

# IndyCar Media Conference

Sunday April 17, 2016

## Simon Pagenaud Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: We'd like to welcome to the podium the winner of today's Toyota Grand Prix of Long Beach, driver of car No. 22, the PPG Automotive Finish Chevrolet for Team Penske, Simon Pagenaud. Simon earned his fifth career victory today, his first with Team Penske, his first win since Houston 2014. He extends his championship lead. Simon, congratulations. Take us through your day.

SIMON PAGENAUD: Yeah, it was a great day, fantastic team effort, once again, on the 22 side. Obviously we made a pretty interesting call on the aerodynamic setup of the car before the race, thanks to Ben Bretzman, my engineer, for pushing me to it, and it worked. We were able to be really aggressive and managed to get some passes done.

And then at the end there, it was the last pit sequence, we managed to make two more laps than Helio and Scott, ran some big laps, and my crew did once again a fantastic pit stop and put me in a position to win the race.

Hats off to my whole crew, to Kyle Moyer, my strategist, as well. I mean, the 22 team is just on it this year, compared to last year. We've just gone a big step forward. I believe there's some more to come, so it feels great, and everybody is just having a good time, too. Great day. First win for Roger, so you guys can't ask me anymore when I'm going to win, so that feels great, too. I can just focus on the job now, so thank you.

THE MODERATOR: You mentioned you started the season with back-to-back second-place finishes, a win today; what do you attribute this to, just being with the team a full year now, or what has taken that next step?

SIMON PAGENAUD: Yeah, I think it's believing in yourself. I mean, I was doing really well with Schmidt before. We had well to do it with Ben Bretzman, and it worked for us, now it was just a matter of finding our position within the team and also build the team. The 22 car was brand new last year, new people coming on board. Some people from the other cars came with us. It was a matter of having everybody work together, just kind of love each other, and things now are going really smoothly.

I'd like to just look at it like any job. When you change jobs, you change cities, you go somewhere, it takes a little bit of time to understand the people you work with, and that's what we did, and I think right now we're on a really good path, just understanding each other really well, and being on the same spirit.

### **Q. Simon, is this more of a relief that you finally got this win with Roger Penske?**

SIMON PAGENAUD: A relief for your questions, yes, but honestly I really didn't care. I knew it was coming because we've been so competitive since the beginning of the year. I knew I could win races. It's not my first win. I've been around. It was just a matter of when, and it's when we were going to put ourselves in that position.

But I've been saying it, consistency is key for me in this championship, and for the way I drive. It might not be exciting to watch. It might not be the most fun to watch, but it works. I'm just going to stick to what I believe in, and when it's time to win, we'll win.

### **Q. Earlier today Helio said it was hard to pass. Obviously it wasn't easy to pass, but where did you pass, and how did you find yourself able to pass?**

SIMON PAGENAUD: Yeah, I had a bad start, but I was able to out-brake Tony at the start of the race, so I got third back, and then we managed to get Dixon on the second lap. We had a lot of straight-line speed in the car, which made it difficult the rest of the track, but I was able to -- with a great setup on the PPG car I was able to stay with them on the infield, and then on the straight I was so fast that I had a run on people. Even when I was behind Helio they just asked me to save fuel, otherwise if I tried, I probably could get the lead back actually at the start of the race because the car was that fast on the straight.

But yeah, and what happened is, like I said, those two laps that I had in clear traffic when Helio and Scott pitted because of traffic was key, and we put some big, big laps in on black tires that worked really well on the car. Then we put the reds on because we wanted the big out lap to protect whatever was going to happen next, and the car stayed really well together to the end of the race.

**Q. When they said your pit exit was under review, was there any time when you were wondering, oh, can I have my magic moment kind of hindered here?**

SIMON PAGENAUD: No, I actually didn't know. Nobody mentioned it. Kyle didn't tell me on the radio. I just focused on the job. I really honestly didn't know it was that close. I wouldn't have changed anything honestly. We're talking -- to make it like an easy call to say it's no penalty or no warning, it would have been that much more. So it just made it great for TV and for you to understand, but actually IndyCar has made it really clear this year what you can and cannot do, and it was certainly on the verge of being a stronger penalty, but I did get a warning. I only did it once in the race. Same for Muñoz. Muñoz did the same thing, so I guess it was a clear understanding for race control.

**Q. We talked before last year about going to Penske, and when you don't reel off that first win when you're driving for Team Penske pretty quickly, does the pressure kind of mount race to race to get that first win? The next question you're going to be sick of, now that you've got your first win, when are you going to get your next one?**

SIMON PAGENAUD: Here we go again. You guys never stop, do you? Well, I guess it's just like racing. You never stop, you always go to the next step, and that's very true. It's a great question.

