

IndyCar Media Conference

Saturday July 9, 2016

Helio Castroneves Will Power Simon Pagenaud Juan Pablo Montoya Press Conference

THE MODERATOR: We are pleased to be joined by Team Penske, and Will Power is on his way.

Juan, we'll start with you. We are here at Iowa Speedway, just a couple of starts here, but it's not a track that's been too kind to you here. What are some of the more challenging aspects of being here at Iowa Speedway?

JUAN PABLO MONTOYA: I think that we have been really competitive here. First year, I was really quick in practice, and I had a huge run in qualifying, finished seventh in the back. I got to the front, the rear wing delaminated, the end plate, so we changed the rear wing. Got back to the front and I was starting ahead, and he turned down on me and we touch each other, end up on the wall.

Last year I think I was running fourth and the right front suspension with the extra load broke and I hit a wall. So two-for-two. Hopefully this year, we can have a good race. I thought we had a really test here. I think we all found a few things that made the car very competitive. So it should be exciting. It's a fun, short oval, because you have -- you really have two crews, so you can run side-by-side. It makes it a little more interesting.

THE MODERATOR: And Helio, kind of the opposite story for you. You've had quite the success here, two poles. You've led a lot of laps and you're second in points behind your teammate. Do you feel like this track is a good opportunity to make up even more points?

HELIO CASTRONEVES: Yeah, that's for sure. We didn't get a win yet. So we really want to -- you can go. Go.

JUAN PABLO MONTOYA: Can I go?



HELIO CASTRONEVES: He has to go to a drug test. Make sure you get the bag, not the bag on the side.

So let's start our press conference now, now we are like less stressful. Sorry, back to the question.

We've been close many times, and I do feel like it could be a position for us to catch our teammates here. The good news is Team Penske is one, two, three, and that's our goal to keep going all the way to the end of the season. But we have a big test here.

Obviously some teams, it's been very good in the past. So we want to make sure that we don't let those scenarios happen again, and looking forward to another good result. But definitely we had a good test here a week ago, so as a team, as Juan Pablo said, my car seems to be really good balanced as well. We are looking forward to a great day here and a great weekend here for the entire Team Penske.

THE MODERATOR: Simon, a few road bumps since the first five races of the season but you still have a fairly large lead over your teammates. What are you looking forward here at Iowa Speedway, and how are you approaching kind of the -- we are past the halfway mark and we are kind of in the home stretch.

SIMON PAGENAUD: So far, it's been an interesting season. Lots of ups, a few downs lately with some mechanical issues, but overall the 22 team has been incredible all year. I feel like wherever we go, we've been strong, in position to win or finish in the Top-5. So I think that's what you want to do as a championship contender.

Now there's seven races to go. Iowa is a place that I really like. Usually have always had good times here, except last year. So we tested last week, like they said, and we finally found what I needed here to be a bit more aggressive and a bit more comfortable with the race car.

So it was a really good test day. I think we did about 210 laps one day. I was a bit worn out at the end. But all went really well and I'm pretty hopeful we can do strong this weekend.

THE MODERATOR: Will, you've been in many of these championship battles before. Do you feel like you're surging at the right time as your teammates? You probably have the momentum with the past two wins in a row.

WILL POWER: Yeah, I have no choice but to be doing well now, if I'm going to have any chance of getting there. We'll see, at the start of the season, missing the first race, and then just some bad races kind of mixed in there.

But you know, I kind of feel good physically right now. And I think that this track, never had a good result here, really. We've run well, and maybe a yellow at the end and we don't take tires or do the wrong thing.

Yeah, it's time to have a good day. It's very difficult to tell if you have a good car here; you can test and feel good, and then suddenly in the race, it can be the complete opposite.

So hopefully tonight we get a feel of that, running in traffic, and hopefully can hit on something that's good.

Q. One question for all three of you. How quick is the part of traffic, how will that play in your strategy in the short ovals? Is it important part on short ovals, traffic?

WILL POWER: Yeah, it's everything, basically, because you spend the whole night in traffic, whether you're leading or you're last or you're in the middle. The track is just gathered with cars and it's about being able to run in traffic, and try and have a car that's not affected by the turbulence too much, which is pretty difficult with this car right now.

SIMON PAGENAUD: Yeah, and also, it's a bit different than Phoenix. You can run are you, two, two-and-a-half lengths here. So this is a good opportunity for passing. It creates -- it usually creates a good show, close, side-by-side racing.

And it's very important to make your car work on both settings. If you manage to get that right, then you're going to be in good shape in traffic, because then you can do the opposite of what the guy does. But if you have two guys in front of you, then that becomes a bit more complicated. But I think we should be okay. I think it's a really good show. I'm really excited for the race.

HELIO CASTRONEVES: Ever short track always has a traffic situation. I feel like if we have new tires, it might not be such a big deal. But when the tires start degrading; seems Firestone designed the tires to go that way, it's becoming a challenge a little bit more.

In the past, the race used to finish at night, which makes every car faster towards the end of the race. Here, it might be a little bit different because we're not finishing at night, so the track might be a little bit warm and we'll see what happens.

So it will be new, it will be interesting, and I can't wait to go out there.

