

IndyCar Media

Conference

Saturday May 14, 2016

Simon Pagenaud

Helio Castroneves

James Hinchcliffe

Press Conference



HELIO CASTRONEVES: Roger was on the radio, a little bit exciting, as well. I was like, okay, I can see him (laughing). I was trying to tell him, but I didn't have time, because every time, he was talking mostly all the time, so I couldn't -- I was like keep him -- okay, I know.

But one thing, I want to thank obviously hum by Verizon and the entire Team Penske because -- and again, congrats to Simon. This guy, I've got to find out what he's drinking. It must be some special wine.

JAMES HINCHCLIFFE: When you find out, would you share it with me, too?

HELIO CASTRONEVES: Not at all. I'll keep it for myself.

JAMES HINCHCLIFFE: Worth trying. Worth asking.

HELIO CASTRONEVES: And the team did a very good job. We changed everything. We started the weekend with lots of brake issues, and going to qualifying, we had the same issue.

For the warmup, we changed everything and we felt they were good but it didn't seem to show up in times. But definitely in the race, we were putting good lap times, especially with the Reds. Definitely my car, it's alive in Reds and I really like that.

Through the entire race, I was pushing. I don't think this was a race saving a lot of fuel for us, and obviously with a little bit of luck with the yellow, it put us in this position of second place.

Definitely Simon was too fast. I saw when he was behind me, that he was just playing with me. But nothing could do it. He was like coming close and staying the distance, and I said it, well, hopefully in and out will be good enough, but unfortunately it wasn't.

THE MODERATOR: I expect everyone wants to know how the cold seemed to effect grip. Was that much of an issue?

HELIO CASTRONEVES: For me, it was more -- I believe for everybody, but coming out of the pits, we practice here with the track, it was a little bit cold, but not as cold today. But the sunshine; we never had the

THE MODERATOR: Congratulations, given all that you've gone through to come back to Indianapolis and finish on the podium, yeah, I know you want to win, but it's still a pretty darned good day.

JAMES HINCHCLIFFE: Definitely, I'm super proud of the #5 car, everybody on the Arrow Electronics team has done such a good job the last few races. The momentum has really been rolling with us. We had a great race in Long Beach, great race in Barber, better race here. Missed all of first practice and still managed to get the car out there and qualify in the second row, race our way to a podium.

Wasn't easy. There was a lot of back and forth there. Some great racing, great work in the pits. Can't thank the guys enough for the pit stop. That second stop was just killer. Unfortunately I couldn't quite stay in front of Simon there.

But had a great battle with Charlie a couple times there side-by-side for a few corners, and it was nice not having to save fuel. Just getting to go and drive a race hard and push this thing every lap and have some great battles along the way. Huge credit to Honda; obviously there's a big upturn in form there, and really proud of the effort those guys have done.

Big congrats to Simon. Three in a row is pretty impressive, and Helio coming from where he started, he was doing decent, came back at the end. We caught up to him but couldn't quite get by him. As you said, catching him is one thing, passing him is another. But no, great effort from the guys all around.

THE MODERATOR: Helio, joins us, as well. It dawned on me, we normally are in some form or fashion here to wish you a happy birthday. We missed that this year.

Hinch mentioned, it got pretty tight there at the end. He was right on you but soldiered on for a good runner-up finish.

sunshine today, and probably the temperature on the track was really low. And that's why when every time you come out of the pits, I heard a lot of people getting caught with the pits coming out. That's probably one of the reasons.

But anyway, in the end, that was the main thing for me. Other than that, was fine.

THE MODERATOR: I'm assuming you agree with that assessment?

JAMES HINCHCLIFFE: One hundred percent. Like he said, you practice out laps all weekend in conditions considerably warmer than this, and then you come in for that first stop, you fly out of the pits, and oh, all right, this is different. I don't know if it caught anybody yet, but it was tough, though, to get back up to speed. These Firestones work great, but they need a little bit of heat before they really kick in.

Q. When you beat Simon out of the pits, did you think that you could hold him off or did you think, how long is it going to take for him to track me down?

JAMES HINCHCLIFFE: At that point it was still early in the race, and the way the pit cycle worked out, we weren't at the front of the field. It would have been a different story had we restarted up front. I got a little bit snookered on that restart and kind of got slowed up by both Charlie and Simon. I kind of felt bad, because all of the hard work of the guys in the pits is almost negated right away, but we were able to get Charlie back later in that sint.