Listen, I mean, like I said, I'm not somebody who puts a lot of pressure on myself, and I like to just be laser focused on my task, and that's what I've been doing this year. I knew -- I felt it. I felt we were going to be competitive. Every race I come in, I don't really focus on results, I focus on doing my job, and whatever the result is, it's the best I could do at the time. When I don't do that, then I'm upset with myself. Sometimes you might finish sixth and be happy with yourself, and sometimes you win a race and you might not have done the best job.

You know, it is what it is. But certainly there's a lot more to come. I think the team -- my 22 team is tremendous. Certainly one of the strongest right now. I feel like I'm driving really well, so everything -- all the stars are aligned. It's going to be a long championship, you know. We started really well. There's Indy 500 to come. There's a lot to come. We'll just keep focusing on what we want to do, and we'll see what happens.

**Q. About four or five years ago you and I were talking on several occasions before you got your rides in IndyCar, and you said, I get in there, I think I can win. I think I can do this. I believe I can do this, and you got the chance and you've done it.**

SIMON PAGENAUD: Yeah, it's great, a great feeling to

know it, obviously. That's what I work for. That's what all drivers work for is to get to the top step every race. When it happens, it's a really sweet feeling. Most importantly, yeah, it's really nice to win for Roger and have that one checked off the list, so I'm glad that's done.

I always believed I could do it. It's just a matter of being with the right equipment, being in the right situation. Sam Schmidt really helped me to get on the front scene and get recognized by Roger, and then now I've got the car to do it, so I've got the car, I've got the team, I've got everything. So no more excuses, I guess.

**Q. Simon, I know you made it clear, you said IndyCar has made it really clear what you can and can't do, but are you concerned that going forward warnings are kind of a gray area and if you're on the losing end you might get bit by somebody that gets a warning type deal?**

SIMON PAGENAUD: I mean, no, I thought it was -- they've done this manual. They've done a manual that they actually sent to all the drivers, and the drivers' association and IndyCar and the teams actually worked with IndyCar to understand what was going to be a warning, what was going to be a minimum penalty, so a warning, mid-penalty and higher penalty. Each one of those levels has a different consequence.

You know, going into the race, I know the rule book, so I know that that line, I know you can take risks. I know you can get on the limit. It's just racing at the end of the day, and quite frankly, like I said, another inch to the right wouldn't have changed the outcome of the race.

**Q. Remarkably this race stayed green, which is the first time it's happened in many years, and a lot of the drivers are saying it was too quick, and they would like a three-pit race, a lengthened race. What's your take on that?**

SIMON PAGENAUD: I won. I'm happy. (Laughter.)

No, I don't have any -- it was very quick. I mean, it was like -- after 50 laps, I was like, wow, we're almost done here. The pace of the cars are really fast nowadays compared to 10 years ago. The pace is really, really strong. We brake really late. We carry a lot of speed through the corners and pretty fast on the straights, too. We go up to 190 on the straight now.

So yeah, there's a lot of speed. I don't know, personally it was fun for me as a driver because it was pure racing. It was about doing a perfect out lap, being on the limit every lap, so it's certainly not as exciting from outside, but I thought the pit sequence made it exciting. I'm a happy person. I thought our strategy

worked out well, so personally I think the job is done.

**Q. After Phoenix you made a promotional trip into Wisconsin and went up to Tiletown, USA. Did any of that magic rub off on you a little bit because after that trip here you are with your victory?**

SIMON PAGENAUD: I did touch Lombardi's foot at the stadium there, so maybe that's it. Maybe that was my luck. I did get some cheese, too, yeah, as you can imagine.

**Q. Somebody was talking the other day, and they said that part of their problem with passing in a lot of corners is the brakes are so good that you brake way later than you used to and everybody can do it because the brakes are that good. Is that, in fact, a problem when you want to pass where you used to and now it's not so easy?**

SIMON PAGENAUD: Yeah, I think the cars are just -- I mean, actually before the weekend, I study a lot, as you guys know, so I reviewed a lot of onboard cameras from this track, and I reviewed Bourdais's lap from 2003 compared to Helio's lap from last year in qualifying, and it's incredible the difference.

I suggest you guys look at it because our cars are really fast these days. They're a lot faster than we say. Certainly the braking zone is really short, and the aerodynamics are really high, so it's difficult to follow a car.

But this track here has got a long straight, so it allows you to draft and get past in Turn 1. I did it two times today with two fast cars, so it's possible. It's just you kind of have to find different ways to make the car work in straight line.