

NTT INDYCAR SERIES

News Conference

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Beth Paretta

Simona De Silvestro

Lauren Sullivan

Andra Buzatu

Paretta Autosport Press Conference

THE MODERATOR: Good morning. Thank you for coming to meet the Paretta Autosport team, a female-dominant team attempting to make this year's 105th running of the Indianapolis 500. We're going to start off with a quick video presentation so you can meet the team.

As you can see scrolling across the screen, those are many of the ladies associated with Paretta Autosport this year. We will start with meeting team owner Beth Paretta.

BETH PARETTA: Thank you, Katie. I realize that it's exactly four months since I was sitting here to announce the team. It was January 19th. So here we are on May 19th, a very special day for a lot of reasons.

We've done a lot in four months. There was a lot of stuff that was done before that day of the announcement, but really excited to finally be here and for you to actually meet the faces that comprise Paretta Autosport, both on the commercial side, the competition side and the support that we've been getting through our technical partnership with Team Penske, which has been amazing. Very excited to be here today, and thank you for being on Zoom for those looking at us remotely. We couldn't get our message out and tell the story without all of you, so thank you for your time and the way that you have very kindly covered this story.

Hopefully it's resonated with people to be more than another team, another entry, trying our best. We're trying to do a lot more and trying to provide opportunity and hopefully some inspiration, both for kids and for women everywhere to push and work hard to also know that anybody might be possible for yourself. Very happy to be here.

You saw the names on the team, but if we can just kind of cycle through quickly, I don't know if you can go back through that or if there's a way to pause them. But Simona, myself, but we've got the competition team, Ayla Agren, Caitlyn Brown, Andra Buzatu, Madison Conrad, Linda Conti, Sara Durant, Amanda Frayer, Mallorie Muller, Chelsea Pechenino and Lauren Sullivan, Runa Amin -- this is the commercial side. Runa Amin, our intern; Barbara Burns, PR; Maria Grady, our photographer, Belicia Montgomery, business operations; Heather Pirowski on partnerships, and Linda Rosenberg in marketing.

This is also on the competition team, the support from Team Penske. Clint Cummings, Casey Eason, Chris Fry, Jefferson Hodges, Michael Nelson, Tom Novins, John Picchinotti, Raul Prados, our race engineer; Gary Prall, Sean Rinaman, who is our amazing pit coach who's been training the women in pit stops; Vance Welker, our crew chief; and that's it alphabetically.

So although this is female forward, I want to make sure that everybody understands that this is with the support and help and guidance and mentorship from some very amazing and experienced men who have worked in racing for many years, who have been part of this process from the beginning and teaching some of our women that are new to INDYCAR some of the ways of working around this car and working around this racetrack.

I also want to give a big thank you to Rocket Pro TPO, our primary sponsor, Money Lion, our two main sponsors, who have been amazing. Not only have they been supportive but they are leveraging our story to also highlight some of the women's forward initiatives on the business side for each of their companies. So it was a really great fit for both of those, Money Lion, talking about financial literacy for women. We're talking about education and careers which lead to independence for women, financial literacy, so Money Lion is doing that. And Rocket Pro TPO, females in the mortgage industry who are business owners.

So it's wonderful to align with like-minded companies.

Also a big thanks to everybody at Chevrolet for the Chevy power that will be hopefully making Simona go very fast here at the speedway in car No. 16. That's it. That's kind



of -- you'll meet everybody individually afterward, but just want to show you some of the important people sitting next to me, too, to summarize their journey for the past four months.

Simona?

SIMONA DE SILVESTRO: Yeah, well, for me it's definitely pretty special to be back at the speedway. I think you know that Beth has kind of put this opportunity together for me and as well for all the other women. I think it's quite special.

For sure I think our association with Team Penske is just incredible. I've learned so much just over the last like -- the test day and yesterday, as well, so just kind of getting confidence out there, and the car feels really good, so from that point of view, I'm really excited to be here because I think we have the tools to do something great, and everyone is really learning really quickly from everyone. Me myself, as well, I haven't been in an INDYCAR for six years, so it's great to have great teammates around me and everyone from Team Penske really kind of helping us out on that side.

For sure, like Beth said, having Rocket Pro TPO and Money Lion kind of coming on board and telling this journey together, I think it's great special. I think without them we wouldn't be here, as well, so I think, yeah, car looks pretty good, as well. Looks fast and cool. Yeah, and Chevy, to welcome me back in the family, I think it's really special.

