

IndyCar Media Days

Tuesday February 2, 2016

Simon Pagenaud

Media Day Presser



THE MODERATOR: We'll go ahead and continue with our Verizon IndyCar Series media availability. Pleased to be joined by Simon Pagenaud.

You're entering the second year with the team. What are things you learned from the first year that you're looking forward to continuing the second year?

SIMON PAGENAUD: It's great to have the winter to get to work on the little details. This year was a lot of work, for sure. Between two teams assembled in a very nice way, we have some really, really good people on my car.

It's been a better season than it looked with the results. Performance was quite incredible, right away, right out of the box. The execution was our issue. But that's exactly what we worked on this winter, trying to understand how we could execute better, what to execute better and how.

I'm super excited. The guys have been working really, really hard this winter. I can only thank my crew, how much work they've been doing, pit stops, thinking about it, making the car as nice as possible. I can't thank them enough for all the work they've done so far.

I think '16 should be certainly a much better year for us. I'm excited and relaxed about it.

THE MODERATOR: Everybody keeps talking about the anniversary of the hundredth running of the 500. Team Penske is also celebrating an anniversary with Roger's 50th year in motorsports. You recently gathered to celebrate. What happened at that celebration and how honored are you to be a part of this monumental year for the team?

SIMON PAGENAUD: What an incredible night we had. There were I believe 45 drivers that drove for Penske there present on-site out of the 83 total. Let me tell you, Danny Sullivan, Rick Mears, Gil de Ferran, Timo Bernhard, Romain Dumas, my friend who won Le Mans from France. Incredible drivers, I couldn't name everybody because it would take a while.

It was a great evening because we're talking about the history of Penske Racing, 50 years, everything that Roger went through throughout those 50 years, all the history that happened, how he created this team and

what it became.

I think you can think of a team like Penske would be a team like Ferrari in Formula One, which is incredible to think that way. Personally being part of it is quite an honor, something special.

I think that evening, there were about 1400 people gathered together, whether it was drivers, crew, families, partners, some partners that have been with Penske for 25, 30 years. I think we all felt privileged to be there. Certainly one of the best evenings I've had in racing.

THE MODERATOR: All these team adjustments you've had to make, but a couple personal adjustments. You were a driver based in Indianapolis when you signed with Team Penske you moved out to Charlotte. What has that change been like? Is it warmer, more comfortable to be living in.

SIMON PAGENAUD: It's very true. It was big changes last year. You don't realize it at the time when it happens. You think everything is settled and everything is going to go well.

I have to say, the difference last year to here is huge just because I've had time to settle down, I've had time to get my things in place, in order. Now I don't have to think twice when I go to the gym which road to take. It's important for the comfort of life and preparation as well.

It's the same with the team. I know who to talk to for what reason. That's a big difference. Certainly it was a big move. I've lived in Indy for nine years. All of a sudden I lost all my connections and had to restart a new life.

I just want to remind you I came from France. Never been to the U.S. before, moved to Indianapolis, never moved. Certainly a big change and a new life started.

THE MODERATOR: In a few days you and the team will be heading out to Phoenix for a Chevrolet test. What are some of the things you're looking forward to about that track, one of the returning tracks for the series in 2016?

SIMON PAGENAUD: It's a legendary track for IndyCar. It's good to be back there. It's great to be on the West Coast as well. I think it's a fantastic market for us.

It's a new track. Actually the Phoenix track has done a great job at promoting, I know that for a fact because I have friends living there, they got tickets for their motorhome, they have tickets to park their motorhome for the NASCAR race and they were invited to come to the IndyCar race.

Phoenix is doing a great job of promoting the event. It's very exciting. They're doing everything they can for all their fans to be interested in IndyCar. That is important to have a track that can support us like that.

A short oval, should be an exciting race with turn one where you can go side-by-side. We'll see. I'm excited to test the new aero kit, evolution of the aero kit, get a new try at the engine as well.

All that is what is exciting. We don't get much testing anymore. We decided to test mostly during the season. It's been a long time without driving the IndyCar, so pretty excited about it.

THE MODERATOR: You're one of the two drivers that have been out to Boston recently to check out of the new course that is set up there. What were your impressions? I have seen a video of you going around the track. A very unique track for you.

SIMON PAGENAUD: Yeah, the layout is beautiful. I'm not here just promoting it. It is quite cool. It's got some fast corners, some really wide straights, some deep braking. Obviously we're going under a tunnel. I think that's great. Not just like Monaco, but I hope the fans can go in the tunnel and hear the cars go by. That would be really cool.

The tunnel part is really nice. Left-handed, going to be really fast. You go and brake for the long straight. It goes around the harbor. It's a really dynamic area in Boston, with a lot of restaurants around. I think it's going to be a great area for the race around the convention center. I was there for the auto show, and people were pretty excited. So we'll see.

THE MODERATOR: Attended a hockey game, too?

SIMON PAGENAUD: I did a hockey game. I was lucky to be in the suites. I had a great view. That game was super fast. It was crazy. I couldn't follow the game because it was too fast.

THE MODERATOR: What have you been up to during the off-season? You've been doing some, I believe, ice racing in Andorra? Where were you?

SIMON PAGENAUD: I went to Andorra, between France and Spain. I've been invited to do a winter championship that's organized in France. It's been going on for 25 years. It's called the Trophy Andros. I don't know if you know the jam Bonne Maman. It's the same company called Andros. They're a partner and sponsor this series. They've been sponsoring that series for 25 years. They've asked me to come and the schedule allowed me to go. This time I was available. It was great.

Driving on ice, I've never driven on ice. They had stud tires, skinny tires, an electric car as well. A lot of new things. But it was very interesting, quite enjoyable because I don't race in Europe anymore. It was a good opportunity to race with some old friends and new friends. It was pretty cool.

THE MODERATOR: Questions for Simon.

Q. How did you feel at the 24 Hours of Daytona and the fire? Were you in your car?

SIMON PAGENAUD: I was in my bed. I was watching on TV. It wasn't me. I was driving that car, but I wasn't in the car at the time.

That was scary. It was a bad sight. Luckily he was fine. I think he got some fumes. He didn't feel too good for a little while after that. Luckily nobody got injured.

It's some huge spill basically. I don't know how it happened. They don't know how it happened either. Some fumes spilled and created some flames.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you, Simon. Have fun in Phoenix.

SIMON PAGENAUD: Thank you.