

NTT IndyCar Series News Conference

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Press Conference

Simon Pagenaud

Team Penske

THE MODERATOR: Our pole sitter for tomorrow's Honda Indy Toronto has arrived, winning his second NTT P1 Award of the season, the 12th pole of his developing decorated career, also won the pole for the Indianapolis 500, Simon Pagenaud.

SIMON PAGENAUD: Thank you.

THE MODERATOR: I just thought that you were on a lap, but all the adventure was behind you. I don't know that you know this, but Scott Dixon was sliding through (Turn 11) and Alexander Rossi was bouncing off the wall. It looked like you had a pretty clean lap.

SIMON PAGENAUD: Yeah, the DXC Technology car has been phenomenal all weekend, and it was a matter of just extracting the best out of it, getting the tires going, putting myself in a good rhythm.

We had pace all weekend. We had a bit of a margin on everybody all weekend, but at the end qualifying, everybody goes out to the maximum limit, so obviously the lap time gets closer and closer and closer. Very difficult to actually qualify, going through the qualifying segment being so far back in pit lane because you can't get your temperature in the tires because everybody is backing up. So I was really striving to just transfer and get enough heat in the tires in Q1 and Q2 there, finished my lap behind Sato in Q2 and luckily we transferred, but then once I was in the Fast Six I knew we had the car. We didn't need to make any changes, and it was super fast.

The last lap was definitely a little bit here, there, everywhere to try to extract the maximum amount out of the tires, and the engine was purring really well down the lake shore, and quite frankly it was one of my best laps in qualifying.

Q. It was mentioned on the television broadcast yesterday that it didn't appear you even broke a sweat yesterday, it was that good. Has it been as good of a weekend as it's appeared?

SIMON PAGENAUD: Yeah, the car is very consistent. One thing I explained this weekend is I was trying to get a car that's versatile, that can be good on different asphalt, that can be predictable for me to attack and trust, and that's really what it's giving me this weekend, so that's why you see me being so confident and being able to put laps down like I'm doing. It's honestly a



pleasure to drive this weekend. I'm having the most fun I've had in a long, long time. Actually, no, I had just as much fun in Indy. So it's great to be in that kind of zone.

Q. What would it mean for you to land a victory here in Toronto? It's one of those places that has eluded you.

SIMON PAGENAUD: Yeah, it has been eluding me here. Like I said, and we talked about it, I've always been really fast here, but unfortunately the yellows have often been against me here. Last year was great. I finished second.

But we certainly have way more pace this year than we did last year. I'm going to attack tomorrow. I mean, this is the end of the championship. It's time to be aggressive, time to pounce on the table, quite frankly, and I've got to mark my territory. So tomorrow I'm going to go out and drive hard, and I can't control the outcome, so we'll just see what happens.

Q. You mentioned yesterday just getting that break after Indy and how wild that was. Do you feel like you're -- and then you had all the other races and all the other media tour stops that you did. Do you feel like you're back to the way you felt before May? Do you feel back to normal a little bit?

SIMON PAGENAUD: Yes, absolutely. Detroit was not fun. Detroit was not fun. I raced in 24 hours of Le Mans tired, but that was tired for too many days, which is a good thing. It is what it is. I've just had to take the time with Kristin Wiggs, my assistant, to reorganize the team around me and find a way to be a good ambassador for the 500 but also to have enough time for me to prepare. We're getting there obviously. As you can see, we're getting there. But it's definitely a life-changing event and I've got to adjust and be the champion that I want to be for the 500.

At this point I feel like May was great, but I've got other mountains I want to climb, and I want a second championship. Yeah, it's time to go.

Q. I have actually two questions. The Firestone tires from what I understand, they brought the same red tire as Detroit, but they worked on putting more grip into the black primary tires. If you touch both of them, the blacks seem to be stickier than the reds, which surprised me. Have you noticed anything? I don't know if you've gone enough laps to do a full stint on the blacks, but I'm just wondering if the blacks will have the longevity that

they should have versus the reds?

