

# IndyCar Media Conference

Sunday April 24, 2016

## Simon Pagenaud Post-Race Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: We'll go ahead and continue with our Verizon IndyCar Series media availability. We're joined now by our race winner, Simon Pagenaud, driving the No. 22 PPG Team Penske car.

Congratulations on back-to-back wins for you. Also Team Penske's 180th career IndyCar victory. First of all, take us through those last few laps. I know your mind must have been going in all kinds of different directions.

SIMON PAGENAUD: Yeah, it was interesting with Graham there. We decided to make it exciting for the fans at the end. I guess we had a terrific race. The PPG Chevy car was just fast on the stint today. I was very comfortable on all sorts of tires. The black tires were working really well. The red tires were really good, as well.

The pit sequence actually worked out really well for us, even though we were stuck in traffic halfway through the race, and then that was a bit of an issue because I could have really gone. But once you're behind someone, even if that someone is eighth tenths slower than you, you can't really pass. And you obviously have to be really careful about the tire degradation when you're behind someone. So ultimately I couldn't really create the gap I wanted to create.

But in the end, Graham really caught up, and he gave me a good piece of driving that was amazing from him. I put my hat off to him for that. He got me really excited, and I wouldn't say that -- the redness came up after I went off track. I said, yeah, I'm going to get that one back no matter what. We had so much pace in the car that I could get back to him, and then it was about being aggressive. He got a little too aggressive over the curb, and that was my chance.

THE MODERATOR: Obviously the race started under yellow, but another pretty much green flag race all the way through. What additional challenges does that present to you as a driver?

SIMON PAGENAUD: Obviously the IndyCars right now are the most physical we've had it. There's more downforce than ever. The cars are a lot more fun to drive than they've ever been. The race is really high pace. The steering wheel, we don't have power

steering, so the steering wheel is really, really heavy. As the race goes on, the steering wheel gets heavier and heavier, and every time you put a new set of Firestone tires, again, it gets heavier. So by the end of the race, you're pretty much cooked.

You've got to find your -- you've got to pick up your time when you really want to push it to max attack, and other times you try to rest a little bit. I'm talking about 1 percent because you've got to be flat chat (phonetic) pretty much the whole time.

So it was very challenging physically. Traffic is obviously a big challenge, as well, you know, dealing with the back markers. The rules allow them to fight against the leader to stay on the lead lap, so it makes it very difficult for the leader, but it's understandable on their side, so it is what it is. I guess it was great racing in the end.

**Q. Either way, should the race officials have called something with you and Graham approaching Turn 8?**

SIMON PAGENAUD: Well, I don't know. I've got to see the review. I didn't think it was the wrong side. I couldn't see that he was next to me when I went for Turn 8, and that was pretty much causing the entry there. I felt like I was being pushed. I don't know, I don't want to sound like -- I've obviously had enough of that. It was just a great race, and it was a great battle.

**Q. He said you blocked, by the way.**

SIMON PAGENAUD: Okay, fine. I won't answer.

**Q. It took you over a year to get your first Team Penske win. Now it only took you a week to get your second. How does it feel to back it up that quickly?**

SIMON PAGENAUD: It feels great. I've got to tell you guys, the biggest thing is when your work pays off, when you work so hard and it pays off like this, it's so rewarding. You feel so grateful. I'm very thankful for my position right now, for being in this team. They give me the best car. My engineer for the digitation, he shows every day, working so many hours with a little baby at home. Kyle Moyer, for just understanding the kind of driver I am and trying to just bring his top game every day for the strategy. That's something you need to learn, and we get along really well now.

First and foremost, it's the crew. Pit stops are just flawless. We never think about it anymore. We don't even think about are we going to be in the pits. It's just, no, are we going to be T1 in the pits this time. So it's the whole team, and it's not just me. I'm definitely driving my best right now, but they're also doing the best job they can do.

**Q. You mentioned that Graham went up on the curb and gave you a chance. Did you know he had run into another car and had damaged his wing and was kind of a sitting duck there?**

SIMON PAGENAUD: Kyle told me that he had a damaged front wing, and then when he was coming back -- when he was gaining time on me when I was behind, I believe it was Mikhail or Seb, I could see his line in Turn 2 was really strange. I could see he was going really wide, so I knew even if he passed me, that would be my chance back, Turn 2. I knew he was struggling there, but he looked pretty good everywhere else. It's not like he was struggling that much. Then when he got around me, then I saw that he was really, really struggling in 2, and that was going my chance.

