

# IndyCar Media Conference

Sunday March 13, 2016

## Juan Pablo Montoya Simon Pagenaud Ryan Hunter-Reay

### Press Conference

THE MODERATOR: We'll get started with our post race press conference. We're joined by Ryan Hunter-Reay, who finished in third place today.

Ryan, a strong finish today, nice pass of Helio. Talk about your day.

RYAN HUNTER-REAY: It's always physical here. This is one of those tracks that really takes it out of you. This is a good way to start the season. Starting on the podium here, we fair pretty well through the rest of the season. Hopefully that's a good omen.

We got everything out of it today. There was nothing left in the car. Had some good battles out there today. Helio really dive-bombed me there at one point and hit Dixon, almost turned him around. It was really nice to get by him at the end for the podium. That was a small, tiny little victory for us.

Just to be on the podium with the Penske boys today is a big accomplishment because they've been the class of the field here for many years.

Good way to start the season. Good pit stops. We really learned something about the race setup, which is very, very, very good for us. We came out of here last year having no idea where to go. Today was a very good lesson for us. We learned a lot about the new package today. Hopefully that sets us on a course for better results in the future.

We have our eye on wins. We're definitely not okay with finishing third, so... All in all, a good day.

This is my home race. Been here on the podium four times. Would really, really love to win this one. I can't say enough about this event. It's one of my favorites. The way it's put on, the fans, definitely one of the highlights of the Verizon IndyCar Series schedule.

THE MODERATOR: We're also joined by second-place finisher, Simon Pagenaud.



Simon, 48 laps led to start the race, talk about your day.

SIMON PAGENAUD: Overall it was a great day. If you compare to last year, it's been a massive improvement on the whole 22 crew. I'm super proud to represent HPE in our first race and be here on the podium in second place, leading the race for a while.

But, yeah, I mean, Montoya is an old dog. He found a little good trick on me. Fortunately I had a lot of wheel spin compared to last year. I decided to be aggressive on the restarts. Maybe I was too close to T.K. I think it took quite a bit of aerodynamics out of my car. Had a lot of wheel spin, didn't go forward. Great job on him to get me.

It's a big advantage to be up front. Once you're up front, with the turbulence behind, it's very difficult, hard to keep the tires in good shape. If there was going to be another restart, it would have been difficult to get it back.

Overall you have to look at the big picture. Big picture, it's a great start of the season. The evolution of the whole team, I hope you guys see it now, that you stop saying bad stuff about my team (laughter).

But it's been awesome. We had so much fun this weekend. We're just going to keep pushing and I think we'll be strong this year.

THE MODERATOR: You've had the full year with the team, the full off-season. Do you feel more a part of the Team Penske team?

SIMON PAGENAUD: I was part of it last year. A lot of people don't understand it takes time to build a team. It's not overnight. You don't beat these guys overnight. It's not possible. It's the elite.

When you win a race in IndyCar, it's when you've done everything perfect. I made one tiny little mistake today and it lost me the race. It's like a football team. I've been saying that all weekend. You get your football team, assemble the team together, it takes time for everybody to communicate well, understand each other, like each other to work better. That's where we

at now. It's quite enjoyable.

RYAN HUNTER-REAY: Obviously the Penske boys have a better idea of how Will is. Thoughts are with Will. He must be in a pretty bad place not to be in the racecar for a race. We're thinking about him. That's definitely not the way you want to see it happen.

THE MODERATOR: Questions.

**Q. Compared to last year at the same race, how would you judge the performance? Do you see a clear difference?**

RYAN HUNTER-REAY: I think it is better. I don't think we are where we want to be yet. We were half a second off the Penskes in qualifying. That's not acceptable. But last year I think we qualified 10th or 12th or something. I'm not even sure. It was a sidenote. This year we made the Fast Six. It's definitely better.

But we need to find what works with that package. I'm encouraged by how the race went today. This car, the new package, what it does best is it doesn't surprise you. Last year's package, it was constantly trying to throw you under the wall. You couldn't really get on top of it. You always had to stay at 90%. This one you can drive at 100%, at least you know what it's going to do. Somewhat predictable.