Q. You tested here. How has the track changed since last year? There were some reports that maybe the bumps in turns three and four were a little more pronounced than the past.

HELIO CASTRONEVES: Yeah, they did a ver good job in turn one. Turn one was a very big bump. It was one of the ovals, I would say, with the bump in the middle of the corner, that you've got to go sometimes flat-out, trusting that the car is going to make it or not.

But they are able to eliminate that. It's actually kind of strange now, because you're expecting the bump to be there and now it's gone.

But three and four, it's some of the patches that we had in the past, it was some having some delamination, I believe, but they also change already. We understand that when we are going out there, it's going to be a little bit better.

So the good news is, keep improving, keep getting better and definitely that results in a better racing, too.

Q. Can you talk a little bit about what happened to Juan last year, because as I understand it, there was a suspension failure because of the loads. Are your cars not set up similar or did he have a different setup? Because it seems like an unusual situation.

HELIO CASTRONEVES: No, the thing is the load that we are getting because of the high downforce that we are achieving, was not because constantly downforce loading. It was actually the bump. So when you hit the bump, it was actually overloading the suspension and going to the area that unfortunately it was about to get a failure.

So we had the test here, and we didn't achieve not even close to what happened last year. So definitely the bump was the cause, unfortunately, of going to an overload, and that was probably an indication that's what happened.

But in terms of suspension, you can only -- I mean, our team, obviously we check, recheck and double-check to make sure that everything is signed. Sometimes just the material, it's not right when you are achieving that kind of loads. But hopefully this year we don't have

that kind of issue.

Q. And we're past halfway through the season, and I think all of you are still very alive in the championship. Can you talk about looking forward, what your hopes are and your strategy going forward?

HELIO CASTRONEVES: Yeah, like I said, definitely Simon built up a big lead. Big credit for himself and his group. But the end of the day, like I said in the beginning, we wanted Team Penske to succeed.

In my situation here, definitely being in the top three right now, it's great, but it's not what we want. We want to be where Simon's position is. So we are trying to create an internal battle, but that's the good thing, healthy competition is always great for the fans and for the series.

Now Will is obviously over there as well. And to be honest, even at that big lead that Simon has, it's still a lot of points. Especially when you are talking about the last race of the season have double points. So I think there are a lot of people still around with a chance. But we've just got to keep focused as a group to make sure that we give this chance and this a championship to Team Penske.

SIMON PAGENAUD: To me, we are going to keep doing what we've been working. Everything is working really well. Everybody is super motivated on the 22 car. But it's the whole group. It's not just the 22 car. Every team work well together. We all work really well together. And once you put your gloves on, then you go to the racetrack and you battle.

But we'll see what happens in the end. Hopefully it's one, two, three and we get to Friday at the end at Sonoma. But it's too far to know. Like I just said, there's so many points, and all we have got to do is try to score as many points as possible today -- I mean, tomorrow, and go on then to the next one.

But you can't do any mathematics right now. It's just not the right time to do it.

WILL POWER: Yeah, it's just focus one race at a time. It's amazing how the points can swing so quickly. You know, just takes a couple of races of the right people finishing badly, and you finishing well, and you're right there again.

So yeah, Scott Dixon, you look at his championships, and he's been a hundred points out before and he's comeback to win it. You watch him each year and he just methodically chips away, and that's a good lesson right there. You can definitely comeback; never give up.

THE MODERATOR: I was going to say earlier, trying to pull a Scott Dixon late in the championship.

Q. You touched on it a little bit but how do you maintain that balance of sharing data and information with the team, yet wanting to retain your own competitive advantage to run for that championship; how do you maintain that balance?

SIMON PAGENAUD: I think you, you know, just go out -- the advantage is, all four of us are at the top level and we have the exact same equipment.

So we know, first of all, we know we have to beat Scott, and we have to beat a lot of other guys that are very, very good. And it's not -- we are one, two, three in the championship, but it's not like we've been one, two, three in every race. Every race we work really hard to understanding what Will is doing better, what Helio is doing better in that corner, and then maybe I might put it on my car.

But then I still have to do a better job than them to beat them with what they have. So it's a very interesting situation, because it helps us gets better every race, every event, and we know it's a big help for each of us. It's just how you use it, and you've got to remain friendly, because if you don't, then it's not a very nice environment to work at and come every morning.

So I think so far, it's been working really well that way, but like I said, when you go to the racetrack, when the green flag drops, it's you and your team against them, but you can't take each other out, that's the biggest thing.

Q. With the night race coming up and looking at lower humidity, how do you think that will affect either your physical or mental performance, and then performance of the vehicle?

HELIO CASTRONEVES: Yeah, I don't think it's going to be that night -- but I think there's not much to do. The track is going to -- the thing is the temperature, and I think the temperature might keep the same way, and the track temperature might keep the same way, as well.

This place is physical, more than any other oval to be honest. And to be honest, remember? (Laughing). That's an inside joke with Juan Pablo anyway. (Laughter).

But it's fun. It's very fun as Simon said, and we have multiple lines that you can actually try to pass people, but definitely, that's one of the toughest ones. And when you've got to go, you just have to keep the pedal to the metal.

THE MODERATOR: Gentlemen, thank you.