

NTT IndyCar Series News Conference

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Press Conference

Roger Penske

Owner, Team Penske

John Menard

Owner, Menards

Kyle Moyer

Race Strategist, Team Penske

THE MODERATOR: For those of us that have followed the Indianapolis 500 for several decades, it is a welcome sight to welcome John Menard to Victory Lane at Indianapolis for the 500. Welcome, John.

JOHN MENARD: Thank you very much. It was 40 years ago when I first came down here in 1979, and I didn't get all the way in, and I had a big sign that we used to put up over the garages. So I'm dragging the sign on Georgetown road, and I'm walking -- I didn't know where the entrance was. I didn't know enough to go there on 16th and drive under. So this guy at the gate in a yellow shirt was standing there, and he goes, where are you going with that sign and I said I want to get in the garage area. So he said, "I'll open the gate for you." So he unlocked the gate and let me in. I didn't have a credential. I didn't know where I was going. I said which was is the garage area? I think he thought I was crazy, but we had a good time. But that was the first time I was here, 40 years ago. Been trying ever since. I see some stubborn, stupid guy. Here you go. Great fun.

THE MODERATOR: You won here in a NASCAR race with your son, and that's family --

JOHN MENARD: That's family.

THE MODERATOR: But this is a different race.

JOHN MENARD: Yeah, that was a NASCAR race, which is pretty distinct from this race. That was probably the highlight of my personal racing career just because it was my son that won. But this ranks right in there. I'll tell you what, this is a good deal, and I can't thank Team Penske, I can't thank the Indianapolis Motor Speedway enough for all the great memories and times and over the years that we've had here. It's amazing.

THE MODERATOR: Does Simon know he now has to make an appearance at every Menard's store across the country?



JOHN MENARD: I think he already has. Most of them anyway. Roger is going to cut the ribbon, though, on our new store in Michigan, right near his office. He goes, I will cut the ribbon for the opening. I thought, great. I don't know how much he's going to charge me, but we're going to have to talk about that.

Q. Maybe he'll open a store, too.

JOHN MENARD: Yeah, we've got to get him started small, though. One store, and then we'll ask him about the second one.

Q. John, you opened by talking about your history here and your love of this place, so how do you feel now to see Menard's in Victory Lane? It's the Greatest Spectacle in Racing.

JOHN MENARD: You ever watch that movie called "The Candidate" when that guy works and works and works and finally gets elected, after the election, he won, and he gazed into the mirror and says, what the hell do I do now? That's the way I feel. We'll go try to win another one.

Q. Are you going to go to Charlotte now?

JOHN MENARD: Yeah, I'll go if I can. We'll see how all this plays out.

Q. What's your take on Simon Pagenaud? What makes him special from your vantage point?

JOHN MENARD: Wow, well, first, Simon is just one wonderful human being. If you get to know him, you'll love him. Second of all, if you watched the last few laps of this race, as a race car driver, Simon is really, really good. I mean, he was -- Rossi is really, really good, and that could have ended kind of badly in Turn 1 or 2 or 3 or 4, a lot of other places, and yeah, that was just plain good racing. Two really talented guys, and they were just going after each other, back and forth, back and forth, but Simon doesn't give up. He's the real deal.

THE MODERATOR: We have Roger Penske who's joined us, along with Kyle Moyer, the strategist. Congratulations, Captain. As I think you said, he won that one.

ROGER PENSKE: Well, I'd have to say, I've been here many years and the last couple of years, somebody pass you and it would be over. Happened to Helio a couple times, but that flight at the end you knew we were building up to something with 15 laps and they take the cars that are not on the lead lap and put them

in the back. It really sets up for an amazing run and good clean racing. You see how close it was. One more lap, it could have gone the other way. To Kyle Moyer, Kyle is the man that ran that pit and Ben (Bretzman) the engineer, they're the ones that deserve the credit. We come here with four cars, we're all on a particular car and these guys were the winners today. I tell you, Simon arrived here this month, I don't know if it was May 1st or May 10th and he never left until today, so it's a tremendous situation.

I got a call from the President as we were in the winner's circle, we had been down there with Joey, and he congratulated me, he said, I must have been your good-luck charm. He was in Japan and got -- Simon had a chance to talk to him, so hopefully he'll be invited to the White House.

THE MODERATOR: Can you talk about John Menard winning his first Indianapolis 500 and how much that must mean to you, too?