Simon, though, he was kind of in a class of his own. I don't know if we would have had enough for him. Either way it, would have been tough, because there's no doubt he's very strong.

Q. How much does this result feel better than know low last year? I realize it was a win but it was strategy; whereas, this was performance all weekend.

JAMES HINCHCLIFFE: A win always feels better, I'll be honest (Laughter). Helio can agree with that one.

But no, for sure, to start in the second row was great and to be able to stay up there all day long, to have good pace at the end of the race there, like I said, I don't think we had quite enough to do anything with Simon. But we maybe could have at least kept up with him, and that's huge. It shows huge gains on the team's side, on the manufacture's side, and in certain ways, it's more rewarding, but a win is still a win, let's be honest, you know.

Q. Two questions for you, James. No. 1, just watching the race on television, you seem to be flying when your teammate, my impression, was struggling. How identical is the setup?

JAMES HINCHCLIFFE: Honestly, here, him and I did actually have one pretty fundamental difference. Normally we end up pretty close. There was one kind of underlying thing that he prefers over me at a circuit like this. So that could have made a difference certainly, I don't know.

He showed pretty good pace in qualifying. Got into Q2 for the first time in the year, so he's improving, and obviously it was working for him in practice and qualifying. Haven't spoken to him yet since the end of the race to know how his race went.

Q. You mentioned earlier you missed the pre-practice. Can you give more details about that?

JAMES HINCHCLIFFE: We had a mechanical issue with the car, a sensor kind of went bad, but it was one of those sensors that you need to have for the thing to run. And unfortunately it was buried very deep in the car and we had to peel the whole thing apart. We even missed ten minutes of second practice because it took all of three hours to get the thing pulled apart, fixed and put back together.

Q. James, how much more meaning does this result give you knowing that the proceeds will go to help benefit those up in Fort McMurray?

JAMES HINCHCLIFFE: It was a good day to have a good day with, what was happening up there, it was tough to watch, and with Ric Peterson, one of my team owners, his business is based kind of up in that part of the country. And Petro-Canada has a lot of people on the ground in Fort-Mac, and it's terrible what happened to that place.

It's small, but like I said, it's a good day to have a good day and hopefully the little bit that we are contributing, it's obviously going to a good cause and hopefully it can help out.

Q. At Media Day back in February, you said you would not get full closure from last year's accident until you raced here again. Is that chapter now closed?

JAMES HINCHCLIFFE: Yeah, honestly in my mind, yeah. For me, such a big part of it was just getting back into a race car. So 99 percent of that for me was done back in September.

But you know, to come back here and get back on the practice, and we've tested here obviously on the oval and we're going to be back on the oval in 48 hours, and for me, it's over and done with. It's in the past. So far,

the present is working out pretty well.

Q. Second place, I know you're good teammates, say all the right things about Simon, congrats to your teammate, but part of you has to be a little selfish, doesn't it?

HELIO CASTRONEVES: Well, you know, like I said, sometimes you're the windshield, and sometimes you're the bug.

You know, even that second place, it's not the way you want it but I'll take it. If you were to tell me the beginning of the race, I'll finish second place -- no, I need a lot of luck.

I see it this way. Most of the weekends, we have a very good performance and unfortunately this weekend because of the issue with the brakes we didn't find a good balance. You know, once you go out there in the race and you get the rhythm, it turned out to be not so bad. So everything we did, it's actually not bad.

But now, we've got to forget about it. We've got to move on. We've got to study for next year, why we start the weekends in such a bad way, and things like that -- or even in the next event, road course. At this point, like I say, we are going to enjoy it, yes. It's tough, because Simon win three in a row, which is incredible. But we got to remember, we still double points in the Indy 500 and the end of the season, so there is a lot of things going on that it can help.

And I won't stop believing. I know that we can win the championship, even though Simon has a lot of points ahead of us, but I won't stop believing. From now, we are going to be just thinking about the Indy 500 but we celebrate a little bit this podium.

Q. For both gentlemen, besides the wine, what has made Simon so effective? Three wins in a row, we haven't seen that I think in three years since Dixon did it. What does he have going for him now that maybe he didn't have in the past?