Yeah, I think we'll have a good month of May, and I can't wait to go back out on track today.

Lauren?

LAUREN SULLIVAN: My name is Lauren Sullivan and I am the performance engineer for Paretta Autosport. I support the race engineer Raul, and I was asked to loan my skill set to this team by Team Penske. My full-time job is actually being a NASCAR wind tunnel test engineer for Team Penske, and earlier this year upper management came to me and asked if I would be interested in translating what I do on the NASCAR side over to the INDYCAR side to support Paretta Autosport, and so I of course said absolutely. This is a fantastic opportunity to translate data quality and wind tunnel testing to track-based testing and data quality.

From there, the journey has been incredible and has exceeded many expectations, every expectation actually, from the men from Team Penske who have been supporting us to all the ladies I've been able to work with,

and each experience has just gone beyond predictions and how I thought it would go. It's just been wonderful. The energy and the excitement that is in this team is infectious, and we are here and we are ready to do what we came here to do.

Watching all these ladies and myself, all of us learn a new skill set so quickly, the relentless amount of hard work and hours we've each put in since the start of the year to be ready for race day, and we're ready for it. It's cool to see it all finally come together.

We're also very aware of our unique position to the next generation, the eyes that are on us, in particular the young ladies that are out there watching this unfold, and we hope that by seeing us, you guys realize that we didn't do anything extraordinary to be here. We are just like you, and so if you can see us, you can be us. By all of us coming together, we're hoping to make that message very clear.

One of those wonderful ladies that we have with us is Andra.

ANDRA BUZATU: Good morning. My name is Andra Buzatu. I am a mechanic on the car as well as being on the pit crew.

I recently got out of the military last year in September and decided to come to NASCAR Technical Institute, where I was recruited for the team.

Since February, we have all been getting up at 3:30, 4:00 in the morning four days a week to be at the Penske shop by 5:00 a.m. to practice our stops. Every single day we're learning something new, and we had quite a few women start out on the team, so the women that you see standing here are the ones that made it and are in a final part of the team.

When it comes to being over the wall, we're hoping to see a lot of us going over the wall. It will still be tentative on race day, where we are, but we have -- we've been working very, very hard to be where we are.

I think the biggest point is that we're just another race team, and we're here to win, and we're here to really show that we deserve to be here. Thank you.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you, ladies. Great to put some faces and names behind the Paretta Autosport story. Now that you have met the women of Paretta Autosport we're going to open the floor for a few brief questions.

Q. (No microphone.)

 . . . when all is said, we're done.®

BETH PARETTA: I've worked in motorsport a long time, and this is different than anything I've ever been part of, obviously, for all the reasons that you see.

I started just as a fan watching from home. I was somebody that watched racing all the time, and I didn't necessarily plot out that this would be where I'd find myself. It's the most extraordinary -- it's the most extraordinary thing to be able to do for a living, in fairness, and we'll all say that, everybody on the team, even on our toughest days and our early mornings and late nights and covered in schmutz. We love it, and we do it because we're competitive and we do it because it's about pushing ourselves.

Many of us have individual journeys but there's nothing like being on a team and knowing that the person standing next to you is as driven as you are. We're all better together.

Those sorts of things, these are opportunities of a lifetime, and it's funny because all of us have worked in racing we can think back to different teams we were on and have such affectionate memories and I'm hoping that this is the start of something and we're going to work together for many years if all goes well and if we have our partners that would like to continue this with us and see how far we can take this.

A day like today is something that we're always going to remember.

Q. Beth, you had talked about this a few years ago, and you wanted an all-female team. How difficult was it to -- when you first announced it to actually get here today?

BETH PARETTA: Well, there were some logistics challenges at the 11th hour in 2016 that were unfortunate, and they affected a few teams that year, and we got caught up in that. It happens; it's kind of the trials and tribulations of Indy.

Yeah, I took a couple of years in between. I was focusing on the education side of things and building that and still continuing to build my network, and in fairness, Roger Penske and his team were supportive then and we were going to work together sort of in a different alliance, so when the race for equality and change was announced last year, I reached back out to him to say, hey, what is this about and what's your ambition with this program, and he said, let's talk, because it was already -- the seeds had already been planted. So it was a very short conversation this time.

We immediately got a car and the car was secured and immediately my next call was to Chevrolet and then the engine was secured. In fairness I think because I went through that it made this a little easier because it was a known idea.

I think obviously the climate has changed. I think five years ago, six years ago we might have been too early for the world.

