

NTT INDYCAR SERIES

News Conference

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Indianapolis, Indiana, USA

Tim Cindric

Josef Newgarden

Will Power

Simon Pagenaud

Scott McLaughlin

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: Good morning, everyone. Welcome back to the DEX Imaging Media Center here on Fast Friday at the world famous Indianapolis Motor Speedway.

It is Fast Friday at the Indianapolis Motor Speedway. It's going to be Team Penske at the podium, winners of 18 Indianapolis 500s. We'd like to welcome Indianapolis' own Tim Cindric, president of Team Penske. The driver of the No. 2 Shell Fuel Rewards Chevrolet, two-time NTT INDYCAR SERIES champ Josef Newgarden. The driver of the No. 2 Pennzoil Chevrolet, rookie Scott McLaughlin. He is the 2018 Indianapolis 500 champion, we welcome the driver of the No. 12 Verizon 5G Chevrolet in Will Power. And of course the 2019 winner of the Indy 500, driver of the No. 22 Menard's Chevrolet, it's Simon Pagenaud.

Some of the more impressive numbers from this great, great race team, you probably know many of them by heart. This year marks the 52nd year Team Penske has entered the Indianapolis 500, 18 wins, of course, from 13 different drivers over the years, all a part of a team that has a combined 767 years of INDYCAR experience. That seems like a lot.

Let's start with Tim who is sitting there nodding his head. As an Indianapolis native, Tim, certainly your reverence for this race ranks right up there with anyone. What does it mean to you and Team Penske to be closing in on 20 wins in what is certainly the biggest race in the world and maybe share some of the secret to the team's success?

TIM CINDRIC: Well, if we can just get to that question, I think the secret is the guy we work for, which is probably no secret.

Relative to 20, the first time I came here and raced as part of Roger's team in someone, obviously we won the race, finished first and second, and I'll never forget in Victory Lane I said to Roger, You know, this might be 10 for you or 11 I guess it was at that point, 11 for you, but this is something, my father has worked here all his life and never accomplished that. Pretty big day for me.

He looked at me, and he just said, I want 20. I'm just like, in the moment, trying to comprehend one, and he's already thinking nine ahead.

I'd love to make all that possible here in a few years. But sometimes you can win this race a few years in a row and it doesn't choose you for quite a few more years, so you never know when it's your turn.

THE MODERATOR: Simon Pagenaud, the 2019 Indianapolis 500 champion. Last time the race was run on its traditional Memorial Day weekend, you became the first Frenchman in 100 years to win the race. Looking back on it now, how did that change your life, and what do you need to do to do it all over again?

SIMON PAGENAUD: Well, it's the biggest race in the world. I think simply said, for any racer, it's a magic moment that happens in your career. It's personally a life accomplishment, so obviously has a very special connotation.

Doing it again, you know, I suspect the race is going to be quite different this year. We obviously have a different aero package, we've got the aeroscreen on the car, and INDYCAR has done a great job coming up with the aerodynamic parts to make the racing the best they can.

I think it's going to be harder to hold a lead, so I don't think you'll see someone lead the race as I did in '19. But Team Penske has prepared so hard for this one, as we always do, but you always keep looking for more, and it's been a pleasure so far to go around this amazing place every day.

THE MODERATOR: It's a privilege and an honor to drive through the tunnel to come to the Indianapolis Motor Speedway. Will, it hasn't been all that long ago when you won the Indy 500. How much does experience pay when it



comes to this place, and will it help going into next Sunday's race?

WILL POWER: Yeah, I mean, I feel more comfortable than I've ever felt around here right now, just from experience. And it's amazing that you keep learning as you go. It's different every year. The package once again is certainly going to race different. It's going to be closer, kind of packed-up sort of racing where the top two will switch back and forth.

I think you've got to just put yourself in that position like every year in that last stint. You have to be in that top two on the last restart or the last pit stop, whatever is the last thing that happens.

Yeah, I feel like as a team we've done a lot of work to improve the cars over last year and have a really good chance this year. I think the moment of truth is qualifying to see where the true speed is, and I really hope that we're all in the top nine.

THE MODERATOR: Josef Newgarden, certainly your resume stacks up with anyone over the last four years or so. There's always something about Indianapolis. That's the one you really want to win. You've come close the last couple years. Why is this the year for you do you think?

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: Well, I had to make sure we brought someone else in that hasn't won it in the team so I'm not the solo guy that hasn't won the Indianapolis 500 on the team.