HELIO CASTRONEVES: Well, he's a talent. In the past he won races before. Last year he didn't have much of a great season. He's moving teams, and this year, everything is happening for him. Qualifying, he's hitting the right notes, getting ready every weekend. When you have someone with that momentum, the whole entire team, the group, it's very difficult sometimes to put a stop.

But he will stop. I mean, we're going to try to find a way to stop him, and I'm sure other guys are thinking the same way, we've got to stop this guy. But at the moment, he's definitely carried this great momentum and good for him.

JAMES HINCHCLIFFE: I think Helio hits a lot of the points. I think it was more a shock last year that he didn't win a race.

So maybe he's making up for lost time. He's obviously got a great team, great teammates, great car and he's capitalized on some great opportunities. A couple of the big hitters had problems in qualifying this weekend, to the benefit of all of us this weekend, the rest of us.

But no, he's executing really well. He's been aggressive when he has to, calculated when he has to, and that's what it takes to win races at this level. I think he's always had it in him.

I think last year was probably more the anomaly than this year, but as Helio said, it was about 22 other guys trying really hard to end this streak as quickly as possible.

Q. What do you have to do to stop Simon right now?

HELIO CASTRONEVES: Maybe give him some Canadian wine.

JAMES HINCHCLIFFE: Give him some Canadian beer because it's way stronger than the beer here --

HELIO CASTRONEVES: -- or need to have a drink that can --

JAMES HINCHCLIFFE: Yeah, we'll think of something. We'll think of something -- no, that's what we meant (Laughter). It's a hundred percent.

HELIO CASTRONEVES: Yeah, I was right behind you man, yes (laughing).

JAMES HINCHCLIFFE: I just think it's going to take someone else to have a perfect day. To win these races, you have to have mistake-free days, and he's had a couple of those in a row, starting from good positions. Obviously like I said good team, good car, you qualify well and you're up front, and if you executing you're going to be in contention.

So I think it's -- I mean, he's beatable, for sure. It's not like Formula One with the Mercedes team. This is a very attainable goal. It's fallen his way the last couple but racing is a fickle business and we'll see. Hopefully the tides turn a little bit in someone else's favor.

Q. You're talking about Pagnaud. We have the 100th race, which is getting attention. How much would it mean to each of you to win that race?

JAMES HINCHCLIFFE: As a three-time winner, I'll let Helio --

HELIO CASTRONEVES: Thank you, Mr. Hinchcliffe. Appreciate that.

Let me say one thing: This place is incredible. I see that not only Indianapolis people, but also the entire town and entire people. And the community, actually, is embracing this 100th, and actually big thumbs up for the entire community, because they are the ones that kept this tradition alive.

I think that's one of the reasons it's going to be big. In my case, I have a very good opportunity here to do something that only three guys were able to do. You know, despite it's me, how cool would it be in history -- don't you think it would be really cool?

JAMES HINCHCLIFFE: A little bit (laughter).

HELIO CASTRONEVES: I think a lot of the generation haven't seen someone win four times. But I know everybody is really putting a lot of effort, not only in the drivers but also in the teams and sponsors, everyone. Because it's a special day.

For us drivers, I think Hinch might agree with me, but we understand the tradition. We never forget about this one. But once you close the visor, it's another race that we've got to make it happen.

It would be great. It would be great to put all the numbers together and that's what we're going for.

JAMES HINCHCLIFFE: Yeah, I think -- I don't care if it's the 82nd or 104th, you couldn't to win this race, right. But the 100th is a little extra special. It does have a little bit more attention to it. To win your first, on that one, would be incredible; to win your fourth on that one would be obviously incredible.

So I think there's a lot of -- there's 33 people that are obviously thinking how great it could be to get your face back -- either on that trophy or back on that trophy.

We'll see. I think the driver that wins this one is going to be remembered in the same way that Ray Harroun is known. Not a lot of people remember the 50th or the 93rd or whatever, no offense. (Laughter).

But if you want to -- (inaudible) (laughter) they will know you (Laughter). Graham Hill -- no, I'm James Hinchcliffe -- I won the 50th. There you go. I like this sport. I didn't even know that.

Q. A few months back, Rick Mears had talked about after he won his third 500, he was content, and he didn't think he could get a fourth, and then it turns out the fourth was the best of them all. Has he

talked to you about that, because you're in that position now.

