

NTT IndyCar Series News Conference

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Press Conference

Simon Pagenaud

Team Penske

THE MODERATOR: Simon Pagenaud, Team Penske joins us, within 39 points of the championship. Sounded like an almost perfect day.

SIMON PAGENAUD: It was. What a great weekend really. We really hooked up the whole weekend with a fantastic racecar. Super proud for DXC Technology, they came here with a big group. I wanted to give them another win. We got a win with the Menards car and with the DXC Technology car, which is important to our partnership with Team Penske. They are supporting our program. Not only being a partner on the race car, but also on the support side of racing with all the technology to bring, it helps us being better on the racetrack. That's very important to us.

Then it's Bastille Day in France. Being able to win for France, after winning Indianapolis, it's been a special year. I'm very proud to fly the French flag here in a cousin country, which is Canada. I'm really excited and proud.

I guess the French guy is leading the Tour de France today on the bike. I felt like I had to do the same. Super proud.

THE MODERATOR: Talk about the race.

SIMON PAGENAUD: The first corner was difficult. We managed. We took off and the car handled really well. We definitely had an advantage on the tire wear. I knew we had a really good race car. We were able to match the Honda power pretty well. Helped us really to perform even better, so thanks to Chevy.

On the black Firestone tires, we were trying to make the fuel. Passing the backmarkers at the end was very complicated. I just played the game with (Scott) Dixon to make sure I was covering myself through Turn 1, catch the backmarkers.

That wasn't very fun for the leaders or for the fans. If I was trying to pass them, I would use a lot of fuel. They were making it quite difficult. I just used my experience to be smart there.

THE MODERATOR: Questions.

Q. This is the first time since May, the 500, that you entered a weekend with the mentality of coming



out on top. You seemed to have a strong approach to May, getting the job done. This is the first time you've returned to that?

SIMON PAGENAUD: Yes. Detroit - and Texas is a different story. But Detroit was not the way I wanted to run a race weekend. You see when I'm well-prepared, I can do the job. I've shown it before. It's just a matter of being in that zone.

Certainly the car was phenomenal this weekend, so it really was a matter of understanding how to extract the maximum out of it and stay on that aggressive level. I kept driving hard all weekend, while still having some margin, except in qualifying.

We were always a little bit ahead of the competition while not taking too much risk. That really was a comfortable zone, yeah. Definitely a good approach certainly. I'm still working on that to make sure that happens every race.

There are days that start really well for you. There are days that are really the easiest day in racing. It's just a matter of executing. There are days where it's more difficult. In those days you learn a lot more and you become stronger.

Q. At what point did you know that Scott Dixon was right behind you, especially when he was a second behind you, half a second? How did you keep ahead of him, especially on those last 15 laps?

SIMON PAGENAUD: I knew the gap with Scott. Scott is a really good racer. He's five-time champ. You know he's going to be there at the end. I knew that was going to be the case.

I built a gap at the beginning to be safe over the pit sequence. Then at the end when I saw the back markers, I knew that was his chance to come back. So what I did is once I figured out that Hunter-Reay was using 'push to pass', I could use my 'push to pass', but I was using a lot of fuel doing so. I was putting myself at risk.

What I did is I just looked at where Dixon was strong and I adjusted my pace to make sure I was ahead of him enough and not bothered by the backmarkers through Turn 1 and 3. The rest of the track Dixon couldn't pass me, so I was saving the fuel there.

I kept a distance with the backmarkers not to be in trouble myself. I used a bit of experience there.

Throughout the years I learned how to do that, watching the greats. That's how I pulled it off.

Q. When you hear the gap has gone from six seconds to a half second, he's right on your bumper, you have the team telling you to go into your fuel conservation, how do you handle that? Is it overwhelming?

SIMON PAGENAUD: I was very composed today because I knew I had such a great race car. It was just frustrating in a way. But I've been racing for a while now, so I managed to control my emotion and found a way to use the back markers to my advantage. Really I was in that mentality this weekend, just positive, never thinking negative.

The goal is to finish first, doesn't matter if it's half a second, 2/10ths, 10 seconds. It was really great for the fans, made it exciting. It's good, good for the show.

At the end of the day I feel confident always.

Q. You won the Indianapolis 500, then you win the Honda Indy. I believe, correct me if I'm wrong, the first person in history to go from Indianapolis 500 straight onto Indy, because you have all of these pressures of sponsorship, like that. What is it like to race from the Indianapolis 500 and win the Honda Indy right after that?