Like Tim said, you never know when it's your day, and I know having driven this place nine times, going into my tenth, you've just got to be prepared for the opportunity. You've got to put yourself in position here. That's the key element, I think, is giving yourself an opportunity to win the race, and if it's your day, then you need to seize it.

Yeah, we feel good. It's been a blast working with everybody, as always. I'm always excited to be here. Always have fun every single day. Trying to stay calm and collected and make sure you're absorbing any knowledge you can each day. Whether it's good or bad knowledge, it all helps you at the end of the day.

We're charging forward. I feel really positive with our Fuel Rewards car. I think it looks good. Feels fast with Team Chevy, so we'll see what we've got this weekend.

THE MODERATOR: Scott McLaughlin, it wasn't that long ago when you had your first test on the oval, but you certainly come into this with so much experience, Super Car championships, Bathurst 1000, you've been some to

some world renowned events before and have won. How does Indy compare to all of that or does it? And what's your experience been like so far?

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: Yeah, not one of those things prepared me for this. It's a unique beast. But I have got a great team on my back with me, and my teammates, as well, push me along, and I'm learning so much. I'm just soaking everything up like a sponge.

Really excited. I think the Pennzoil Chevy is feeling really good in qualifying and race trim. But I'm building up to it, trying to just ride in traffic and learn different lines and follow different people and lead and go back in the six deep and five deep, and just enjoying the experience.

It's obviously going to be a little bit different this year, but it's going to be a hell of a lot better than it was last year, so I'm excited for that and excited for the experience.

Q. First of all, I just want to get out of the way, what is the difference between the photo you guys took on Tuesday and the photo Rahal took yesterday?

TIM CINDRIC: I think if you you're referring to what happened yesterday, obviously we are all pretty fortunate that ended in the way it did rather than in some other way.

What we did on the first day or whatever is something we've done every single year here, or we've at least attempted to. It's been a little different.

Obviously a lot of you know that the tradition here has been to be the first out. It's changed a little bit in the fact that in the first five minutes of the first session, you can't go by once. In the past, and I think if you look back in other years, you will have seen that we've waited to go by the first time, and our instructions really have been, Hey, if there's anybody else on the racetrack we'll call it off, and if not, we go ahead and do that.

It's been the only time in which we've ever attempted that, but it's been something that we try and do as a tradition is to be first out. It's just a way to start May and something Roger has always taken a lot of pride in. And if we get the opportunity, then we come across the line as a team, and if we don't get the opportunity we call it off.

Really for us it's always been an awareness situation. But it's always been the first session, the first time, and we've never had a problem.

Yesterday obviously was unfortunate and all the circumstances were not in a good place. But anyway, I think we'll all learn from it and move on.

Q. Should there be a designated time for teams that want to do that?

TIM CINDRIC: I don't know. I think that's really not up to us. I think it's just as opportunity presents itself. We've taken advantage of it more as a tradition more than anything else and really never thought of it at any other point.

Q. I've noticed Greg Penske on the timing stand a lot more this year. What is he doing? What's his role?

TIM CINDRIC: Greg is a supporter of ours, big supporter of ours.

I think on the timing stand itself, maybe you've noticed him more often, but honestly, Greg has always been there. He's been there whenever he can be there. Obviously his business is -- his core business is all in California. But he's been a key supporter for the 20-some years that I've been here, so I guess I don't really see it as any different.

Q. He's not making any race-changing calls?

TIM CINDRIC: No. I'd love for him to call the races. I've always wanted as many members of the family as possible, and obviously Jay was part of the series for many years, and now he's doing Formula E.

I always enjoyed -- I had always hoped that Jay would join our team and be part of our team rather than have to compete against him because he's a very competitive person and all the rest of it. But for me, I welcome any day that the Penske family shows up and want them to participate in any way they can.

Q. For the drivers, Tim said that RP says he wants to win 20 Indy 500s. I know you all know that he loves this race, he wants to win this race. What sort of pressure is there to go and get numbers 19 and 20?

WILL POWER: Yeah, I think just driving for Penske, you have that pressure no matter what, and just the event itself. So I don't think there's really any added pressure to get that number 19 or 20.

It's what every single driver and team comes here to do is to win this race. You feel it over the month just with the media attention and I guess the amount of practice you get and watching everyone else. You just feel that build as it comes to race day.

Yeah, we're all super determined all equally determined I would say to win number 19 for Roger.