**Q. Ryan, Honda told us over the weekend their goal was to widen the setup window. Like trying to stay on top of razor blades.**

RYAN HUNTER-REAY: More downforce does that.

**Q. You talked about it a little bit, but how was it to drive throughout the race? Were changes predictable, something you can work with?**

RYAN HUNTER-REAY: Yeah. Like I said, last year the car, the way I drive the car, it's very on the nose. Last year when I would attack a corner, come off the brake pedal, it would snap loose. As soon as I would catch it, it would go to big understeer. Couldn't get rid of that. Didn't matter what I did to the car. I could have a completely dead front end and understeering car.

This year you can dial it a little more towards your setup style. Like I said, it's more predictable. I think predictability comes with added downforce, which we definitely gained some downforce with it.

The Honda engine department, HPD, has done a great job. That was good today. Drivability is good. Those guys have been working very hard. Looking forward to the rest of the season.

**Q. Ryan, Penske loses Will before the race. The 12**

**car has to go back to the field. Still they go 1-2-4. Do you throw up your hands?**

RYAN HUNTER-REAY: Yeah, that's why they don't want to repave it. They're really good. They have been. They just have it sorted out.

Penske, the team and the drivers within the team, are some of the best in the sport. When you combine a lot of talent behind the wheel with a car that's dialed in, you get that result.

I mean, they obviously have found something nobody else has. That's how you make runs for championships, having certain races like that. We'll probably see some more like that from them.

They've done a very good job with it. They're very consistent.

Who finished fourth?

**Q. Helio.**

RYAN HUNTER-REAY: That's right. What am I thinking? Sorry, forgot about my buddy Helio (laughter).

**Q. You took third place away from Helio today. Talk about that.**

RYAN HUNTER-REAY: Helio is a great driver. Him and I raced wheel-to-wheel at 220 miles an hour, in my career, one of the better races at the Indy 500 in 2014. I think he's very good that way.

He made a move inside of me in turn one. I gave him the room, raced him side-by-side through two corners. I ended up taking the position back. Then he dive-bombed me into turn four. I thought he was going to clean everybody out. He ran into Dixon and somehow kept going. Didn't have any wing damage. Hit him pretty hard, too. Chevy's got strong front wings.

Kept going, then I caught him back up later in the race and passed him in the end.

It's great going wheel-to-wheel with a guy like that. He's definitely one of them that will go for it. He's very aggressive. But anybody at the front is.

**Q. I'm curious about the difference between the black primary tires and the red alternates in terms of how long they last and whether you see a difference with the package. Do the changes made over the off-season affect the tires?**

SIMON PAGENAUD: Yeah, it didn't seem to degrade as much this year. I thought we could keep the rear tires in better shape. Our package is just more stable in general.

Like Ryan said, we had a lot of instability, especially braking, last year. The car was a lot more on the nose. So now it really helps to save the tires.

Yeah, I thought the shift between black Firestone tires and reds were what you would expect. But the degradation was pretty mild, I thought.

RYAN HUNTER-REAY: I burned the rears off it, so...

I thought Firestone did a great job with the tires. If you take care of them, they're going to be there for you. If you try to turn quick in succession 15 laps qualifying pace, they're not going to be there for you at the end. That's how it seemed.

Helio and I, with two stints to go, he was on reds, I was on blacks, and he got by me. Then I was on reds, he was on blacks at the end, I got by him.

That's how it's supposed to work, the ebb and flow of the race. Firestone did a very good job with that, as they always do.

**Q. You found out pretty late Will was not going to go. How does that affect the entire mentality of the team? Is each individual driver so focused on his own race that you have to put it out of your mind a little bit?**

SIMON PAGENAUD: It's a shame. I've known him for 10 years. So when something happens like that, it's not like he's my best friend, but still I care about him. I care about him. I care about all the guys in the series because we're pretty much together for all year long, so you have to care for them. There's a pretty good atmosphere with the drivers.

Like Ryan said, when that happens, you wonder what's going on. You kind of worry. At the end of the day, I mean, you still have to perform in your job. We're here for a reason. You got to be able to block that out and just focus on your job, like you said. I think that's what we did.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you very much. Congratulations.

RYAN HUNTER-REAY: Thank you.