ROGER PENSKE: Well, John and I have been around here a long time, haven't we. I've watched him and he watched me and a couple years ago, we said, look, maybe we'd do better together. Finally it took a couple years, but John, to see the Menard's logo and certainly your excitement and commitment to the sport for so many years is terrific, and we could bring home a winner with you and you with our guys. Just tremendous. You've got a great brand. You're a great person, your family, and obviously Paul is a key guy on our team down in the south, so we can't say enough. You've got Indy, you've got the Brickyard, and now you've got the 500. And also you've got the road race, a triple header. Think about that, all three, so pretty good.

THE MODERATOR: Kyle, you look a little stunned. Are you surprised how this came to be?

KYLE MOYER: Yeah, it was a weird day because, I mean, we had a really good car, and then we put him out front, and I thought there for a little bit maybe we were not going to do the fuel mileage right, we were just going to get the most laps led and that was it for a while. But then the yellow came out wrong, then it came out right and stuff. It was sort of like the Grand Prix, we just kept fighting at it and the car came really good toward the end there. But all day, I mean, Simon drove brilliant. We had sort of planned on not trying to drop back, but when you're out front it's a lot of fuel you're using.

Q. Mr. Menard, you've sponsored so many different things in racing, just countless sponsorships, countless commitments, spending money. Does this feel like something you've kind of been rewarded back now?

JOHN MENARD: Oh, it should sure. This was really, really special. I mean, been trying to win this thing for

40 years, win it with Roger. Kyle, I remember Kyle when he was working for Gary Bettenhausen. That was a good 40 years ago. There's a lot of history here, a lot of memories. So yeah, it's a journey, not a destination sometimes. But this is a good destination.

Q. John, with your sponsorship logo, your company logo on the race car with a French driver, is there any intention you will expand your business to Europe, maybe to France?

JOHN MENARD: Well, if you examine our name, Menard is a very French name. Menard is a French name, and we live in Eau Claire, Wisconsin, which is clear water, and my family was from Quebec. Whereas Quebec is a bit closer than France, we'll certainly consider any offers in France when time permits, which I don't think will get done in this lifetime. (Laughs.) There's a possibility, sure, you bet, we love France!

Q. The scuttlebutt going into this month was that Simon might be in a little bit of trouble as far as hanging on to his job and stuff. Number one, was that true? And then number two, just talk about his rebound this month as you've pointed out a while ago?

ROGER PENSKE: I don't think that I said anything to the media about Simon. He's on our team. He's one of our drivers. You've seen that. That was scuttlebutt. I think that's a good word for it. But what he did this month, certainly he achieved records in his own personal life and certainly what he had expected to, and the run today, it's a history book run for me when we think about some of the races -- an opportunity to be in the winner's circle, so he did a great job.

Q. Following up on that, Roger, can you say with certainty that Simon will be back with your team next year?

ROGER PENSKE: What do you think? Do you want to answer that question for me? Absolutely.

Q. Can you kind of describe your secret to the dominance these last 50 years at the Indy 500?

ROGER PENSKE: It's just one word: It's our people.

Q. Roger and Kyle, what is it that -- Kyle at the shop, the first week of May, he said, we've got to win. Simon has got to win. The other guys have won. It's like you flipped a switch on the guy. What was it about this month that has changed the whole dynamic with Simon Pagenaud?

KYLE MOYER: It's an easy answer. He's on your back looking at you, and you're on this team for a reason, and the reason is to win. Team Penske has always been winners, that's why I came here. That's why Simon is here. That's why all of our drivers, everybody that works here is for a reason, and that is to win, because that's our brand we're putting out there, you know. Penske, Team Penske, all of them are winners. So you're expected to win.

So when you're not, you've got to figure out a way to do it. Simon has done that. I think in this month he's actually forced it on you to show you that he can win. Like I told you a month ago, I said, if he wins one, there's no reason he can't win five in a row, because he's that type of driver, once he gets the confidence built, the GP really gave him confidence, and then the pole did, and so now you've got the race.

ROGER PENSKE: Well, I think that from my perspective, he came with us the first year, won the championship, had one down year, but again, our guys are with us. You think most of the drivers spend a lot of time, and obviously we thought a lot of him, or we wouldn't have had him in our sports car. Remember he runs the sports car in the longer races. No, I think Kyle is right. We've got a great group of people, and it really is a combination of all four drivers, and it's amazing if you've got numbers, they seem to work here, and there's no question. With Helio in the pits, Davidson didn't have a good speed limiter and I'm not sure about Will's call, but we put ourselves out of the race.

Again, with Josef and Simon -- and Simon wasn't going to be beat today. He raced clean, and that's what I have to say about Rossi, also, the two of them for the laps that they ran side by side was as good a racing as you've ever seen here.