Q. Now you have Roger Penske on board with diversity efforts. Did he give you that push that got you across the finish line?

BETH PARETTA: I'd say the push in the sense of the technical alliance obviously then is easier when you call somebody like a Simona De Silvestro and say hey I'm putting this team together and I have a technical partnership with Roger Penske. I don't think there was any hesitation. I mean, not that there's hesitation, but it's extra. I mean, to be able to be aligned with a team that knows their way around the speedway is a little easier.

In fairness, I have a good relationship with Chevrolet, so did the Penske situation help? No, I had that and I'm a known quantity in some places. But there's no doubt that it just helps, because also when you're calling and talking to possible potential sponsor partners, it's one thing to back an idea, it's another thing to back an idea that has a connection to something that's a going concern.

Q. For the others, you look around and you've got this team of females and it seems like something that would never be possible and yet here it is. I'm wondering how that makes you feel.

SIMONA DE SILVESTRO: Well, I think for me personally, like when I look at pit lane, to me it doesn't matter -- I think they all deserve to be there. I look at whoever is changing my tire because it's the best person to do that job, but for sure I think what Beth was able to do is just give this amazing opportunity.

Everyone is learning from the best people like in the paddock, and I think that's something that even in my career I've fought for. At the end of the day racing is all about being in the right place at the right moment, and right now we just have literally all the tools in our hands to really show what we can do, and I think that's really uplifting.

I think everyone involved in the program, as well, is just really -- realizes that. Everyone is putting the extra work into it, and I think that's really special to see, and for sure when we're on pit lane, I think all the other teams kind of look at us, but we just do our job and that's what it is, and

hopefully I think it'll just open even more opportunities to other girls out there.

Also in different teams, for example, just to -- if somebody is good at what they do, they should also get a shot at it.

BETH PARETTA: And to be fair there are women in other teams and you'll see them in pit lane. I don't know if some teams have done this where they've actually put some of their women more forward where they might have been back at the shop, and if that's maybe something that's new this year for whatever reason, good. Then it worked. Because they were there all along.

Q. Do you two feel part of something?

LAUREN SULLIVAN: Oh, yeah, the camaraderie hits different. Being on the NASCAR side, it's also a male-dominated field, but to come over here and be in a female-dominated team, it hits different, just because you're so used to being one or two in a field of many other men and stuff like that.

It's a very unique experience, and it's really cool to see and look around, especially like when we're walking together down pit road or something like that, and it's like, we're doing this, and we're doing it well. It's exciting.

ANDRA BUZATU: It's so crazy to be with a bunch of other women that want to do what you do because on my ship I was one of the only female mechanics. The rest of them were officers, so I was the only one like down in the pits in the engine room.

It's so cool to be working alongside other women who are so driven to do what you love to do.

Q. Simona, a few weeks ago Will Power was saying that -- he said, Simona is going to be my favorite. The Swiss Missile, she's going to be fast in that Penske car. I think you're really highly respected as a racer and maybe people look at you as you just haven't had the right opportunity. Do you feel like you're in an opportunity now that you can really shine?

SIMONA DE SILVESTRO: Yeah, definitely. If I look at my career, like INDYCAR has done so much for my career. I think it's really put me on the map. But when I was here in 2010, 2013, I never got the call from a big team, even though I think kind of the results were okay, and it could have been a possibility.

I think it just took a little bit of work, and finally I think, yeah, with Beth doing this and also Roger, I think when they called me, I think it was quite special because I feel like,

okay, I've put a lot of work to be in this position finally, and here I am today.

From that point of view I'm grateful that I stuck with it all these years to finally be here, and for sure I think this is the best opportunity for me yet in INDYCAR and here, as well, at the Indy 500 because literally everyone in the team, everyone around us really wants us to do well. They really give you everything you need and try to make you as comfortable as you can, and the car is really fast, as well.

From that point of view, it's just, yeah, putting my head down and getting it done, and hopefully this will be a really strong month of May and we'll see where the journey goes.

Q. Can you win the Indy 500?

SIMONA DE SILVESTRO: Yeah. You know, I think so, if we -- I think at the end of the day this place -- you need a little bit of luck. You need things to go well. But I feel like we're really putting the right amount of work into it, and at the end of the day the things I can control is doing the job. I can be as prepared as I can, the women, as well, the guys on the team, as well, my engineer. Everyone knows that, so we just have to get the work done, and hopefully on Sunday we'll be in a good position.

