

NTT IndyCar Series News Conference

Sunday September 22, 2019

Press Conference

Roger Penske

Team Penske

THE MODERATOR: Next up in the press conference room is Mr. Roger Penske. Roger, it's a familiar gathering we have, third time in four years, 16 times overall. You continue to pile up victories and championships and Indianapolis 500 wins, and if you can cap it all off, you went 1, 2 in the championship this year. Just your overall thoughts.

ROGER PENSKE: Well, when you think about as long as we've been in this sport and continue to have a team of people who can execute as they have, not just this year but the past several years, you know, it's -- the continuity of our team and the people makes the difference.

I think when we go to Indy, we have almost 700 years of experience around these cars, which makes a huge difference. Interestingly, when you go in our race shop, we have a big sign that shows how many people over 20 years, how many people over 10 years. It's almost 40 percent of our company, when you take all of the series we race in.

Josef, a great champion. You can see it in his eyes. You could see it the first time he won with us, and with Will and Simon, who just had an outstanding season, when you think about three wins and certainly the Indy 500 is the crown jewel that all of us want to have every year.

But the season was great, the poles and the competition. We've got a lot of young drivers coming up, Rosenqvist came in, Colton Herta outstanding, and then it's the Dixons and the rest of them that you have to race every single day, and Michael has got a great team, Chip does, and obviously the folks over at Arrow, and it's just on and on and on. I probably missed somebody. But the competition has never been better.

I think the teams, when you look at them top to bottom, it's competitive. I think the rules are in great shape, and it's affordable to go racing in IndyCar now, which I think is key, and if we keep the rules the way they are, then we can get data equity, we need to come back to these tracks the same time every year, and that's going to grow this fan base. I think the races are the right length, and we have a really key TV partner with NBC obviously showing us today on national television. It was a real superstar event for us, and obviously for the whole series and the IndyCar family and industry



around the world that really looks at us every day.

I just have to say thanks to our people, Tim Cindric and our sponsors, Chevy, great power for the whole season. It's a real dogfight between Honda and Chevy. Nobody has much of a lead, and I think it's just how the chips fall each year. But overall our sponsors and NTT, having them come back and take over from Verizon was a great job to go from one year to the next and have a key company was very important to the series.

I want to thank the whole Hulman family and Mark Miles and Tony and their whole family for having the Indy 500. That race has only gotten better, and I think we can make it better every year, and that's where everybody wants to win, and certainly from my perspective we get ready at the beginning of the year, starting on Monday or Tuesday when our guys are getting back, we're starting to get ready for next year's Indy 500.

We've got three great champions that can race there, and, to me, we'll see what happens next year, but I thank all the media for the continued support of the series and certainly of our team, and we're going to be here, and we love to race.

I think one of the last races I won was back in the '60s here, '63 or '64 or '65 before I quit. So I raced here a lot at times with Gurney and Moss and many of the people that -- Jack Brabham. When you think about those races, it was the LA Times or San Francisco Examiner race in those days, and we raced at LA Times down in Riverside.

It hasn't changed much. Same place, same coming up through Fort Ord. Nothing has changed, just the people and the racers. So thanks for having this opportunity for me.

THE MODERATOR: What we could see from your individual groups on the track today, it looked like real Penske excellence working together.

ROGER PENSKE: Well, if you really analyzed it, we went on black tires at the beginning to understand what we could do with them and knew that they would run longer and we could run longer and we had good stops we could jump a couple of cars and get ahead of Rossi, and I think that paid off because Simon and certainly Will were going to go for the win, and Tim had set it up that Josef had to stay behind Rossi all day.

So you saw we were within three, four, five seconds at the most, but it was a matter of staying out of trouble, and if we could have that buffer between first and wherever those two were, it would make a difference on the championship. It worked out fine. You never know, wasn't a lot of yellows, having problems. But good execution, I think the pit stops -- I think we were 1 and 2 on pit lane today, the 2 car and the 12, which makes a big difference, and that's why we were able to jump a couple of cars when we came out. Great execution and reliability and certainly we had world-class guys behind the wheel today.

Q. I think you raced here countless times when IndyCar, Champ Car, whatever was the official name, but the first time with the Dallara, and I also think (indiscernible) previous races with different cars. Is this how you come to a new circuit, (indiscernible) to set them up?

ROGER PENSKE: Well, I think the cars are so much different than what they were -- what was it, 15 years ago? Was that the last time? So 15 years ago, I think cars have really changed. But Dallara has given us a great reliable car, and when you think about the chassis that we won the Indy 500 with this year was three years old. That just shows you how good the pieces are and the parts.

But I think that the engineering people -- we didn't have the data that we had today. We know every inch of this racetrack we have on data so we can set the cars up in simulation. We have that capability, and I think that's what we use. The drivers go to the simulator, they actually race on this track for a half a day in the simulator, just like being on the track, so when they get here, they know almost everything what the track feels like.