SIMON PAGENAUD: Yeah, it's kind of what you're expected to do here. We all know it's No. 1 priority for Roger and the race team. As a driver if you're here in INDYCAR, I think it's your No. 1 goal, as well.

Obviously, yes, it's more pressure because it's the biggest race in the world, like I said, and yeah, you've just got to get it done at some point, but like Tim and Josef said, she kind of chooses you, so you've got to be patient.

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: Yeah, I think you start to -- the more times that you're here the more you feel the pressure to compete with the group around you. Obviously that starts with Roger, but I think it's everybody.

On my team specifically it's Tim, it's all the boys on the 2 car. You want to get the job done for everybody. Really the other cars, as well. There's a tremendous amount of work that goes in at our team across the board. You want it to be your car, but I think there's a sense of pride there on any of these cars that win the race.

I think you feel that pressure across the entire group that you want to get the job done.

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: There's really not much more I can add. I think we all know how big this is to Roger and his team, especially now with the ownership structure here at IMS. But I'd just love to get one on the board at least.

Q. (No microphone.)

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: I've been here before on various occasions. I came here for the 100th in 2016, and it was a pretty special moment then.

But I think being here as a driver, especially with a sponsor like Pennzoil and the Yellow Sub, it's pretty special, and you know the history of what's been put ahead of you.

You'd love to be a part of that and create your own legacy, but you've got to respect it and respect this place. And it's very similar to a place back home that I know well, Bathurst, but they're two different beasts.

It's a very cool thing to be here for sure and a race that I've seen and watched growing up for a very long time.

Q. Scott, you've practiced, of course, prior to this year at this track. Now that you have nearly a few days under your belt in the month of May, how do you feel you became acclimated to the track, especially with the adapted conditions over time?

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: Yeah, I think it's been nice to have some different conditions throughout the week. It's got hotter and hotter as we've got on. The wind has changed in various amounts but not a huge amount.

Yeah, I think we're progressing nicely, just along our program. There's been a couple of hiccups as everyone has seen, but at the end of the day we've got through pretty smoothly and just run to our program.

I think that's the same across all four cars. I think we've been pretty methodical in the way we've approached it from a race trim perspective and then trying out some qualifying and all that sort of stuff, and just really preparing me for what's ahead, I think.

Fast Friday, I'm really excited for the extra boost level and seeing what it's like heading into Turn 1 for the first time at around 240 miles an hour, something I haven't done before, and looking forward to seeing what that feels like.

Q. You mentioned already feeling that 240. Is there anything that might rival it, something similar?

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: Nothing. No, nothing. It's a very special thing and very unique to this one place, and that's why it's so special.

Q. Tim, we saw how it ended in the Daytona 500 with Brad and Joey. You guys talked about how the top two guys can pass pretty easily. Has there been any discussions or foresee any discussions if you guys are running one-two in the closing laps next Sunday?

TIM CINDRIC: We haven't got to Sunday yet for sure, but yeah, we've seen that, obviously, and how that turned out, and that was unfortunate for a lot of things and a lot of reasons.

I think when you look back to watching -- was it Will and Montoya going toe to toe there? Was probably the most recent one from our end.

I think these guys know exactly what they're trying to achieve, and it's the biggest race in the world, and Daytona is right up there with it as far as prestige in the NASCAR Series.

It's really hard to tell these guys anything else but to go for it and just race each other fair and clean and hopefully they bring it home. I think they all know and respect exactly what it means to the team, to Roger and all the sponsors.

I think even going back to Brad and Joey, they certainly didn't want that outcome, but it's part of racing. It's part of

the risk that you take. I think these guys doing it at the speeds they do it at, they've got a little self-preservation in mind, as well. I think it's very, I guess, expected from whoever is first and second here to race right to the line.

Roger has always said that you can race as much as you can, but just don't hit each other. Sometimes it goes the other way.

Q. The drivers, you guys race each other any differently than you would if it was not a teammate at the end?

WILL POWER: Yeah, no. I think Tim hit the nail on the head. It's self-preservation. It's pretty high speed, and yeah, it's not like NASCAR. You can't bump, you can't touch, and you know that.

Basically if you put yourself in a position where you're going to hit a car, you're not going to finish the race and you're not going to win it, so you know that, and you race accordingly.

Obviously it's a pretty big prize at the end, so yeah, it -- yeah, I mean, just got to -- it is what it is. You've got to race smart and that's the only way you're going to win the race.