Q. Pit stop times, what did you guys start out at and what have you improved to?

ANDRA BUZATU: Oh, man, we started off at, I don't know, 17-, 18-second stops --

BETH PARETTA: On a static car.

ANDRA BUZATU: Yeah.

BETH PARETTA: We could put a car right here and see how long it would take any of you to do it.

ANDRA BUZATU: And I think now our average is around 5.5, five seconds.

BETH PARETTA: There's average, so there's some sub-five.

Q. Also Team Penske guys like Rick Rinaman were famous for -- he was going over the wall when he was 62. The fact they've won the pit stop challenge so often, what's it like getting coached by some of those guys where to shave a tenth of a second off here, a half a second there, what's the process?

ANDRA BUZATU: Sean is the best coach that we possibly could have asked for. This is his first time coaching a



group of women. I mean, the process is so minute. You think we're just taking a tire on -- taking a tire off, putting a tire on, but there's -- like the angle of how you pick up the tire, the angle of how you put the gun on, it started off with the basics, and now we are so just picking apart the finest of details.

It's been a long process of just the basics down to the details. I'm super confident with how all of us stand when it comes down to pit stops.

BETH PARETTA: It's like going to the Harvard of pit schools.

Q. I believe the pit stop challenge is canceled for this year, but for next year how big a goal would it be to get out there and fight for that championship?

ANDRA BUZATU: I mean, that's all we could ask for, right?

Q. How oversubscribed was it like when you announced this deal? Did you get a lot of applications? What was your feel for how much enthusiasm there was behind this?

BETH PARETTA: We got a ton of CVs, a ton of resumes, through the website, through my LinkedIn, every way. From a lot of men, as well, which was lovely. In fairness because it was such a short timeline, we really relied on people that we knew and had a relationship with and then kind of like one degree of separation of then using -- like going to a resource like Jefferson Hodges with Team Penske who had previously worked with a bunch of the women before or knew them through the NASCAR Technical Institute. We really were pragmatic about it.

Q. I wanted to ask also about -- I realize why you picked the 500, but obviously with 35 cars it's high risk coming in with a team, not because they're individually inexperienced but just working together. Wouldn't it have been safer to do like a Long Beach or St. Pete where you're guaranteed to actually be on the grid?

BETH PARETTA: Absolutely, and we actually considered doing a bundle of races. Part of it has to do with Simona's day job as a Porsche factory driver so there were some conflicts with some of the dates, so we looked at that, but we decided collectively with Roger and their upper management that we would start here and then go from here.

Q. So are you hinting that there are more races coming up?

BETH PARETTA: (Nodding head.)

Q. Simona, how quickly did you get back into the swing of driving an open-wheel car because it was completely alien what you were doing down in Supercars to come here.

SIMONA DE SILVESTRO: Yeah, actually to be honest, I felt at home pretty quickly. I think if I think about my career and all that, I always felt the most comfortable in open-wheel car to be honest. That's I think how my driving style is. Also growing up in Europe and all that and just having driven these type of cars for such a long time, I felt pretty quickly at home.

For sure here at the speedway definitely the first few laps it's pretty quick because I hadn't been here for six years, but yeah, I felt pretty comfortable pretty quickly, and I think that has a lot to do just with the team, as well, taking it really step by step and having also with the other drivers like people to kind of lean on a little bit. That felt actually pretty good.

I think it was good that we did the open test because we just all kind of got to know each other for the first time and know how everyone works and also with my engineer and things like that, so now we had a little bit of time off to kind of work through these things. So it feels really comfortable out there, and for sure the racing is a tough part because how you're racing on an oval, but we've been doing a bit of practice, and today, as well, we'll try to do a bit more traffic running to get as comfortable as we can out there in traffic, as well.

Q. If Paretta Autosport does continue to other races, I assume that you're going to try and make yourself available? Porsche commitments allowing, yeah?

SIMONA DE SILVESTRO: Yeah, at the end of the day I am at the moment under contract with Porsche, but I think in that sense I'm pretty lucky that they are really big racing brand. I think even when I called them about doing the Indy 500, it didn't take two seconds for them to let me do it. From that point of view I think it's really special. They know how important INDYCAR is, as well, so yeah, from that point of view I think I'm lucky for them to kind of be on my side for those things.

Q. Just wanted to clarify with you, you've talked about kind of the pit crew over the past half an hour or so. I wonder if you've committed to an all-female crew over the wall for the race or if there's still work to be done with finalizing that crew before the race actually comes.