**Q. He ended up hitting Hawksworth while he was leading and damaged the wing a second time after he had already passed you.**

SIMON PAGENAUD: Yeah, I didn't know about that. No, I just saw that he went in the grass. I did see something flying when he went in the grass in Turn 9, and then I took my chance right away. I knew he was struggling. I saw that he wasn't confident in his car, so I took a chance right there.

**Q. How difficult was the middle portion of the race when you were kind of stuck behind Conor? Did you think he should move over, or was he fair to defend his position?**

SIMON PAGENAUD: I've been in that position before. I was there. It's the judgment call from the driver. It's the rules. He's just playing by the rules, and that's his right. I used to get upset about it, but now I understand better that it's the rules, and if there was a yellow, he would have been back with a chance to do better. So I get it. Is it frustrating? Absolutely. I was very frustrated. But I was trying to keep my tires underneath me. I could see my gap melting. It's just a shame we don't have the Lucky Dog because then you could really race, and it would be more respectful between drivers, also. But that's another topic.

But he did everything by the rules, and I have nothing to be upset about.

**Q. Team Penske won both big races at Indy last year with Will Power winning the Grand Prix and**

**Juan winning the Indy 500. You won the first Grand Prix there. This roll could continue all the way into June. Just talk about what's out there within your reach.**

SIMON PAGENAUD: Yeah, I've been thinking about the Indy Grand Prix for a while because that is one of my favorite tracks, certainly favorite road course, and great memories from winning the inaugural Grand Prix there. It's the kickoff for the month of May. Great memories from the Indy 500 last year, leading a lot of laps. I'm very excited for May.

I'm actually relieved that we are about to get to May. I'm going to work really hard the next two weeks with Ben to try to understand how we can just do exactly what we did today at the Indy Grand Prix, and then it's going to be oval time, superspeedways, so it's going to be a different story, so just have to work and study.

**Q. Do you think that being in this environment at Team Penske for a full season has actually helped you kind of relax a little bit and now we're seeing the fruits of your labor with two straight wins?**

SIMON PAGENAUD: Can you say the beginning?

**Q. Being in Team Penske for an entire year, you moved to an entirely different environment, you're able to relax now and get used to being there for a while. Has it ultimately come about now that you're more relaxed and are used to being in Team Penske for a while now?**

SIMON PAGENAUD: Yeah, absolutely. I think I said this already, but it is a big move to go to a team like this. It's not as simple as you would think to put one of the good drivers on the best team. That doesn't mean he's going to win right away. All I had to do is basically do a little homework, work with my crew, my engineer, my strategist, to optimize everybody, optimize myself, too, and I think that's exactly what we did this winter.

Confidence was up during the winter because testing went well. We went back to what worked at Schmidt for me, talking about the approach of the weekend, talking about the approach of testing in the winter, and there you are. Now it's working.

**Q. Are you expecting anything different from the competition because you're entering the month of May ahead of everybody and having four very strong runs, being the favorite going forward so far?**

SIMON PAGENAUD: I think for the Angie's List Grand Prix we'll be strong. I think our cars show a lot of pace in this situation. It's going to be a lower downforce package, so the Chevys should be pretty strong, as well.

Like I said, it's a track that really suits me. I'm hoping to be at the same level. Now the competition will catch back again. That's the thing with Team Penske, we started so strong, now the competition is just going to catch up all year long, so the more points we can score now, the best.

And then Indy, obviously I would say at Indy, Juan Pablo's favorite and Dixon's for sure, so we'll just try to be one of those favorites, too.

**Q. Speaking of Juan Pablo, the old guy starts last and finishes fifth. What did you think of that?**

SIMON PAGENAUD: Yeah, it's so amazing. How did he do that? Yeah, I guess he was hungry. I don't know. I don't know, I have to obviously watch the race to understand the strategy, but great job. That's amazing.

Did he do four stops? No? Wow.

**Q. Can you explain why the Grand Prix of Indy is one of your favorite tracks? Does it have to do with the length of the straightaways? It seems like it's fairly flat.**

SIMON PAGENAUD: It's for the rhythm, the rhythm of the track, the way it throws speed, but it also has a lot of very hard braking zones, and some -- and the fact that it's flat, I actually like that. I don't really enjoy elevation changes. For me visual is very important, so that's why I love that track, and just, like I said, I just love the rhythm. I've lived there for nine years, too, so I've got good memories in Indy.