

NTT INDYCAR SERIES

News Conference

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Indianapolis, Indiana, USA

Simon Pagenaud

Tim Hertzner

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: This might be the cutest news conference we've ever done. Our day continues up here at the Indianapolis Motor Speedway, great to have everyone here with us including the one-time NTT INDYCAR SERIES champion and 2019 Indianapolis 500 champion. Who can forget that iconic photo in Victory Lane with Norman, the Jack Russell terrier. Simon is taking that to a whole new level now, his love of dogs.

Tim Hertzner also joins us as well, the president and CEO of Lutheran Church Charities.

Our six furry friends with us are K-9 Comfort Dogs, Naomi, Mercy, Jared, Hannah, Emma and Benjamin. They are also with their handlers today, who we welcome as well.

K-9 Comfort Dogs provides a vital service to people who have undergone natural or human-caused trauma such as hurricanes, tornadoes, shootings, et cetera, so forth. When invited, they also deploy in terms of disaster and crisis to bring comfort to all those affected, including first responders and the volunteers.

For more on all that, we turn things over to Simon Pagenaud.

SIMON PAGENAUD: It's fun to be here, talk about something else than racing. We're going to talk about dogs.

Obviously as you guys know I've always loved dogs. I grew up with dogs at home. I found that they bring you so much love and respect in life. I've always been very, very close to my furry animals.

With Hailey, my wife, we fostered a dog here when we were in Indianapolis living here. Worked closely with the Indy Humane Society. As you know we donated as well with Borg-Warner after winning the Indianapolis 500 to them to help the cause. We've always been trying to find

ways to help great communities that work with dogs in relationship with humans.

Obviously we've had the chance to find Norman, who is an emotional support animal, and a fantastic Jack Russell to have around. He's taught us a lot, taught us love, taught us to relate on the bad days. This is such a great thing because obviously people live through traumas, whether it's natural like hurricane, tornadoes, loss of their house, or disease that can also be very traumatic in a family, fire. There's also the non-natural part, which could be a mass shooting like we've had at the Sandy, Connecticut, Elementary School. These dogs were dispatched there and helped kids at school, helped comfort them.

As you can see on their harness, it says, Pet me. Usually when you see a dog at the airport, it says, Do not pet me. If you guys want to pet the dogs, kiss the dogs, get licked by the dogs, that's why they here for. I hope that makes you smile.

Yeah, we definitely have a strong, strong love for dogs. We partnered with Julius K-9 which is a harness company, they make harness for dogs. They try to design the best harness to provide great comfort for the owner and a great bond between the owner and the dog.

That's why that relationship started after they saw Norman in Victory Lane when we won the 2019 Indianapolis 500. It's been amazing to have them by our side and in this situation.

We'll tell you a little surprise afterwards in relationship with Julius K-9. Fantastic opportunity to have some smiles tonight.

THE MODERATOR: You also learned of the Comfort Ministries?

SIMON PAGENAUD: Absolutely. That's what this is all about. They have 120 dogs in the U.S. dispatched all around the U.S., 27 states. Some of their handlers are here with them. They have 2,000 hours of training, which I could not believe when I heard the number. I heard from Tim, starts at eight weeks old. They just train them to comfort those in those traumas I explained earlier.



When I heard of them, I thought this was a fantastic cause. I wanted to be behind it so here I am, here we are.

THE MODERATOR: Doug Boles was a part of it. Suzy Elliott from our staff. Certainly we're fortunate to have Tim here as well as six of the K-9 Comfort teams. Tim, tell us about it a little bit.

TIM HETZNER: Well, I never thought I'd be doing dogs, but it was through a disaster response when I saw the power of dogs help people calm down and help them deal with the loss they've had, to be able to talk about it. We started with four dogs in 2008. It was one of the most effective ways of helping people in crisis and disaster. We just keep growing.

It's the characteristics of a dog. I think they're a gift from God. They're active listeners, they're confidential, they don't take notes, they show unconditional love, and they wag a tail. If you had all those qualities with a friend, I don't have any friends that have all those qualities at one time.

SIMON PAGENAUD: Me neither (laughter).

TIM HETZNER: I'm always amazed at what dogs can teach humans. There's certainly a challenge out there in our world for dogs to help people to just chill, be nice, listen and help people. That's what keeps me going with these furry blondes.

THE MODERATOR: You talk about comfort dogs, being there in service. Most recently here in Indianapolis with what happened at the FedEx facility, the dogs were there to help.