And when we go back home, they'll go back in the simulator and run the track again to see was it just exactly what I thought it was. That's the kind of technology -- and everybody gets a chance, Chevy and Honda, they all have simulators that the drivers can use.

Q. I would ask you about Josef over the last couple weeks; he'd been a champion before, and he's obviously been in big moments, but was he a little bit nervous? Did you sense anything about him the last couple days?

ROGER PENSKE: Well, you know, listen, you have a 41-point lead, you've got double points, which we never knew what was going on. I think I ran into John Barnes today and I said, you know, what it's like, you're leading the last lap of the Indy 500, you hit the wall in the last corner, well, could have happened to us today, too, but fortunately it worked out. But I think Josef is a pro. He led throughout this whole season, came off right away with victories. I know he was on edge a little bit, but I know he's glad it's over.

Q. You mentioned that you knew he was on edge a little bit. He really broke down in tears after and needed to compose himself. Did you know that Josef was that emotional as a guy?

ROGER PENSKE: Was he an emotional guy --

Q. He broke down in tears. You said he was nervous, and when the race was over he literally was sobbing and needed to compose himself.

ROGER PENSKE: Well, I think there's so much emotion inside for someone like that because you've got to be perfect today, and I think the fact that he was able to execute the way he did, it was just a time to let it all out. His family was there, his mom, his grandmother, she came all the way from Denmark to see this race, so it was pretty special for her.

THE MODERATOR: As many times as you've done this, was your stomach churning the last half of the race?

ROGER PENSKE: My stomach churns all the time, so I'm used to it.

Q. You got 18th Indy 500 this year, you got the IndyCar championship. I know Supercars you've got a pretty good lead with McLaughlin, I guess Kes and Logano could win you a NASCAR championship. I know the year is not over, but could this season be one of your greatest ever?

ROGER PENSKE: Well, I think we've got 35 or 36 wins so far this season and a bunch of poles across the different series. But you know, we're in all of them. We got to execute at Road Atlanta with the Acura team in IMSA, and McLaughlin has just had a super season when you think about winning 17 races, probably more than anyone has ever won for us in one season. I think Mark Donohue had the record before.

But when you get into the Cup side, what do we got, eight to go here, and we've got three great drivers, and it's going to come down to the last four and maybe the last corner and what have you. But the good news is we're still in it, and our goal obviously is try to win all four.

But we understand it's a formidable challenge with the people that we're racing.

Q. Question for you about the second championship for Josef. We saw a lot more emotion out of him today than with his first. Is there a reason when drivers win the second one you see a little bit more from them? And even Brad has said in the past that winning the second championship for him would mean more than the first. Why is that from your standpoint, and what have you seen from Josef to make this one more special?

ROGER PENSKE: Well, I think when you're young, you

just don't understand the elements and the pressure, and as you mature, you start to understand the circumstances that you're in, the things that can go wrong. And I think Josef has understood that, a lot of pressure with his new sponsor, with Hitachi.

So when you start putting that all together, and Brad knows that, Kyle Busch knows it, they all know it. They give you that strong-looking face, but inside I'm sure they're all churning, as we all were, before the race.

Q. We kind of litigated this in May when Simon won there, but the adversity that he faced earlier this year, the speculation, whether it was accurate or not, was thrust upon him. What have you learned from Simon throughout this entire run winning in Indy and then making this championship run that maybe you didn't know about him or you didn't expect to see from him?

ROGER PENSKE: Well, I think when he won the race in the rain, had the pole, you could see he was a different guy running in the 500, and to see him execute and then go to Toronto on one of the toughest courses that we have, we race on, and to see him win there, he really made a statement to us, quite honestly, as a team and certainly for himself, not only here in the U.S. but around the world, and you could see him today racing -- I look at Dixon as the guy we've got to beat every weekend in and out, and racing him wheel to wheel. He's really proved his mettle, and obviously he'll be part of our team next year.

Q. Kind of a follow-up what I asked you when you walked in, two of the most famous names to come out of Culver Military Academy, yourself and George Steinbrenner. To bring the Steinbrenner name into IndyCar and to have them a winner, we've got new drivers coming in, new teams, we're going to need new team owners, how important is it to get guys like that involved in IndyCar?

ROGER PENSKE: Well, George Steinbrenner is from Cleveland where I'm from, so we have that in common, and I knew George Sr. And to have a Steinbrenner in motorsports is terrific. It's like Ganassi, it's like Andretti, all these people, Rahal, on and on and on. To see what they've put together, a small team, and the quality and the capability of Colton Herta is amazing. You could see him today, he ran a perfect race, stops were good, we were right next to him. So I think they've got great momentum, and you're going to hear a lot about them in the future, and I think we need more owners and ones who understand how to win and want to win.