

NTT IndyCar Series News Conference

Saturday, August 15, 2020

Indianapolis, Indiana, USA

Alex Palou

Dale Coyne Racing with Team Goh
Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: We've been joined by Alex Palou. Alex, you finished seventh day and made the Fast Nine. Talk about your day.

ALEX PALOU: Yeah, thank you. I think was an awesome day for us. Obviously yesterday we showed that we had a lot of speed on the car. Today was just about execution, just doing our thing, trying to make four laps flat and trying to manage the car balance between those laps. We made it.

Super happy. I think the team did an amazing job just because since we started here in Indy, we had a really good car, which has improved the car lap by lap. So, yeah, gaining confidence. Tomorrow is going to be a great day for us, for sure.

THE MODERATOR: We'll open it up for questions for Alex.

Q. Talk about the run that you've had so far this year. First Indy 500. What has the experience been like for you?

ALEX PALOU: It's been good. It's been a tough season, I would say, just because of the amount of practice and the test we had. We had no test. We just have an hour of practice just before our qualifying. It's been really good here that we had some days and I could go to sleep before going to qualifying. I think that's why we can see an improvement of performance.

Here in Indy, it's been really good so far. I think the first day it was just about learning the car here because it's really different to Texas and to Iowa and obviously to all the road courses we've been.

But, yeah, it's been really good so far.

Q. Do you think tomorrow you have what it takes to challenge the Andretti and Ganassi cars for the top

spot?

ALEX PALOU: I don't know to be honest (smiling). Difficult to say. I thought that our track condition was not perfect when we went out, but then Marco went out after me and did that lap, those laps. Think it's going to be challenging tomorrow with the Andrettis. They are really quick.

But I think for top five, we can look pretty strong.

Q. I think you're the only first-time Indy 500 runner here at the Speedway that's done that. How happy was Dale? How confident is it that you have an engineer that's won an Indy 500? Does that give you confidence as a rookie?

ALEX PALOU: Yeah, obviously I think that Dale was quite happy. But I think the good day is tomorrow, and then the final day is the 23rd. We were happy, but obviously we need to continue working. We want that pole.

Obviously having Eric as an engineer, you can ask him all. Every time I punch with him, I can feel the ring (smiling). He has a lot of experience. He's a really good guy. Obviously he knows how to make a really fast car here, not only him, but Ross, my second engineer, all the mechanics. It always gives you a lot of confidence having a guy that won the Indy 500 already.

Q. Yesterday you said you still don't have any confidence on ovals. After making the Fast Nine, do you feel like your confidence is getting to the point where this could be a good result for you next week?

ALEX PALOU: Yeah, I mean, confidence is growing every lap I do. But still it's not the same as going to a road course for me. On a road course I know what's going on every time. Here, I'm learning different stuff.

Like today was the first time we did four full laps on a qualifying run with the speeds we have now. Yeah, I'm just learning every day.

Traffic is going to be another thing. The good thing is that we will start at least top nine, so I'll have enough time to get up to speed without losing a lot of track position.

ASAP sports . . . when all is said, we're done.®

But, yeah, I'm just still learning. As I said, I think the biggest challenge I have now is race pace. Not race pace, but running behind cars and trying to overtake them.

Q. Will it still be hard to go to sleep before the Fast Nine like Iowa and Texas?

ALEX PALOU: No. Iowa and Texas, I think I just slept like two or three hours. Tomorrow I'm going to sleep like a baby I think. Well, tonight. We did the job today. The super target was to be in the Fast Nine. We did it. Tomorrow is just about enjoying and obviously going for the pole if we can, otherwise we'll try to start on the first two rows.

Q. Have you done anything in your career that's close to this from the standpoint of pressure? Texas got you used to the ovals. Anything that you can look back on and draw from that helped you deal with this today?

ALEX PALOU: I don't know, to be honest. I think I had more unknowing going to Texas because we did, like, 50 laps before qualifying, then I had just two laps. That track is really difficult, really tough.

So, yeah, I think all my life. Like since you're in karting, maybe you go for the first time to the world championship, you already feel the same pressure as we have here. I think I was lucky enough that there was not lot of media stuff, there was no spectators, so I could just focus on racing and going fast. That made my first year in Indy 500 a lot easier, for sure.