BETH PARETTA: No, the crew over the wall will be coed. We'll see as the week goes on who may go over the wall, and ultimately the number one priority is safety and then competition. Here's the thing: If we have zero women over the wall for the Indy 500 you'll see them at the next race. It's all about progress. Just the fact that you see this lineup and how far we've gotten in these four months, that's how I'm measuring our progress. Every time we can integrate and add one more woman in a key role, that's what we're going to get to.

Is it going to be 100 percent over the wall? No. And we're going to prioritize safety and competition.

Q. You've had some on-track testing time and also yesterday, as well. What are you expecting in terms of competition for the race? How confident are you going into that and what are you expecting in terms of targets?

BETH PARETTA: We are very happy with how everything went yesterday. We're following our plan, and we're taking every day with a very robust methodical plan, and we're going to follow our playbook.

Q. How excited were you yesterday to have the team on track?

BETH PARETTA: Over the moon. I mean, I don't show it. I laughed when the Indy star referred to me as stoic because if anyone knows me, it's like, really? Because it worked, if they thought I was stoic. Because obviously it's a balance. We want to make sure that we're focused, but yeah, I want to make sure that we all have a job to do, this is very important, it's very exciting, but also allow ourselves that moment to exhale and just say, this is also very amazing and very cool. Hopefully we have a little bit of fun with it and do our jobs and hopefully on the night of May 30th we can celebrate.

Q. For Simona, obviously you haven't raced with the aeroscreen, but how have you found adapting to the aeroscreen considering the last time you were in an INDYCAR it didn't have it?

SIMONA DE SILVESTRO: Yeah, to be honest when you're in the car you don't really realize it. It doesn't really change that much. In traffic it is a little bit different because when I raced here six, eight years ago you would feel a bit more the turbulent air on your helmet, on your head, and you don't really feel that now with the aeroscreen. So it's a little bit more tricky in just getting your runs and stuff, your timing of the runs. So that's kind of the only thing that has changed a little bit.

To be honest when you haven't driven here for so long, you kind of just take it as a brand new like everything and kind of just learn from the things -- you learn out there like all the time and don't really think too much about how it was like six years ago because it's quite far away.

Q. You're saying you're coming from a military background; how has that prepared you to come in to motorsport, but then you're also coming from the Penske NASCAR side, so has that been an easy transition to INDYCAR?

ANDRA BUZATU: Yes and no. Four years in the military, I mean, we're used to long days, and I was deployed for six months at a time, so traveling isn't that big of a deal.

I was a mechanic for four years, so I have that background coming into it. Going to NASCAR Tech was an option that I decided to take, and I was not expecting to get this offer.

Transitioning out of military life is difficult on its own, so this opportunity came, and my life just picked up after that. It's been an awesome transition, and everything starting out -- they didn't really throw us into the deep end right away. We got acquainted with everything, and it's just been a great ride ever since.

Q. Simona, since you left in the car, you have been in a bunch of other cars. What have you learned since then, and how can you adapt that when you come back?

SIMONA DE SILVESTRO: Yeah, I think the biggest thing because I've driven so many different cars in the last six years is I think what I've learned the most is just adapting myself a bit. When you're in open wheel for so long, you kind of start to understand and know what you kind of need in the race car to be quick, and jumping from Formula E to a Supercar and now to a GT car, I think the big thing is just in my driving, being adaptable. I think that's the big thing that I learned just -- sometimes things I want to do doesn't really work for that car, so just being a bit more open-minded about things and about my driving, as well.

Q. What do you expect of yourself for the Indy 500?

SIMONA DE SILVESTRO: You know, I think like any racer who enters, I try to be as competitive as I can be. You come to race to win races. That's what we do this for. For sure I think right now it feels really good. For sure it's only early days, but I feel pretty competitive out there, and yeah, the team around me is great.

From that point of view, we're just taking it day by day and just getting the confidence up every day and keep working

on the things that I can do better and getting as comfortable as I can. I think if these things come together, I think we can be pretty strong on Sunday.

Q. Have you had enough time to prepare?

SIMONA DE SILVESTRO: Yeah, for sure. Well, compared to everyone else who's driving INDYCARs every weekend, it's a bit different, but in the sense that the team is just really good around me. They really let me also take my time. They have really good guidance, and that point of view I feel super comfortable.

Like I said before, I feel really comfortable in an INDYCAR. I love open wheel racing, so for me just the level of excitement being here is just really big, and I'm just super happy that I get to be back here and back at IMS, back in an INDYCAR. I think it's special. Definitely pinching myself every day that I get to do this.

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