen replays of the past few years, four-wide, five-wide sometimes. I don't see that with this new car. What's going to happen in the race? If there's a restart, are you going to be able to go three-wide, four-wide?

HELIO CASTRONEVES: I think it's going to be the same. You see 2004, 2009, later, the past few years obviously, you can see people still going four-wide, five-wide sometimes. Obviously the person that goes five-wide, he's put in a very risk situation to finish the race, trying to pass so many cars at once. Probably going to bite you.

With this car, might be a little bit different, slingshot, passing us. Again, a restart, it's something that could happen. Somebody has a tall gear, somebody with a short gear, that could create that kind of a situation.

It will be a very tough 500 for the drivers. I do feel it's going to be a great 500 for the fans. I wanted a boring race, obviously start in the front, never look back, but that's never happened. I guarantee it's going to be very exciting for the fans, they will enjoy it a lot.

Q. Helio, tomorrow is another day. You have some secret ideas to make the car even faster tomorrow?

HELIO CASTRONEVES: Well, I went only half throttle, so tomorrow I'm going to go full throttle (laughter).

No, certainly we're going to push it. We're going to squeeze the heck out of the car, the Pennzoil machine obviously. Myself, Will, Simon and Josef, we're going to be pushing each other. That's what makes the team so competitive.

Again, we will see what's going to happen. But for sure we're going to look at data today and try to find a little more speed. Obviously we'll put it on the track tomorrow.

THE MODERATOR: We appreciate your time. Thank you very much.

Joined now by James Davison.

James, probably a bit of a stressful day for you, but an

exciting one I hope. Take us through your day and coming back from what happened yesterday, to what happened today.

JAMES DAVISON: Yeah, obviously it's been a stressful 24 hours. Yesterday I guess is the kind of Bump Day simulation for everyone. Everyone is doing qualifying sims. On the no tow speeds, we were at risk. We acted accordingly. We had to try to go quicker. In doing so, we found ourselves going over the limit, ending up having a big accident which was the biggest in my career.

It was actually very painful. Initially I got out of the car and I could feel I bumped my leg. Once I got in the safety truck, it was excruciating pain for 10 minutes. Overnight found out where else I hurt myself in various other places, my foot, my ribs, my thigh. I'm a soldier. I kind of tough it out. I was excited to get back in the car.

Of course, while all this was happening, my crew was working hard all night to get the car turned around. We owe this to them immensely. These crew guys, their job is already tough enough. When something happens like that, yeah, it's even tougher for them.

The only way to repay them was to make it in the field today one way or the other. So we went out this morning, straightaway ran 226.8, in a tow, but at least ran that speed. So the car is capable, more or less. I'm not lacking confidence. But we still needed to find time based on our no tow speed, 224 and a half.

We worked away at it. The first run we had, we had a very pleasing number, 225.7, I believe. Then we dropped off immensely. We made some changes to the car to be ready to go if we had to go again. Obviously only until the last 10 minutes did we get bumped to the bubble, then we were in kind of a Catch-22 position where we didn't want to pull the time and find ourselves in a Paul Tracy position, but we also didn't want to find ourselves being in the hands of everyone else.

The way it played out was, yeah, we needed to just wait and see what happened. Just in the nick of time it all just worked out. Pippa made it ahead of Hinch. I really wanted to go again because I'm confident we would have gone quicker. Again, we just couldn't withdraw the time.

It was an incredible 24 hours, something that I think all of us on the team didn't expect that we were going to place. It's a life experience, making it into the Indy 500, actually earning it. The three times I've done this race, there were 33 cars and 24 teams. I didn't qualify in 2015 and '17 due to the circumstances that were around, but I started this race. This time we had to earn it in there.

Yeah, as stressful as it was, it's something that I think we'll all go to our graves with, kind of be pleased in a way that we experienced it.

THE MODERATOR: Knowing that you were sore, knowing that your team was tired, you say your confidence level was really quite high. Is that true? Is that honestly true?

JAMES DAVISON: Yeah, I mean, in all honesty, I'm a confident person. Some people take it the wrong way, which that's everyone's -- they're entitled to their view on things. I feel it's been my biggest asset in my career, is having confidence, being a fighter, really wanting to go out there and achieve my goals on and off the track.

Obviously with Indianapolis, in black and white, where 33, 35 grown men and women strapped to jet fighter planes on wheels, doing 230 miles an hour between concrete walls with massive consequences if it all goes wrong, you got to have confidence.

Yeah, you know, this morning I knew I'd had the biggest crash of my career just 12 hours earlier. Just had to man up and get on with it, be very mentally strong, draw off experience. Yeah, I think there's no substitute for experience in any discipline to give you confidence.

THE MODERATOR: Questions for James.

Q. You said earlier you had to drive over the limit. Was this before the accident, the car had not enough speed?

JAMES DAVISON: When I say 'over the limit', we spun and hit the wall, right? That's over the limit.

We had to try trim to get speed yesterday. We had to try to free the car up to get scrub out of it. When that happens, you're putting yourself in a dangerous position. But that's the position we were in and had to act on. We weren't going to go quicker just looking at it. We had to try something.

Basically we freed the car up too much. There was a headwind out of turn two, and it was the perfect storm. We were low on downforce, basically too much turn in the car, and a headwind pinning the front down.

In all my years of driving two seasons of Indy Lights, three Indy 500s, I've always had some kind of warning sign when the rear is going to go. You usually feel a bit of chatter on the right rear tire telling you, I'm starting to become unstuck. In that case, boom, gone. I knew I was in trouble when I was backwards, not before (laughter).

Q. The team repaired the car overnight. How was the car in qualification trim? Even better than before?

JAMES DAVISON: It's always hard to know with conditions. I think since it rained, then we went out, I had a huge amount of understeer at turn two, then I was loose at turn three. I got quite sideways at turn three. That wasn't a good feeling at all after yesterday. I had to be very aggressive on tuning the car during the run.

From what I could see, a lot of people were understeering at turn two. It was just night-and-day difference between turn two and three because the wind had changed.

We took the car back, made some changes to it, and obviously didn't need to go out and do another run. Again, I would have liked to have, to really have unleashed the full potential, all the work that's gone in by this team. You obviously have to play by the rules and be sensible, not withdraw your time unless you really have to.

Yeah, we're in.

Q. Now you get to do it all again tomorrow. What's the plan for tomorrow with the different circumstances from today?

JAMES DAVISON: I think sensibly we just run the setup that we put on today to go run again, which is the setup that we ran earlier yesterday when I ran a 226 by myself. Obviously it's kind of risk management at this point. I think it's fair to say, unless something very unusual happens, our car speed is towards the back of the field.

Is it worth trying to go on some aggressive qualifying setup and potentially finding ourselves in the same situation that we were in yesterday in the qualifying sim and crashing? When you crash cars, generally the next bit of path isn't as good as the next, then your race is in jeopardy.

I think we're going to go probably somewhere between trying to find limits and being sensible.

THE MODERATOR: James, congratulations. Thank you very much.

JAMES DAVISON: Thank you.