Q. This is your third oval. Have you found out any secret to dealing with an oval?

ALEX PALOU: I don't know yet. I don't know yet. I think I'll still have to find out.

I just think it's confidence and laps with the car that I have now. Also with the team, with my engineers. To be honest, having so much practice here in Indy, it helped a lot. Obviously having some races before in Texas and Iowa, it's always going to help.

But I think I still need to gain 30%, 40% of confidence here in ovals.

Q. How much attention have you had from Spain so far? Obviously with Fernando, that brings a lot of media attention, a lot of people watching. Have you noticed any interest from Spain, added attention from there?

ALEX PALOU: Honestly, no. The first day, yes. I saw

there was a lot of people. All the media was like, Oh, Alonso is top five. Then suddenly all the media went, like, down, no more news about INDYCAR, no more news about Alonso, obviously no news about me.

I didn't check yet, but I bet it's not going to be lots of news like on the first day when Fernando was top five. So, yeah, whatever...

Q. Does that surprise you at all? Do you feel you're still building some of that reputation? Fernando has been in Formula 1, had that career. You're starting your career rather than ending it like he is.

ALEX PALOU: No, you always expect that. I expected that that was going to happen. But maybe I expected that having a great result like we had the first day, the second, Fast Friday, also today, I expected a bit more of course.

That's Spanish media. Obviously Alonso won two times Formula 1 championship, which you can't take away from him. But, yeah, I think the media, it's not helping a lot to let the normal people know.

But, yeah, it is what it is. I think we'll have to win some championships before they start talking about us.

Q. A couple weeks ago you said Super Formula in Japan was the best series that kind of prepared you for Indy. Does anything really prepare you for the Indianapolis Motor Speedway?

ALEX PALOU: Not really. It's completely different. Obviously prepares you for the road courses, but not for ovals. I think for ovals was just iRacing. For sure it help a bit to understand and start working with a spotter.

But I think it was just about having a good car, having good spotters, having a good team, having everything right and correct for today. We see some guys that done this qualifying and this race lots of times before that they are struggling. So I think it's a race where you have to have everything right in order to be competitive.

Q. You're 23 years old, you have a great career ahead of you. How does it feel to be the most successful Spaniard at the Indianapolis Motor Speedway?

ALEX PALOU: It feels awesome, man. I like it (laughter). Hopefully I can see some news with that thing you said. But, yeah, it's awesome. It's really nice.

Q. Indianapolis Motor Speedway is not an easy track to get the grip with and to learn. Never ran Indy Lights here. Your oval experience is low. What were your



**expectations coming into this qualifying run today?
Did you expect to be in the Fast Nine?**

ALEX PALOU: Thank you.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports

ALEX PALOU: To be honest, I think we had like no expectations. We didn't know if you come here and you are straight really fast and top 10 like we did, or maybe you'll struggle, which would be normal, then you progressively start improving.

So, yeah, we were really lucky to start with a really good car and being really comfortable, of course. So after the first day, I was like, Oh, maybe we can do something here.

Obviously if you start thinking that you can qualify on Fast Nine the first day, maybe you going to go down. I was just like, Okay, that's a target, let's try and work for it. That's what we did.

I think we improved the car every time we went out. Even today was much better than yesterday. I am 100% sure that tomorrow is going to be better than today just because we could see some things from the other cars on the onboard.

Yeah, I'm just super excited we got the Fast Nine, which is amazing. We want more. I think everybody wants more.

Q. Whatever your position will be tomorrow, you will have the position of leading the race likely. Do you imagine yourself in that point on Sunday?

ALEX PALOU: Yeah, of course, that would be awesome. Would be awesome to try and lead the race. That means we going to maybe have to overtake some guys, maybe not.

So, yeah, let's see where we start. But, yeah, for sure, if you start on the first three rows, which is Fast Nine, you can have a shot at leading the race. I think we have a car capable of doing that.

We going to enjoy the race. We going to learn while we are racing. Obviously just because we are rookies and we are not 100% comfortable with traffic, that doesn't mean we're not going to go for the win. We'll try to go for that. Obviously the first step is to lead the race.

THE MODERATOR: Alex and Rinus will be vying for the fastest rookie award. There's been an increase to that award from \$5,000 to \$10,000. Money on the line tomorrow for the fastest rookie.

Alex, best of luck. Thanks for joining us today. Hope to see you again tomorrow.