

IndyCar Media Conference

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Simon Pagenaud Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: Simon Pagenaud who will start second in next weekend's Indianapolis 500. Simon, congratulations. Are you happy with how things went today in qualifying and where your teammates ended up, as well?

SIMON PAGENAUD: Yeah, hell, of course I'm happy. You could say I'm the first loser, but I'm still happy. I think it's a phenomenal job from Chevrolet, first of all. What an incredible return -- they turned the table. It's incredible compared to last year, the improvement that was made. I can't say -- I can't thank them enough for the progress and the hard work that they put in this winter. It's been incredible.

Being able to overtake like that, another manufacturer by two steps, it's phenomenal. Thanks to them, and obviously I think the prep that Team Penske put in is phenomenal. As you look at all four cars, the performance is almost equal, and I don't think you can say that of a lot of teams on the paddock.

Everything went well. We just didn't have the 230 that Ed put down. Congratulations to them for such a great job. It is what it is. We're starting in a really, really good position. I'm really happy for John Menard, as well. His support here is tremendous, so he's going to be, I'm sure, very happy tonight.

Q. This qualifying format, it's so much like a race weekend in itself, so much attention is put on qualifying well for the race next weekend. Is it hard to shift gears and realize, okay, now that I've just gotten past this, now I have to prepare for what's really important?

SIMON PAGENAUD: At the beginning of the race we worked on race setup only, and it was good, and then we shifted to qualifying setup before Fast Friday because we were worried about rain, possible rain, which didn't happen. So we've had time to prepare for qualify for sure. And now it's definitely -- tonight we're going to have to switch our mind back to race pace and try to make the car as good as possible in traffic.

The advantage is we're starting up front, and I think that's the ideal position for a good race and executing. Obviously pit stops are going to be very important, but when you start up front here, it makes a big difference, like you could see when I run up front in 2015. So I think it's a really, really promising situation.

Q. I know that you're focused on your effort and on your teammates' effort, but as a competitor, how much respect level can you have for Ed Carpenter because every year he comes to the Indianapolis 500 and he's among the fastest guys? He's now a three-time pole winner here.

SIMON PAGENAUD: Yeah, great job to that team. They understand this place very well. They obviously know how to get speed out of his cars, and they definitely understand something great. Congratulations. That's all I can say. I only know what we do and how much we've been working on it ourselves. Looking at it from the outside, it's sometimes unfair, so I just focus on our deal and I can say when we've done a good job, and I appreciate that.

Q. You qualified on the front row in 2015 with a newer aero kit, now you're dealing with the universal aero kit for 2018. What kind of pressures have you had to deal with knowing that it was an entirely new body style both times, yet you got onto the front row both times?

SIMON PAGENAUD: I'm sorry, I don't understand the question.

Q. The pressure today was the same as in 2015 when we had an entirely new package to deal with, a new body style and a bunch of new things to deal with, with a new team, as well, in Team Penske?

SIMON PAGENAUD: Yeah, I think it's a similar situation. I think each year you find yourself in different modes. Last year we didn't have a shot at the pole. The other years I've always pretty much been in the Fast Nine most of the time. But this year we had a real shot. I think '15 we would have had a shot, too, if we didn't have the rule change at the end right before qualifying because we had a really fast car, but today I really thought we had a shot.

Last night we looked at everything with our mechanics to try to find speed on the head mats, on the mirrors, trying to lower my seat. We did all sorts of things to try to gain anything out of it. It was a good group effort, and that's when -- when you do well like this, it's fun.

Q. Can you flash back to yesterday's run for a second because I think there was rain at the end of your run? How was that to finish?

SIMON PAGENAUD: Stressful. I was finishing my run, I could see some drops, and I was praying for the yellow not to come out, and with the luck I've had this year, I was like, the yellow for sure is coming out

before. The moment I cross that finish the yellow is going to come out, my laps are going to be canceled. But with the power of positive thinking, that didn't happen. It was fantastic. I just had like a really good run, and I knew that we would be in the Fast Nine if we could just finish. So yeah, it was -- I guess it was a blessing.

THE MODERATOR: Congratulations. Thank you very much.