SIMON PAGENAUD: It's a great question. The difficulty, what's really cool about INDYCAR is the different tracks. Indy, the Speedway, is so different to Indy Toronto, it's pretty much big opposites. You're going through streets, you're braking really hard, you're sliding. In Indy, you got to be really smooth, doing 240 miles an hour. Here we have the slowest corner on the calendar with the hairpin in turn 3. Separate skills.

That's the beauty of INDYCAR. I think to win the championship, you have to be so complete. That's what I love.

But pressure, I do very well under pressure. It just drives me. I love it because that's when you have to extract more out of yourself. There's no other way to go. You can't turn back. It's just time to go for me right now. It's championship time.

Q. I know you're not a guy who doubts himself. Over the last month, there's been some eagerness to make this a Rossi-Newgarden championship fight, left you out. Did you see any of that? Is that motivation for you?

SIMON PAGENAUD: No, I think if you look at my Indy car career, I've been fighting for championships almost every year. Never count me out. That's all I can say.

Maybe here in the end, I'm showing it today, that's my determination that's talking, it's not pretentious, it's just that I have a great team behind me. We won the biggest race in the world. We just won an awesome

race. To be at a driver track where you need to have a really good car, chassis and engine, we showed that today.

We've got all the equipment, all the tools to do so well. Now it's just a matter of knowing when to push it. It's a long championship. You've got to build it. I'm here and I think Newgarden, Rossi and Dixon know it, like I know they're here, too. It's going to be a great fight in the end.

Q. You mentioned the struggle after May to keep the momentum going. Why is it different this time? Do you imagine it's going to be tough to keep this momentum going?

SIMON PAGENAUD: No, I don't believe it's going to be tough. Those tracks coming up are very good for us. I love Iowa. It's a fun oval. Mid-Ohio, it's a really good track.

We just going to have to approach it the same way we have and execute. I think the momentum that we have, the way that my mechanics work on the racecar, the smiles that they have mornings and evenings, just shows the potential of our team.

I'm determined. I told (team owner) Roger (Penske) before the weekend, I said, I'm 100 percent in and I'm going to give you everything I have. That's what you want to hear. That's what you want to do, go out and win championships.

It's just I had to rest and I had to gather myself after this big storm that happened to me after winning Indy. I reorganized my team around me, not Penske, but my personal team, Team Pagenaud. We're doing a great job with that, which is about optimizing time so I can have time focusing on racing. That's what we're going to have to do, but it seems like it's working.

Q. Was this weekend in many ways like a microcosm of your month of May? Seemed like you were fast all weekend, fast in every session, won pole, won the race.

SIMON PAGENAUD: When you want it so bad, I guess it happens, right? That's why I kept saying after Indy, I dreamt about winning Indy, just got to work really hard at it. It's not about working hard, it's about working well, focusing on the right things.

I think last weekend, having time at home, studying tapes, studying data, going to the simulator, all that allowed me to have the time to rethink how I was going to approach this weekend. The same way I did for Indy.

I found something there that works really well for me. I just got to keep riding that wave forward. So, yeah, it's nice to be in that position.

Q. A couple of weeks ago you saw your clay face for the Borg-Warner trophy. After that you went

back to France. Did you say after that, Celebration time has come to an end, now I'm back to full focus on the championship?

SIMON PAGENAUD: That's a good point. Good point. I think that was definitely a closure to go to France and realize the impact of the biggest race in the world. I had no idea the impact it was going to have in France. It was quite incredible.

We're actually going back in August for a media tour with INDYCAR to celebrate with the media there and fans in my hometown as well, which I'm really excited about. (The) Borg-Warner (Trophy) is going to be there. Those are good moments, too.

Yeah, I'm definitely switched to championship mode now even though I'm a happy person.

Q. A lot of us travel the circuit, we circle this event because it's such a great city. Was this one of the ones you had in your mind, I want to win Toronto?

SIMON PAGENAUD: Absolutely. Me, and my engineer (Ben Bretzman) was even more eager than me. We've been so fast here so many years, on the verge of winning so many times. Like I said earlier this weekend, yellow came out and then we finished either fifth or fourth, never had the win despite being fastest car.

That's another closure. It's nice to be able to tick that box, say we've done it. For me, it's one of the best street courses because it's so dicey. I really enjoy that. I felt like I had to win it at some point, so I'm glad it's done. Now I can focus on the rest.

THE MODERATOR: Simon, thank you.

SIMON PAGENAUD: Thank you.