Q. Simon and Will, back in '18 and '19 obviously you guys won. Was there a moment in the month that you knew I've got a car that's capable of winning this, and are you there yet after three days of practice?

SIMON PAGENAUD: Yeah, I mean, we had an incredible package in '19, and Chevy power really helped us tremendously all month, all two weeks long really. We knew we had a shot.

There are so many things that can happen during the race that you're not in control of. We tried to take our destiny in our own hands in the race and led a lot, maybe too much at some point, and then it turned back into our hands. It could have gone the other way.

I think this year we're close to being where we were in '19, but I think the whole field is a lot closer. I can't control the others. I can only control myself and my team, and I think we're doing everything we can to be in the same spot.

Q. Porsche recently announced that they're going to be partnering with Penske to go to IMSA and Le Mans. Do all four of you have an interest in going to Le Mans and racing for Team Penske over there?

WILL POWER: Yeah.

SIMON PAGENAUD: Yes.

WILL POWER: Certainly. That would be awesome.

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: Yep.

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: Yep.

Q. Scott, what happened to your keys?

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: I don't know. I'm lucky I can drive.

TIM CINDRIC: Who gets to go in the Porsche? I don't know. We'll talk about it in a couple years.

Q. Simon, you've been toward the top drivers in the no-tow speeds. Is that by design or is that by just the way it's fallen when you've been on track, and how important are those speeds?

SIMON PAGENAUD: Well, we did some qualifying runs yesterday to try and see what speed we could squeeze out of the 22. We were pretty pleased. I don't know what others are doing. It's just like I said to Eric, we'll see really today where we are. But we had a good feel for it.

I think we've got a little bit more speed that we can find today, so it's really encouraging for the whole team. The goal is really to get one Penske car on the pole.

WILL POWER: I don't know if they're valuable from yesterday, but yeah, we'll see today, get a feel. It's very difficult. If you can see a car, you're getting head. But that will be classed as a no-tow because it's about 10 seconds ahead. You won't really know until everyone runs on Saturday, but I feel like we've got pretty reasonable cars.

Q. There seems to be a tremendous youth movement that is involved in INDYCAR right now. Three of the first five winners have been first-time winners. Scott is knocking on the door, ready to get a victory. How do you assess the way this influx of talent over the last couple of years has been for INDYCAR?

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: I think it's just -- I guess you could say in some ways it's a changing of the guard. Someone has got to step up. There's a lot of young people coming through the Road to Indy program, which I've seen firsthand this year for the very first time.

I think it's a great program that INDYCAR and everyone involved has got through the F 2000s, the Pro 2000s, all the way through the Indy Lights. It's a great category to watch.

I think Rinus, Pato, Colton, they're world class drivers and they're in world class teams. And like Simon said before, the competitiveness between the teams now in INDYCAR is -- there's not much in it, and really anyone can win on the day, which not many race series in the world have that.

It's exciting. I think it's great that INDYCAR are taking it in their stride to promote it and get excited by it. And yeah, I'd love to be a part of that, as well.

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: Well, like Scott said, there's a great mix of talent. I think the most glaring thing about the series now is the parity. You really have immense parity amongst the teams, which has created intense competition amongst the drivers. It's really a drivers' championship through and through. You feel like you show up and can make a difference nowadays.

I think you're seeing that with the young guys. The young guys are coming in and they see that opportunity, and they're quite frankly taking to it very well. A guy like Scott can come in and push us around and make us better and be right there. He's pretty close to us right out of the gate in these first five races.

I think you're seeing the same stuff with other drivers and new drivers coming in. It's created a good challenge for everybody. It's a very difficult championship now to be the best at. Consistency is pretty important. But trying to stay on top of sort of the speed mountain is getting increasingly difficult.

Q. Scott, obviously one of the last most recent rookies to win this race was Helio in 2001 for Penske. Do you go into this feeling like you actually have a legit shot at not just being Rookie of the Year but actually winning it, and does that add extra pressure?

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: No one puts more pressure on me than myself. I've always run by that. I'm in a car that certainly can win the race. I'll be right there.

But I've got to work on my timing, I've got to learn this, I'm trying to learn it at a very fast rate, understand the mountain that I've got to climb to be in that bracket, buy my ticket to that last stint.

At the same time, I back myself to learn as much as I can at a fast rate, and I back the team that I have around me. Yeah, I don't think nothing is possible. I think we can for sure give it a good shake, and if the opportunity presents at the end to take it, I back myself to take it when I need to.

