

NTT INDYCAR SERIES

News Conference

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Press Conference

Simon Pagenaud

Team Penske

Conor Daly

Ed Carpenter Racing

THE MODERATOR: Welcome, everybody, to today's NTT INDYCAR Series video news conference in advance of the GMR Grand Prix on Saturday at Indianapolis Motor Speedway. The race will be noon at eastern on your local NBC affiliate.

We're pleased to be joined by the defending champion of the GMR Grand Prix, Simon Pagenaud of Team Penske, and Conor Daly, driver of the No. 20 US Air Force Chevrolet for Ed Carpenter Racing.

Simon, we'll start with you. I know last May at Indianapolis, it was pretty life-changing for you. How important was the win in the GMR Grand Prix for setting that stage?

SIMON PAGENAUD: Hi, everyone. Thanks for joining.

Obviously racing in Indianapolis to me, it's what we're all about. Obviously, our name is INDYCAR. I've always loved the Indy Grand Prix because it really sets the tone going into the month of May. It just showcases what INDYCAR is about, road course racing, then the week after that we usually go into the Indianapolis 500.

That's what's really about our series, is diversity in terms of tracks and talents. I really enjoy it. I'm really excited to come to Indy again and race in Indianapolis again. That put a grin on my face.

Obviously, the Grand Prix has been very blessed for me. I've had three wins there. I hope I can get it to number four. It's definitely the goal this weekend. But it definitely changed my life last year. Now I can race very focused, yeah, very focused. Also, the chance to race with my personal pressure is off because I've achieved my dream. Now I can really focus on myself and getting the best out of myself which is what I really enjoy the most.

THE MODERATOR: Conor, you've been going to IMS most of your life, raced in the GMR Grand Prix twice, had a sixth-place finish for Dale Coyne Racing in your debut race. How exciting is it to race at IMS and finally get started with Ed Carpenter Racing?

CONOR DALY: As part of my one-off entries in the



Indianapolis 500 in the past, I've tried to beg, borrow and plead with the teams, Hey, can I please do the Grand Prix as well? It hasn't worked out yet.

It's nice to be back. It's such an incredible way to start out the month of May. I love the road course at Indy. I love the racing opportunity it brings. We know it's going to be hard to beat Team Penske there as usual, but it's going to be a fun challenge. It's going to be great just to get back on track on a road course, fight with everyone.

There's a lot of entries as well. We've obviously got some one-off entries. It's great to see some other people in the field again, like Sage Karam and stuff like that. It's going to be cool to just get back out, get on the road course, let these cars live a little bit at Indianapolis and just have a good weekend.

THE MODERATOR: I know we have quite a few media on the line so we'll open up for questions from the media.

Q. Simon, you mentioned you've won this race three times. The only other person to have won in an INDYCAR on the Indianapolis Motor Speedway road course has been Will Power, your teammate. What do you make of your particular dominance on this course in these last several years? What has worked so incredibly well for the Team Penske cars?

SIMON PAGENAUD: Well, I think what I know for a fact is that Will and I have a very similar driving style. I had the chance to score a win with the Schmidt Peterson Honda when I was there. That was the inaugural Grand Prix, 2014. As a smaller team taking on the big team, that was a lot of fun.

Obviously, I joined the powerhouse of Team Penske and we've been able to carry on the tradition of winning at the Grand Prix. Obviously, I'm very proud of that. I feel, again, very blessed that we have the program to be able to contend for wins everywhere we go.

Team Penske, you guys all know, we put a lot of work in, we work really well as teammates as well. That's one of the things with Will, we have a very similar driving style, but that doesn't mean that we're the same speed in every corner. Some corners he's better than me, some corners I'm better than him. We share a lot. We talk about it, talk about how to set the car up. We've been able to make the whole program better

that way. Josef contributes a lot to that, as well.

I think the three of us together, obviously we have phenomenal engineers that are able to bring some ideas on how to develop the car in a better way for that track or another track.

But I do think there's a little bit of mystery as to why sometimes you go to a track and you have more luck than you would at a different track. All I can think of is Detroit. I've never had much luck there. It doesn't mean I'm not a good driver. I go to the Grand Prix and most of the time I've had good luck.