SIMON PAGENAUD: Thank you.

THE MODERATOR: We will continue with our post race press conference. We're joined now by Juan Pablo Montoya. His second consecutive win here at St. Petersburg, 15th of his career.

Juan, tell us about your day.

JUAN PABLO MONTOYA: I thought it was good, it was. We had a problem with the steering. I hit the wall. I made a mistake this morning on the warmup. I was trying to post a lap on really old tires. I went a little too deep in turn eight.

To be honest, I went straight. I took my hands off the wheel thinking I was going to hit the wall. It stopped so fast, I put my hands back on, I barely clipped it. Got my hands all bruised up. Pretty stupid. Being honest (smiling).

We started the race really good. Halfway through the race, the steering dropped to the left. Every time I braked, went straight. Something broke there, but that's okay.

I mean, affected the car a little bit, but it wasn't too bad until I passed Hawksworth. When I passed Hawksworth, it got really bad. Something let go completely. Before, there was a little bit of play, but not bad.

I backed off. I had a five-second lead, so just take it easy and bring it to the end.

The car had a lot of speed today. It's funny, because if you look at this morning in warmup, we're like P11 or 14 or something. I was like, Wow, doesn't feel that bad.

It's hard when the warmup is so early because the track conditions are very different to what you're going to race, so you have to keep that in mind. I thought we did a fairly good job with that. We knew exactly where we needed to change. I was happy with the car, to be honest.

THE MODERATOR: Early in the race, you were biding your time behind Simon?

JUAN PABLO MONTOYA: I was behind Helio. Helio started having a problem. I passed him. To be honest, when I started running behind Simon, I didn't really even bother trying to close the gap. It's a long race, just save fuel.

We were trying to save a lot of fuel. I was making really good fuel numbers. I was so proud of myself, to be honest. I couldn't believe how good of numbers I was getting, and I was keeping up, so it was good.

With the first exchange, did a really good job on cold tires. I closed the gap. I went from like six seconds to two seconds. In traffic I got even closer. We seemed to have a very similar pace at that point.

I think on black tires, I would say he probably had an even better pace than me. On red tires, I definitely had the upper hand.

THE MODERATOR: Let's open it up for questions.

**Q. Juan, you mentioned saving fuel. Was that part of the reason you spent a long time on black tires during the middle portion of the race?**

JUAN PABLO MONTOYA: To tell you the truth, I think we could have gone a lot longer. I don't know how much longer. When we pitted, I never even got a low fuel alarm at all. I was actually surprised we went in that early. I think it was part of the strategy to make sure people didn't put red tires on and close the gap or something.

To be honest, with years of experience, you learn about it's not how fast you are over a lap, it's how fast you are over, here, 110 laps. I felt we did a really good job.

Last year we had a really fast car. It was hard on rear tires. Today I could get on the gas really hard all day long, and the tires were 100% behind me. That was really nice.

**Q. What about your move when you took the lead?**

JUAN PABLO MONTOYA: It was good, both of them, when I went around Simon and Daly. I'm surprised Simon took that big jump to try to come back. I thought I had him pretty much clear. Oh, no you're not.

I gave him room. I did push him wide a little. But I felt it was pretty fair. Then he did the same thing. But it's okay. We both gave each other room. Close. Left a little mark, but it's okay.

**Q. Your teammate Simon said that he found it easier to be out front than to follow. Did you find that the same?**

JUAN PABLO MONTOYA: For me both was okay. Of course, to be honest, sometimes it's easier to follow because you have a reference where they braking, what they doing. I mean, you can close a lot of the gap there, just brake a little light. You can kind of time it. Actually sometimes when you get to clean track, you go, Where was it?

Honestly, you start using them as reference. The first couple laps, it's like you start braking and you end up braking a lot early to be on the safe side. Like into turn four, I could brake it nearly in the 200 behind him. When I started running up front, I was braking like 260. I never went back to 200. I could do that following them. I don't know why.

It's crazy because you gain a little bit, but you get it

wrong and it stays over. You got to be smart about that.

**Q. Could you explain if you were on the same type of tires as Simon when you passed him.**

JUAN PABLO MONTOYA: I think so. We went red, black, black, red, same as last year.