HELIO CASTRONEVES: We mention, we talk about it, but we don't talk about like, hey, this has got to be this one. We've been here since 2009, since I won three times, it's been the same conversation, and unfortunately we are not right there.

But we are going to try everything we can again. We have the team, we have the people, we have the equipment, and hopefully we can give Mr. Penske another win.

THE MODERATOR: I think we are going to let Helio go and let Hinch go get his medication. (Laughter).

We welcome Simon Pagenaud, winner of the Grand Prix of Indianapolis. Pretty good day, tell us about it, Simon. You were dominant for many stretches, but also had to fight back a little bit.

SIMON PAGENAUD: Yeah, it was -- well, I haven't watched the race, but from my seat, it was pretty exciting.

Obviously the first stint went smoothly. I was very worried and anxious before the race as to how it was going to work it in turn one. So I decided to take the inside and brake as right as I could. It worked from the first start, and we had another restart, which was a bit of a worry again, but issue (ph) same thing and get away.

Then I was -- basically, we had a lot of pace in the Menards car today, so it was -- save tires, save fuel and try to put a gap to be in a safe area for pitting for the pit sequence. We realized very quickly that it was better to pit later, because the temperature is so low that the out lap was very difficult on the tires just to get them energized and grip.

So the first sequence, ^ Kemp bow did a very good job and got us on the pit sequence. We were able to get the lead back, and from there, we got a bit unlucky with the yellow but that's INDYCAR Racing. You have to be ready for this kind of situation.

We are still looking good in fourth there. We managed to get around Hinchcliffe on the restart and followed Helio. He had a really good pace going, and Daly was doing a tremendous job, as well.

The biggest key of the race for us was the last pit sequence where we had more fuel in the car, so I knew I could have two or three laps where I could really push it. And those two, three laps were pretty big. And came back to pit lane; the way to pit lane was it was a bit of rally-cross driving there. I got us enough gap to

make the pit stop. Credit to the team again, just like they have been doing all year long. It's not just me. They did an incredible job in the pit lane at getting me out there.

Strategy was magic again by Kyle Moyer, and the car was heroic (ph). So I had a great time.

Q. You've won three in a row now, you've had to have won three in a row in other series perhaps but what does winning three in a row mean to you?

SIMON PAGENAUD: It's incredible right now. The momentum we have now, this little domination that we are having is incredible. Because not only because you don't see this happen often, but also, because it's the Verizon INDYCAR Series, and you guys saw it in qualifying yesterday: We had 22 cars in 6/10ths of a second.

So when you can perfect weekends like that several times in one race season is incredible. The level of the talent -- the level of talent that teams have, that drivers have, is incredible.

Certainly it feels like being on a cloud, living a little bit of a dream. I'm just super excited, and I'll tell you, one of the biggest things, the first thing that came to my mind is having this Menards livery and winning with it here on the Speedway. It feels very special because of the legacy it has and associating it to Team Penske name is incredible. Being that driver is also an honor, and being able to win with it was very special the last few laps, so I'm very thankful.

Q. I have a technical question for you. You mentioned the tires, if I understood it correctly, quite difficult to get temperatures. What's the situation generally with the car, with a sensitive race car like open-wheel INDYCAR? Can you feel the behavior is different in cold temperatures and hot temperatures?

SIMON PAGENAUD: Yeah, definitely, it's very different this afternoon to the way it was yesterday. Thanks to my sports car experience, I've experienced a lot of out laps like today in INDYCARs. But usually the tires, they come up a lot quicker because we usually run in much higher temperature.

Definitely my stints in sports cars in the morning in this situation really helped. And you've really got to get it done, even if it's slippery. Certainly the tires, they did a tremendous job today. I mean, the situation, the temperature is so low; this tire is not supposed to work in this temperature but they behaved really well. We had really good durability on them. And the Red tires were obviously working the best in these conditions.

The last stint, I had some new Firestone tires, so those felt really good.

Q. Forgive me for listening into your crew communications there, but on the last stint there, was a lot of talk on your radio about fuel mileage and trying to dial back the number. Could you take us through the last stint there and kind of give us some of your thoughts on how that went and how the fuel saving and all the tires, which you already described went?