There's a bit of that mystery in racing. You can't forget it. It's certainly a testament to the great job that we do all together.

Q. Simon, is there an additional comfort level that you get as a driver going to a track where recently you've had success and where your team has also won weekends that you haven't won? This INDYCAR Indianapolis Motor Speedway road course, does it feel any different as far as a comfort level for you guys?

SIMON PAGENAUD: I think as a driver, when you go to a track where you've won before, a track where you've had good success, you just have a level of confidence. I'm going into the Grand Prix with very high expectations of myself and my car and my team. I'm going there to win the race. I'm not going to be third. I'm not going in thinking I could be fifth or sixth or seventh. The goal is to win.

Quite frankly, that's the only thought I have. But there are a lot of things that's going to happen, a lot of things out of my control. All I can do is the best I can. Certainly with the team that I have, obviously you expect to win.

Q. You're both so accessible to fans, have been for a very long time. What will you miss most about not having fans there?

CONOR DALY: Well, I mean, honestly it's my home race. I've even seen some tweets today that, like, you know, Tony Donohue put out it's 27 years since there's been a race at IMS and he hasn't been there. It is weird.

I was a fan first. I was out there every day of my life, every month of May that I was allowed to get out of school early and go. It was such a part of my life. But we will still obviously be doing our best to put on the best show that we can for everyone at home.

We know our job is to go out there and try to absolutely, you know, beat everyone and create an incredible race because we know that if the fans were there, they would be cheering along just as much as they would be at home.

It's tough. It's strange. But I know that we continue to tell everyone, Hey, we appreciate you, hang with us, we'll get back to the track eventually. Everyone will be there eventually. We'll get back hopefully and enjoy it once again.

As long as everyone tunes in on TV, I can guarantee it will be quite a show for everyone.

Q. Simon, could you address that briefly?

SIMON PAGENAUD: Yeah, of course, I think it's a very tough time we're in right now. We just all have to adapt. It's quite unfortunate. INDYCAR has been doing everything they could to reorganize the schedule, make sure that we could put on a show for the fans. That's what we're going to do.

Texas was a good example of it. We're out there racing with the new windscreen, a lot of new things that make the series really exciting. I think we see the numbers.

I think everybody in the series can't wait to have the fans come back. Luckily that's going to be at Road America. We don't have to wait too long. It's unfortunate it can't happen in Indy. Obviously, health and safety is first. I think we're in this position right now.

When you ask that question, first thing I thought is back to my childhood. I was at a racetrack. One of the main drivers refused to give me an autograph. Obviously, I wanted to be a driver at some point, I was really young, I didn't know if I was going to be a driver. I made myself a promise that I would always do the best I could to give an autograph every time I could.

So the fans for me are a big part of my career, a big part of who I am as a racer. It's the case for every INDYCAR driver, I can assure you that.

It's going to be weird. Hopefully, that changes very soon.

Q. Conor, I know you've raced for 42 different INDYCAR teams. Having a split season, how does the communication flow from one team to the other, then from track to track? What is your mindset? Seems like you have good communication skills anyway. How are you suited for this?

CONOR DALY: Well, there's no sharing of information. Everyone wants to beat everyone. It's tough (smiling).

Oddly enough, I feel like I've been with ECR for quite a long time. We still have yet to race with each other. I was signed up in November. Guess what? It's almost July. Haven't even done a single race with them yet. It's really interesting.

But I feel like I'm part of their family already. We've done a lot of work together. We've done a lot of

simulator days together. So working with the engineers, working with my teammates, Ed and Rinus. We're ready. We've got everything in place. It's just a matter of you can only think through so many things until your head starts to explode and you just want to get on the real racetrack.

We've thought through every possible thing that we could possibly think through and we're ready to go out there and deliver for the U.S. Air Force, for Chevrolet, for everyone that supports this group. I can't wait.

The car has been looking great for a long time. Now we got to see it in action side-by-side with a bunch of people. Hopefully at the front. That would be quite satisfactory.

Q. Not complaining or anything, but we've gone so long with such a slow start to the season because of the shutdown, now this is going to be the first of five races over the next three weekends. Is it almost like a standing start to the season going from zero to 160 in a matter of a couple of seconds?