Q. How do you rate Scott's chances? What do you



think he still hasn't experienced in the tests or here that could prevent him from being your next rookie winner?

TIM CINDRIC: He's obviously a fast learner. I think like Will said, I think you learn here every year you're here, and every year you're here you put yourself in different circumstances, different situations. Just qualifying for the race is going to be the first step of that, is where you start.

The qualifying process and the things you go through, I think it's really hard to maybe answer that question until you see a rookie of any kind go through the whole qualifying process because it's different than anything they've ever done before, the four-lap average and the conditions that we'll have and the falloff that you have during those runs, depending on how aggressive you are.

I guess the only thing we've really said to Scott is just try and worry about the things you can control. He's a race car driver. He's a winner. He's had a taste of oval racing at Texas, obviously, and he responded to that quite well.

This place, it's a long race, but yet it seems really short sometimes. It's like Simon was talking about his race where if you're sitting in my shoes, you're wondering why he's leading so many laps, but he's learned that there's times when that's the right thing to do, depending on what car you have and all the rest of it, and I do believe that this place chooses you sometimes.

For him, he wasn't going to have enough fuel to make it happen until there was a caution, and it all came at the right time, and he took advantage of that.

I think Scott has as good a chance as any rookie here has ever had. But experience, you can't put really a value on the experience around here. Yeah, he's with our team for a reason.

Q. Question for either Will or Simon or both of you guys. It took you guys a handful of years to come across your first Indy 500 victory. Can you describe a little bit about what that anticipation was like coming close a handful of years and how you guys managed maybe the mental side of things to be able to break through in 2018 and 2019?

WILL POWER: Yeah, when it comes up on 10 years, I guess it was added pressure, especially when you've won a championship and you know that the other box that you have to tick to be regarded as a successful INDYCAR driver was to win this race. Yeah, it certainly built a lot, and you'd started to wonder if you'd ever win it.

Like these guys have said, Tim said, the place basically chooses you. I remember in '18, the week before, I almost said to my wife, I know I'm going to win the race. I just felt that way. I don't know why. It was just a pretty normal month, car felt really comfortable.

Then waking up on race day, just had such an easy, good feeling. Yeah, it's such a funny race. It's so hard to even kind of predict what you think is going to happen. You just don't know the things it's going to throw at you over the years.

Yeah, it's a hard one to win, but when you win it, it's the most satisfying moment of your whole career.

SIMON PAGENAUD: Yeah, more than the recognition in the business, for me it was more a personal thing, just all the work that you do since you're eight years old in a go-kart learning, and then learning the right way and going every step of the way through the racing ladder.

Personally as a Frenchman coming here at the speedway, you're not a favorite. You're not a favorite because oval racing doesn't exist in Europe. Having to learn that discipline or that skill, I should say, was something new in 2012, so it's not that long ago at the time.

It just felt like a great personal accomplishment. At the end of my life that will be a very, very special thing for myself.

Q. For Tim, going back to that conversation with Roger in 2001 in Victory Lane, obviously he's got a lot of other responsibilities now with INDYCAR and IMS and everything, but how much do you hear from him about performance of the team and wanting to do well?

TIM CINDRIC: Oh, it hasn't changed, without a doubt. In fact, it continues to increase. I don't see that letting up at any point.

Q. 18 months into him sort of being now separated from the team, how is it different? Is it more comfortable? Was it ever awkward at all?

TIM CINDRIC: No, I think the biggest difference is we miss him in pit lane, not knowing really where he is or knowing -- when I say 'where he is', I mean during the race itself. I'm used to knowing what pit he's in and how to have a conversation with him during the race or ask his advice or vice versa. You kind of miss that camaraderie during the race.

Obviously we all understand why that is and respect why that is. But for me, once the flags fly or checkered flag falls, it's very similar. I don't think it's really a lot different

from where I sit in terms of our interactions or how he helps us run our business.

Q. For the drivers, five races this year, five different winners, none of them from Penske. Somewhat surprising. But then again there was so much talk about how competitive it was going to be coming into this year. Do you feel like it's circumstantial that one of you hasn't won a race yet?

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: Yeah, I think most of us have been second at some point. Yeah, it's hard to answer that. We've definitely -- every car is a little different story-wise, but I think we've been in the mix as a team, and that's the first step. You've got to be in the mix to win these races. And I think we've been there, without a doubt.

I actually felt very positive about the race cars that we've had as a team to start the year, and it hasn't resulted in a win, like you said, but what a perfect place to start that off for the season next weekend, so we're definitely working on that.