SIMON PAGENAUD: In my opinion the blacks are going to have less longevity than last year. They're going to have a bit more degradation, which I think is what was expected from Firestone for better racing. The reds will have strong degradation like you've seen in Detroit. That should be exciting. So we'll see. There will be cars -- I think it's actually a really good combination. I think there will be cars that will be really strong on one set of tires and not as strong on the other. So it'll be interesting to see who does what on tire strategy. There's going to be a lot of that. You guys really need to pay attention how many laps each one of us is running on which tire.

But yeah, we're sitting pretty on tires, so I'm pretty excited about the race tomorrow.

Q. And when you say that your car is consistent, I take that to mean it doesn't matter whether you have reds or blacks on, your car is going to be great. But your teammates or at least Will Power took your setup and he seemed to really struggle with it. What is it that you have that he doesn't or how is it you're able to drive that and he's not quite adapting?

SIMON PAGENAUD: Well, I've been on the other side, too, quite frankly. You know, it's complicated to explain. I think it's actually just like a soccer player. You can't wear somebody else's shoe and you play well with your own shoe. I think at the end of the day, I'm comfortable with a certain type of car, I like certain behavior, and we like something different, a little bit different. On some tracks we're very similar, but because of the bumps here, we might be a little different.

I like a really strong rear end, but I need the front to be really strong mid-corner, and when I have that, I can really go. Will is very different. He likes something that rotates a lot from the rear, so it's a very different style, but we drive actually the same way. If you look at the data, you wouldn't say who's who. But it's just a feel thing, I think. I've been on the other side of it, and when I don't have what I want it's very hard to extract the best out of it, and it just shows how tight the field is and what it means to be confident in the car.

Yeah, that's what racing is all about, really.

Q. How important is pole at a track like Toronto? Do you think there's going to be a lot of passing tomorrow?

SIMON PAGENAUD: Pole is always important from an ego standpoint. You know, speed is speed, and we are racers, and you want to be the fastest, no question.

Now, that doesn't mean I'm going to win the race tomorrow, but certainly it puts me at an advantage. I've got the advantage to be up front and sliding through Turn 1 clear of anyone, and I'm going to try to take

advantage from that. I certainly would rather start first than fifth and get collected in Turn 3.

It is an advantage here because it's difficult to race from back there, but anything happens in Toronto. I think that's what makes it such an amazing race for the fans, that anything can happen until the end.

Q. A little bit of a follow-up on that, we saw at Road America how that track really favors the leader. Does this type of track have that same effect where the clean air is going to be so much better for you, and the other guys in the back are going to have to scramble for themselves?

SIMON PAGENAUD: I don't know. I finished my lap behind Sato in Q2 and the car didn't feel bad at all. I think racing is going to be good. We've seen it last year, there was a lot of passing. Turn 3 is such a good corner for passing, and if someone makes a mistake in Turn 11, you're going to have some action in 1.

I just love the layout. I think it's a great layout for racing. Obviously it's a very shallow, very tight line, so if you make a mistake, you're going to go off and pay a consequence.

I think that's what makes it such a great event.

Q. Since May we've heard you a couple times, not a lot, but mention the attack, how I'm on the attack now. Is that a different -- I mean this sincerely, is that a different kind of gear that comes from within because it seems like you've presented that a little more lately.

SIMON PAGENAUD: Yes. I think you get to learn yourself within racing. That's why this sport is so amazing to me. You get to learn how you function, how you think and what works for you, what doesn't work for you. I think obviously I'm not a crasher. I think I actually have a record of not crashing in Indy car throughout my entire career. I have to believe in myself that I'm not going to crash even though I attack.

So I found -- in '16 I just found that there was a certain level of aggressiveness that worked really well for me, but it's not always easy to click into it. When it happens, it's a lot of fun. But I'm certainly still developing. There's no -- it's a funny thing. It just feels like there's really no limit. The sky's the limit. I really enjoy working on that mental side of things.