SIMON PAGENAUD: It's definitely an adjustment. Everybody I think in the world has been going at an interesting slow speed to going flat out.

I think the advantage of it is we've all been able to train a lot, get ready for the heat. Obviously, the added windscreen makes for quite a hot day every day in the racecar. That's also going to be an adjustment.

But I'm personally ready, ready to go, couldn't be any more ready, to be honest with you. It's the best shape I've ever been in in my career.

CONOR DALY: Yeah, I mean, like Simon said, I feel really good myself. I'm lighter than I've been starting a year before. I feel good. Obviously this weekend will be new for us. We've done some road course testing, of course, with the windscreen. But it's going to be a good old Indiana summer day, plenty of humidity, nice and hot. That will be really tough I think. It will be really interesting.

Really the doubleheaders are going to be the ones where I think it will really test us and put us on the limit. But that's why we do what we do. We want to be the best athletes we can be and the best drivers we can be. It's on us to be as prepared as possible.

I can't wait for it. I've been sitting around in this darn simulator room for way too many weekends. I'm ready to get back to the real racecar and be sweating as much as possible because that means we're out there doing work and I can't wait.

Q. As racers, how excited are you to see the second race of the day on Saturday, to see how well they do on your course?

CONOR DALY: If we're allowed to watch, I can't wait. I think it's going to be great. Those guys, I've been getting a lot of texts from different Xfinity guys about the track. I know it will be totally new for them. But I'm excited.

I wish I could do the race obviously. Got to stay focused on the INDYCAR program. I think it will be cool. I think they'll race pretty well, too.

SIMON PAGENAUD: Yeah, I'm excited to see obviously Austin Cindric, how well he does over there in the Xfinity on Saturday afternoon. But obviously there's a lot of precautionary aspect we have to think about. I don't think I can stay actually. I'm actually going to hop on the plane to get home to make sure we all stay safe. Obviously we just have to follow the guidelines. It's the way it is. I don't think I'll be able to watch the race. I wish I could have. It's the situation we're in.

I look forward to seeing the big NASCAR race on Sunday. That will be fun to watch. At the end of the day, it's a historical moment, I think not just for American racing but for worldwide racing. I look forward to the weekend and seeing the reaction afterward.

Q. Elaborate a little bit more on this crossover. How important is it to share a weekend with NASCAR? Do you want to do more of these weekends with these guys?

CONOR DALY: I think it's huge. I think it's awesome. I mean, I love racing. I'm a race fan. Doesn't matter if it's Formula 1, NASCAR, Formula E, whatever it is, USAC. Anything like that is awesome. I would love to see more of it.

This is the first time it will happen. Realistically we wish we could see both fan bases interacting and everyone there together. We'll still wait on that. But I think it's an exciting sign hopefully for the future because if one side of motorsport, NASCAR, is doing well, we want that success to kind of somehow -- if we can work together, that would be great. This is a team effort. For motorsports to be successful, hopefully, we can all help each other. That would be a lot of fun.

SIMON PAGENAUD: I totally agree with Conor. At the end of the day, we're all racers. Doesn't matter if you have a roof, no roof, windscreen, whatever it is. I'm like Conor, I love any sort of racing. I love anything with four wheels and a steering wheel.

If you can join the power of NASCAR and the power of INDYCAR together, it's fantastic. I think what's happening for us, for everybody that enjoys racing, it's massive. I can't wait to see what the weekend is like, what it's like.

Obviously, it would have been phenomenal to have the

fans come to that race for the first-ever time. We'll see the attendance we get on TV and the response on social media. It's going to be a big weekend.

Q. You two have been good here. Is there a pressure moment to get a good result during the week against some of the guys that haven't been as lucky?

CONOR DALY: I think for me personally, yes, you want to kind of keep the momentum going because I know that I've been strong here in the past. But it's also a new environment still with this team for me.

We're going to have a lot to learn about ourselves. Carlin and I at Texas, I knew that environment already. We were able to take advantage of that. We had a fantastic car. They did the job over the off-season, kind of working with what I had told them last year that we needed to do.

This is still new for us at Ed Carpenter Racing. I'm just excited. We're only one race in. We want to do well at every race. I'm not really thinking about points or anything yet. But I can't wait to just get things going.