Q. Scott, you have the distinct advantage of working closely with Rick Mears, who is as good as anyone who's ever been at this facility. Talk about how that has aided you in terms of your development.

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: Yeah, I think we all have that advantage. Having Rick in the garage is such a fantastic moral boost, morale boost, and he's such a nice guy. For a guy that's done it all in INDYCAR racing, to lend a hand and really just simplify a lot of things, especially for me, when things are coming at me very quickly, especially these last few days, he's even making little changes just in terms of car setup to make sure I'm comfortable before I go out, and that was in the first day. We made a really good change before I went out, and it worked out really good, and I gained a whole heap of confidence from it.

To have a guy come in like that, talk about lines, he calls them patterns, get my timing right, it's a really cool thing and very unique, and I'm really taking it in my stride as well as everyone else on this table.

Q. For the drivers, we've seen with the trains and practice, we've seen the top four are able to overtake and move around, and if you get a little bit further back in the train it's a little more difficult to pass. Is there an extra focus on your qualifying position to make sure you're near the front of that train?

WILL POWER: I still believe track position is really key this year. It's still closer and packed up, but unless you're in that top four, you're pretty much locked out of being able to

pass because obviously the car, the further back you get, every car is drafting off the car in front, so you don't get the advantage of a car breaking the air in front of you. So yep, qualifying you want to be in that top nine.

Q. Josef, you won the first race under kind of Roger Penske's ownership at Indianapolis last year, and we know that was a big thing for the team and a big thing for you, as well. Just wondered if there's extra motivation to win the first 500 for Roger being the fact that it's under his ownership now, the speedway.

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: Yeah, I mean, I think certainly obviously we've already had a winner with Sato, right, last year. Are you speaking specifically to being on the team or just in general?

Q. I'm talking about since Roger Penske has owned the speedway, you were the first person to win for Penske at the speedway last year in the road course race, and then obviously since Roger has owned the speedway you didn't win the 500 last year so Penske has not won a 500 since Roger has owned the speedway. I wondered if that gave you extra motivation as a team.

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: Yeah, I think there's definitely motivation on all of our parts, just circumstantially. You look at what happened last year and the effort that went in from everybody to try and keep this place moving forward was substantial from everybody involved. It was a substantial effort. So there's a lot of gratitude, I think, from all of us to go out and put on a good show.

It would mean a lot to be a Team Penske driver, driving for Roger Penske, to be able to win this race and win it in front of a crowd which we're going to have here. I think it would mean a heck of a lot this specific year, again, looking at the circumstances that we've all had to fight through together.

It would mean a great deal, but obviously any one of us would love to be able to do that. We need to work together to make it happen.

Q. For Tim, are you happy with the gains you've made from last season's Indy 500 to this season's 500 in both the aerodynamics and the engine department, and why?

TIM CINDRIC: I guess probably early to answer to that question, to be honest. Today will give us some indication of the difference between last year and this year. But it's really difficult to tell in the running that we've done at this point in time to what degree our competitiveness has changed from last year.



I know there's been a lot of work put in, not only from our team but also everybody at Chevrolet into how to make ourselves more competitive than we were last year, not only as a team but as an overall manufacturer's group.

I think we're optimistic that we've closed that gap, but we only know what we've accomplished and what we've done. And I think we've taken good steps there. I think our preparation for the race and understanding the different things that occurred last year I think is as good as any year that we've been here.

Then you have to execute. So you can have the best cars and the best aerodynamics and the best engine, and if you don't execute on race day in the pits or anywhere else, I think that it's not going to be your day. This race is won typically by somebody that doesn't make any mistakes as a team, so we still need to execute on that end.

The answer to your question is our first goal is our qualifying. Last year we didn't have any cars in the top nine. That may have been the first time we've ever been in that situation.

As one of the guys said, It's our goal to get the cars in the top nine and then focus on race day. It's probably a little too early to give you, I guess, a full grade on kind of where we are.

Q. Scott, just wanted to follow up on the Rick Mears. Obviously you've spoken about how much experience he has at IMS. What's the best piece of advice he has given you?

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: Trust your ass. Feel the car. Feel the car. Sorry, but that's literally the best piece I've ever had. Trust it. If something doesn't feel right, come in. If it feels good, play with it, get used to it, the front bar, the rear bar, the weight jacker. But yeah, he's been phenomenal.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you so much, and our thanks to Team Penske for coming in this morning.

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