

# IndyCar Media Conference

Friday April 22, 2016

## Simon Pagenaud

### Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: Simon, first of all, how did the first practice go? Obviously it looks like some weather is moving in, so it might be a marker for you guys in terms of progress heading into tomorrow.

SIMON PAGENAUD: Yeah, this morning was interesting. We worked mostly on race setup. We had a few things we wanted to try from the open test here. The car was behaving pretty well on the tires, actually. It was a very interesting session. The track changed a lot, as well, which it always does at that time of the day between 11:00 and 12:00. It was certainly interesting.

But yeah, it's a shame it's raining because I had something I wanted to try, but I guess we'll have to deal with the weather, and we can always try tomorrow morning before qualifying.

THE MODERATOR: So you can't tell us what you wanted to try then.

SIMON PAGENAUD: You would have to kill me. I won't tell you.

**Q. What's the start of the season been like to you? Obviously probably if not your strongest, one of your strongest starts to a season ever. What's that feel like knowing that you're kind of the one with the target on his back?**

SIMON PAGENAUD: Yeah, it feels great. I mean, I just want to continue that trend. We worked really well over the winter, really hard actually, to get the 22 group perfectly in sync. It's so enjoyable when it actually works out, when you actually get everybody to be on the same page and when things flow so well so easily. I'm so excited to see what's more to come. We still have more in our pocket, so it feels really good. Obviously there will be tough days, and those tough days when we do well, that's going to be the key. We already have a win in our bank, so we just need to keep going like this and score a lot of points, and we'll see where we end up, but so far I'm really, really proud of everybody and really pleased with the progress.

**Q. Barber Motorsports Park, we hear a lot of compliments on its beauty and the challenges that it presents to drivers. What are some of your**

**favorite things about the track?**

SIMON PAGENAUD: I like the racing here because especially on restarts, you get a lot of opportunities to run side by side in Turn 1, Turn 2, Turn 5, even entry of Turn 8, so the first lap is very exciting. You can make a move. The weather every year is playing a card, as well, and I kind of like that. That's racing. You've got to play with the elements, and I remember I think it was 2014 when it rained at the beginning of the race and then it was dry at the end. I just love that kind of racing. I wouldn't mind a weekend like that.

**Q. You won last week in Long Beach; what are you trying to do to keep that momentum going into this week?**

SIMON PAGENAUD: Yeah, we come off three strong results with two seconds and a first place, so we're just going to keep focusing on the task, on the job like we've been doing, and just try to execute. I mean, qualifying is very important, but then the race car has to suit me for me to extract the best out of it, and then it's all down to strategy, me getting the fuel save that the guys need for good strategy. When I'm comfortable, we can do that pretty easily. We just need to stay focused and do the same thing, don't get too excited, and just have fun.

**Q. Yesterday IndyCar officials announced the Fast Six is only going to be six minutes now, so I guess it really is a Fast Six. Four less minutes? How much more urgency do you think that's going to create?**

SIMON PAGENAUD: Well, it doesn't really change much because at the end of the day, it's a six-minute guarantee, where before it could have been only two minutes of running, considering the rules, so it's fine. I mean, it doesn't really change the whole game. At the end of the day, you still have to do your fast lap, and now the difference is strategy like Helio and Roger had last weekend paid off for them. That's not going to be the case anymore because now everybody is going to get a chance to do his lap.

For example, we were on the other side of the deal last weekend. It could have been really bad for us because we didn't have a lap in before the red. Now it's not going to be the case anymore. Everybody is going to have a chance.

**Q. Simon, you're on the Drivers' Council. How well received were the changes with pit exit commitment line? How well received was that change?**

SIMON PAGENAUD: There wasn't much talk after Long Beach between the drivers, so I couldn't really comment on that. But I think at the end of the day, it's clear for everybody what we can and cannot do. As long as it's black and white for the drivers, it's pretty good. That's what we like. I would say personally, I think it's a good thing.

**Q. You talked about last year and things not falling into place. Obviously same team, same group. The difference between what was an off-season for you one would consider and this tremendous start you have, the difference with the team and how you relate with the team.**

SIMON PAGENAUD: I think it's more knowing each other. We basically brought people from outside last year to start this new team. Again, it's a fourth car. It's the first time the team fielded a fourth car for us, so we had to bring people over. They took people from the other cars, as well, to build that 22 team. Took us a while to hit the ground running and understand each other really well.

Now engineering strategy, the data guys, the mechanics, they all get along really well, so things are easy. It's just like when you start a new job at a new place. It takes time to understand how to get things flowing. That's exactly what we're doing right now. I would say that's the main difference, because quite frankly, we had the pace last year, we just didn't execute completely.

**Q. Passing is at a premium at this track, so how important is qualifying going into Sunday's race?**

SIMON PAGENAUD: Yeah, especially with the way the racing is right now with IndyCars. I mean, I'll tell you, this is the most fun I've ever had driving the IndyCars. It's really, really fast. The racing is a little bit more difficult because of all the aerodynamic we have on it, but the nature of IndyCar racing is still there. We can still be very aggressive. We have a lot of Push-to-Pass. We can make passes like I did in Long Beach, for example.

Here it's important to qualify up front because of how fast we run around the racetrack. If, like I said, it depends what's going to happen, if there are any incidents, that will create a lot of actions with safety car.

**Q. Simon, when you came back here for the first time a few years ago in 2011 when it was a fill-in role and you got called up last minute, how much did that performance help lead you on this road**

**back into getting in a full-time seat the following year?**

SIMON PAGENAUD: Yeah, I think actually it's a really good question. 2011, that race here was probably what propelled my IndyCar career. I don't think I would have had a chance with Schmidt if I didn't have this opportunity to show what I could do here with Dreyer & Reinbold, so yeah, I finished eighth in that race just behind Helio. It was amazing. We started at the back. I had never drove this car before, never been at this track, so it was an amazing weekend. Everybody was really happy. And then it got me the chance to drive again to replace Justin in mid-Ohio. That was a strong run, and it got me another opportunity at Sonoma for HVM that same year. By then things were already done with Sam, so that really helped me to get ready for 2012, and then the three years at Schmidt were really useful to understand the game. Now I'm definitely in a different level, at a different level of my game. Things are a lot easier to understand. It's just like a chess game. But it's like if you had different rules of chess game. You just have to understand all the details before you can perfect it.

**Q. Regarding Barber, this particular track, what would be the top three things that affect the ultimate outcome of the race?**

SIMON PAGENAUD: That's a good question. I think what's difficult here is all the elevation changes makes it very difficult on us because it's a lot of corners are blinded, and at the speed we're traveling, you have to be inches perfect. It certainly makes it very difficult. The G-forces are really high in the IndyCars, so it's another component. The physical aspect is pretty much a very important one. And then confidence, I think, because you have to throw yourself through the corner with full confidence in yourself and your machine.