**Q. Did the red tires hold up?**

JUAN PABLO MONTOYA: Yeah, they did. The first set went off a little bit, not the rears, the front. I think the pressures were too high. I had the same thing with the first set of blacks. I got a big push towards the end of the stint. We lowered the pressure for the second run and it was really good.

**Q. We saw your popularity on display again here today, especially at the stage.**

JUAN PABLO MONTOYA: Shocking, isn't it?

**Q. We saw it last year, too. I'm sure you have it in some other places, too, but do you feed off of that here?**

JUAN PABLO MONTOYA: You can't determine yourself on whether people like you or not. I rather people like me than they don't. Either way, to be honest with you, when you're racing, you don't really care.

It's great you have people come and support you, you have fans that are passionate about what you do. Every time you see more Colombian flags and people paying attention. It's exciting.

**Q. Tim Cindric said earlier this week your win last year showed that you can still do this and you can do it on a course like this. What do you think this year's win does for you going forward?**

JUAN PABLO MONTOYA: It's nice to start the year with a win. You know what I mean? To be honest with you, when you're in Team Penske, there's always that pressure that you got to win races. You have to win. You're in the best car, you got to win races.

So to start the year with a win, it's like, Oh, I got that one out of the way (laughter).

It's fun because I felt we had a really dominant car in the race. It would have been interesting to see how good Will would have been. You compare Helio's pace to ours, I think ours was a little better. Simon and ours was a little closer in setup than the other two. Kind of like two different groups.

**Q. Simon just said that you need to have a perfect race to win in IndyCar. Did you have a perfect race today?**

JUAN PABLO MONTOYA: I had a pretty good race. A

couple of mechanical issues. But I think the good thing was when I was running like 63.3, 63.4 on red tires. I had a one and a half second lead. He started pushing, closing the gap. I started pushing. I went from running 63.3 to 62.6. I picked up like 6/10ths or 7/10ths. I started pushing hard, opened the gap again. He realized I was quicker than him, so he started saving the tires.

Around six I opened 4/10ths, run 90, open the gap, I ran 90s, 90s, then flats, flats, just to keep opening the gap. You just got to be smart.

**Q. You mentioned how your steering wheel...**

JUAN PABLO MONTOYA: It was pretty bad.

**Q. When you pulled in after you won, you were in the car doing this. I couldn't see the tires, but I got the feeling they weren't changing position.**

JUAN PABLO MONTOYA: The left front wasn't moving too much. The problem is something broke on the right front. When I started, I think it's probably from this morning. So I got to blame myself for that one.

It was bad, but not terrible. When I passed Hawksworth, it went clack. I heard it. It went to turn right, all the way 90 degrees, it wouldn't turn. After 90 degrees, it would really turn. I figured out, Go to 90, turn.

**Q. Were you worried it would break all together?**

JUAN PABLO MONTOYA: Yeah, but I was leading. Leading, I'm not risking it. You look at my last three laps, I took it easy. I used the 'push to pass' to make up some time because I had like seven left with three laps to go. Just abuse it on the straight.

I was really careful. The only place that was bad was turn three, right before turn 10, that little kink where Will crashed, and the fast chicane. I just took it easy through there. That was it. It was fine.

**Q. How would you say it affected the team with Will not being able to go? Have you ever been in a situation like that before where something happens like that?**

JUAN PABLO MONTOYA: To be honest, I was surprised he qualified. He wasn't feeling that well before qualifying. To tell you the truth, he qualified really well. He did an amazing job, how sick he was. He did really good.

Yeah, I mean, I think over one lap he does the best job out of the four of us. In race pace, you can cover him. Not easy, but you can cover him. I've done it. But over one lap, it's tough.

**Q. You said since Sonoma last year that not finishing off the championship was nothing you dwell on. Is there a relief factor in winning?**

JUAN PABLO MONTOYA: Winning, yeah. I mean, to come back here after being down, start the season with a win again, it shows everybody, We're here. It's good. I feel like we can get a lot of wins this year.

THE MODERATOR: That will do it. Juan, thank you very much. Congratulations.

JUAN PABLO MONTOYA: Thank you.