SIMON PAGENAUD: Well, the advantage is we kept our best tires for the end of the race, knowing that's when we wanted to be the most performance. So I knew when I was going to get those tires that I could really push it. And when I put those tires on the car, it was magical.

So then they asked me to save fuel for safety and just to make sure that we don't fail post tech with weight, things like that, and also just to be safe is there is a restart and then we can go full blast.

I don't know exactly how much fuel they put in on the last stop. Maybe they short fuel, I have no idea, but I have to save too much to make it. It wasn't like 2014, lifting down the middle of the straight. It was okay. It was totally easy to do and we still had pace in it. So I believe I was within 2/10ths of my fastest time. It was okay, and again with the new tires, it really helped.

Q. Did you wait for the right time to size him up for the pass?

SIMON PAGENAUD: Yeah, when I saw him get me, it was like, well, how did he do that. And Kyle Moyer, I asked him, "How did he do it? We had a good pit stop. What just happened?" And he said they short fueled. So, okay. If they short fueled, there's still a pit stop to go, he will still have to pit early, so we should have an advantage.

The biggest thing is I wanted to get ahead of him on the restart, which we did, so I could get after Helio and Daly. Because I didn't know Helio -- I knew Helio had a good brake on that yellow and the restart. So I knew he had enough fuel to make it and that he was going to be the challenger. I just wanted to get on a good train.

Q. What about having the race run last in the program and having the three support races beforehand? I'm thinking, how much have the support races laid down rubber today helped compensate for what rubber got washed away overnight in the rain?

SIMON PAGENAUD: It certainly helped. This morning, the warm up was quite tricky, but it was very similar. I mean, Indy Lights, they do put some rubber on the

racetrack but it's not as much as we do put on because of the power of the car, the softness of our tires compared to theirs.

Definitely the first stint, that's where we went on Red tires. We were worried about tire grip, about grip of the racetrack. But I was very surprised right away. The car felt really nice, just down on grip compared to yesterday, but that was the same for everybody.

Q. In the early days of the 500, French racemen won several times. What would it mean to you to finally get another Frenchman's picture on the trophy?

SIMON PAGENAUD: That would be good. Obviously I'm very happy about the beginning of our season. The contention for the championship is very important to me, and obviously we've done that so far. But we've got to keep our head down. The big one is coming, the Crown Jewel. I like to call it that way, the Crown Jewel of racing. To me, it's the best race in the world, the most famous, the most prestigious, and it's special really to be a part of it.

I'm in a car that can win the race and with a team that knows how to win that race. I'm just going to put my head down next week. It certainly would mean -- it would be the accomplishment of my career, personally, if I can put my name on that one, some day. I would just be complete personally. That doesn't mean I wouldn't want to do it again (Laughter). But I would definitely be complete, and that has been my life goal, really, winning that one, winning Le Mans someday; those two are definitely on my mind as my life goal, you know. And I live to be a race car driver.

Q. You've been in this position before, winning the Grand Prix and heading into the bigger picture you just spoke about. Momentum, going from road courses to oval, and the biggest oval on the schedule obviously. Do you really take a lot of, oh, we've won three races heading into the 500, or is it a completely different monster and you have to leave everything else off the plate and focus as if it's the first race of the season?

SIMON PAGENAUD: Yeah, that's a very good question. Nice put -- nicely put. It's a completely different beast like you said. When we start on Monday, you're working with a different aero package, you're working with different tires, Firestone brings us the Super Speedway tires, and I love the way they behave, actually. But we also have a car that's a bit different to how it was last year, with the aero kit, Chevrolet aero kit. We have more power from the engines with the evolution. We have the dome skid which is a safety device which is great but it does take that way grip.

So we are going to have to work around that, and it's not like we are take the car from last year, and go ahead and race. It's probably not going to work. So we are going to have to work around that, make it the most comfortable possible for me to be in a position like today to attack.

Where I think it brings us today is confidence, confidence for me as a driver, being able to play the game in your head during the race was something that I've been doing really well this year. So I think I feel very clear in my head during the race, which is really good. Also as a team, it's just execution has been perfect for everybody.

So I think going into the biggest race of the year, where we have the most pressure, I think the knowledge that we have the confidence is a huge advantage, maybe unfair advantage.

THE MODERATOR: Congratulations and based on our previous press conference, James Hinchcliffe offered you something to drink, don't touch it (Laughter).