Q. There was a famous quote attributed to you, I can't remember if it was late 60s or early 70s when you were having tremendous success in the Trans-Am, and you said we can't just take our press clippings, throw them on the track and expect the other teams to give us the race win, we have to earn it. There's been a lot more press clippings since then. Has there ever been anything not written to explain the success of your organization that you think you wish would have been written?

ROGER PENSKE: No. You know, we're racers. I've heard it too many times, I came here in '51 with my dad, and we put teams together. We got commitments to sponsors like John, and we've become almost a family, everyone, and we work together because when you walk out of that garage this morning, only one guy can win. But we won as a team today, and I think that's -- when I saw Helio and all, they all said the same thing.

Look, the success here is amazing, but you can't do it without the best people. And again, year after year, and I said it here a couple weeks ago, that we had over 700 years of experience in our pit this weekend and this month. So that's what makes the difference, not the clippings. I hope I didn't say that, but maybe I did. I'm sorry.

Q. Roger, the fierceness of that battle, have you ever seen something like that here at the speedway? Those last five laps, ten laps were epic.

ROGER PENSKE: You know, you've seen that at Phoenix, I think, on the miles we've seen that kind of racing. You pass, get back and get yourself back in position. But not here. The last couple years, the car would get out front and they'd go, but you couldn't get away here, and I think it's a credit, by the way, didn't say much about this to IndyCar and the rule package we had today. It's safe. You could see that when the guys got sideways, upside down almost, we could race each other and draft, and I think that's what the fans want, and again, it was a fuel-mileage race for a while there, and Dixon was in a great position there, probably nine or 10, 11 laps better than anybody, and that yellow came out. You never know here until it's the end here, and you saw that here today.

Q. Kyle, was there a point towards the end when they were going that hard and you can't really see everything from pit lane sometimes? Are you kind of glad you couldn't watch the car go all the way around the track?

KYLE MOYER: We were watching.

Q. How nervous were you about that then?

KYLE MOYER: I wouldn't say nervously. I've been on the wrong end of that before, so you know, where I come in second. It was good today with him. I think he did a really good job on covering the base. I think he knew exactly what he had 15 laps to go when the yellow came out, we told him. We were fast all day, so I think Simon drove brilliant there. And I think, you're looking at a former winner already that you beat. Rossi came to the pack pretty heavy, especially when he had the fuel he had a good car, too. So a little bit of Chevy power there sure helped.

Q. Roger, you have won three in the last five, and five in 14. Is this the best you've been since the split do you think?

ROGER PENSKE: I didn't understand, I'm sorry.

Q. You've won three Indy 500s in the last five years and five in 14 years. Is this the best Team Penske has been here since the split, since prior to the split?

ROGER PENSKE: I'd have to say -- we came back, you remember, in I think we won '01, '02 and '03 there, three in a row, which would have been equal to winning five, but that's pretty special. I was talking to Michael Andretti before the race, and I said, hey, it's going to be one of us I hope. I meant that because he's a tough, tough competitor. Kyle knows, he worked with him, and they've done a great job fielding as many cars -- he was certainly disappointed I'm sure to see Herta go out early. This place just gets you, and either it comes true or you go home, come back next year. That's the problem. You've got to wait 12 months.

Q. You've won this 18 times; what does it feel like for you watching those final five lead changes in the final 13 laps? What is that like for you?

ROGER PENSKE: Well, can I tell you, I didn't know if we were going to win. I didn't know until the car came off the fourth corner. I was watching it on a monitor just like everybody else was. But I felt the fact that he couldn't get by with about two laps to go down into 1. It seemed like he pulled out a little bit there in the draft, and I think the tires were getting -- after getting in the dirty air, and I think then I saw that we had it. But going down the back straightaway, he came up on him, and the good news is that the start-finish line isn't down in Turn 1, or it might have been a different story.

Q. And now will you go to Charlotte?

ROGER PENSKE: No, I'm going to watch Charlotte. John is going to Charlotte.

Q. Roger, can you compare your feelings today from your first victory a half a century ago?

ROGER PENSKE: Well, you know, Mark Donohue was special. We came here in '69, 50 years ago, and our goal was to win the race. Mark was an engineer. I think we brought a lot of different thoughts to the speedway as far as technology and aerodynamics. We won it in '72 and then Mears in '79 and that kind of started us. But it's hard -- the only thing I remember about '72 is I lost Mark Donohue. That's a big difference in winning the race here. I guess you'd have to say I'd rather him back than win a race. So to me, this is tough.

But this win here today for Simon and our 50th, it goes down in the record book. But as I say, it's not me, it's all the people that we work with day in and day out that make it so good.