Yes, Road America is going to be wild, Iowa is going to be tough, swapping teams and everything like that. It will just be nice to get things going. I think if you do well, though, at Indy right now, it does create some good momentum because you're just going to be going back-to-back races. It's always nice to have good momentum and cars that are in one piece, as well.

SIMON PAGENAUD: For me, it's a little different. It's quite a bit different for me because I've been with Team Penske for six years. Same engineer for many, many years. Actually almost a decade. I'm in a very different situation where I'm going into the road course at Indy with the goal to win the race, score more points, strike the (indiscernible). We started the season really well in Texas. I feel this year we can't be any more ready, quite frankly, despite the situation.

I'm 100% full throttle right now in my head. I'm really in a good space mentally to go to this racetrack and score as many points as possible. I'm definitely thinking championship right now.

Q. Simon, how much do you expect the Aeroscreen to change some of the setups from the past? You've been good in the last car. You saw Texas changed a little bit. Do you expect a change in the setups for this weekend?

SIMON PAGENAUD: Yeah, it's a great question because Texas was an eye-opener for a lot of us, I think. We realized after the race there was a lot of improvement to be made, but not enough time to really think about what we could do on-site.

Obviously, it's the same for the road course in Indy. We don't really know yet what's going to need change.

Certainly, that hour and 20 minutes of practice is not that much. We're going into qualifying after that, then it's race day the next day.

I think it's going to take a few races to adjust and figure out what we need for each track. Each track is different. No matter what, this is going to be a year of adjustments. I think that might allow driver and engineer combinations to show strength.

Q. Jumping ahead a week. First doubleheader at Road America. What are some of the challenges that go into doing that doubleheader when you have races that one is going to start less than 18 hours after the other one ends?

CONOR DALY: I think from the team side, it's just the amount of work that the guys have to put in. Our crews are going to be flat out, for sure. We appreciate everything that those guys do. They're flat out.

It's going to be interesting for us. Road America, probably going to be warm, probably going to be a physical race. It's been a little while since I've been there in an INDYCAR. It's a great place to race.

The key is, if you have a decent day in the first race, how do you make it an even better day for day two? You know what I mean? Each time on track, you're going to have to do the best job possible. Use race one as a test session for race two if you're struggling a little bit.

We want to go there with a strong package immediately because you have two opportunities for points. But realistically you never know what could happen. It's obviously going to be a very short weekend.

I'm excited for it though. Two races at Road America, I don't think any driver in the world would complain about that.

SIMON PAGENAUD: I think it will be interesting. Obviously we've seen it with NASCAR in Pocono last weekend. First day you're going to have some really good cars. The next day everybody gets better, like Conor said. The second day is actually really, really tough racing day where you're a little bit drained from the day before. Decision making is going to have to be on point despite being tired.

We've had some practice with Detroit. It's grueling. The IndyCars are extremely physical cars. It's going to be hot again with the new windscreen as well. A lot to take in combination there.

I have no doubt it should be an amazing event. But certainly second race will be interesting to see who gets better.

Q. You are in this busy stretch, the quick

turnaround. There's some pressure there not to make it any harder on your team than it needs to be. How much can you be thinking about that in the first race that I really don't need to put one off in (Turn) 5 or whatever?

CONOR DALY: I think drivers are going to go flat out, non-stop, no matter what day it is, what race it is. Yes, we have to think about the weekend as a whole. Obviously, we saw in Texas some mistakes in the day, whether that was in practice or qualifying, really, really affected some people's race days in general.

We got to be smart. That's hopefully part of our job, is using our brains the right way, being smart about things. No matter what, I think we're going to be flat out every day, no matter what.

SIMON PAGENAUD: I actually looked at the schedule yesterday. We're basically starting in July. October it's going to be over. It's half the season really, just as many races in half a season. It's going to be compact, intense. We all know that INDYCAR racing is extremely intense.

I think the big teams might have an advantage for sure because of the amount of people they have working with them. The smaller teams, on the other hand, it's going to be hard for them because of all the work they have to do for all these weeks. They have reduced the amount of people.

Overall all the teams are so professional that it should be normal. I expect nothing less than usual.