TIM HETZNER: Right. It's the people that were at the FedEx facility, families. There's also media that not only have to cover the story but live it. It's also first responders. The coroner's office, police departments. There's a whole array of people that are affected in a mass shooting like that. Also people that have been through other mass shootings. I got calls from people from Sandy Hook when the shooting took place here. People in Boulder because we were there a few weeks earlier. It relives it to many people.

That's why we keep expanding the ministry to be out into those areas. We're doing suicides. There's a lot of people that just need somebody to care, listen, and be there. The dogs are a good bridge to do that.

THE MODERATOR: Among the reasons we're here, sooner or later the fourth floor media center was going to go to the dogs. We're glad it has finally come to that.

There's also a very important presentation. Let's do the photo-op. We'll explain it afterwards.

(Photo-op)

SIMON PAGENAUD: We're very excited. With the partnership of Julius K-9 which is actually a leader in Europe on the dog's harness, they've started developing a business here in the U.S. about two years ago. I'm very, very proud to be with them, representing them.

They've decided because of this amazing cause and idea that Tim has had to build a Comfort K-9, we've decided to support with a \$5,000 check the cause basically. I call it the cause. Should it call it the cause?

TIM HETZNER: It's a ministry.

SIMON PAGENAUD: That's where my language barrier starts right there. I'm sorry about that. I learned the word.

Yeah, we're very, very happy to be able to do that. That's why we're very happy to have the platform of INDYCAR and IMS to provide us the opportunity to show it and also talk great words about the ministry.

Pretty exciting moment. I'm very happy. Never had the chance to do this before here during the race weekend. Thank you very much.

TIM HETZNER: Simon, thank you. Julius K-9, first of all thank them for the fine products they have, also for the generosity to keep us serving in a very demanding world right now with the number of tragedies that take place out there.

They'll eat tonight. We'll feed them tonight. That's why they come up when you brought the check out.

SIMON PAGENAUD: For food. Dogs know food, that's for sure. They need treats tonight, a lot of treats. Bacon treats. Norman loves salmon treats. Won't eat anything else besides that. That dog is so picky. Even eats sushi. My dog eats sushi.

TIM HETZNER: Our diet is pretty controlled.

THE MODERATOR: How did you fall in love with dogs? Before Norman?

SIMON PAGENAUD: My dad tried to hunt. He was terrible at hunting. But he loved having a dog with him. In France, you go hunting with your dog. It's a moment that he really enjoyed. He used to do that with my grandfather. They used to go hunting. My grandfather was much better

hunting.

Anyway, my dad lost his license to hunt because he was so bad at it. He won't be happy I say that. So we had a Labrador actually when I was born. Unfortunately he passed away really quickly. We got another Labrador. She was something else, let me tell you. She taught me a lot about respecting a dog. Couldn't mess with her too much.

We had a dog that you guys probably don't know here, but it's called a griffon. He was the sweetest dog. I basically grew up with him because he lived 17 years. I came to Indianapolis and he unfortunately passed when I was here. That was probably one of the most traumatic times of my life, just losing my dog.

I had to heal quite frankly because I went through school with him. Every time I would come back from school, 4 p.m. in France, pretty early, I would just come up the stairs, my dog would be waiting for me, sitting there, we would cuddle. He would do everything with me.

We decided to have Norman more recently, five years ago now. Since he's been with us, it's been very soothing in life in general. We have a very stressful life. You can say that race car drivers have the best life, yes, but it's also very stressful, very anxious life. Even for Hailey who is watching me go 240 miles an hour, it's not fun actually to watch your husband go that fast against crazy 32 other guys. For her I think having Norman was very helpful emotionally and in soothing.

So, yeah, it's been a great journey. For me dogs have definitely shaped the person that I am today. I can relate obviously to helping people that struggle in life. I can really relate to that just because everybody needs love. These guys will give you as much love as they can give you and they don't judge you. That's very special.

Q. I was over in the merchandise trackside, of all the merchandise only Norman's was sold out.

SIMON PAGENAUD: That's a good sign (smiling).

Q. Did you know that Norman was going to be a celebrity?

SIMON PAGENAUD: No. I really had no idea. Honestly this was the most organic thing we've done. I won't lie. I've been posting pictures to attract people to my social media. It's just natural. He actually has his own social media. He has his own fans. They don't even know about me.

It's quite surprising. We've done it for fun. It's grown a lot. He's got more than 10,000 followers. Julius K-9 is with us because of Norman. After that photo here in Victory Lane, they got interested in this story.

Yeah, he's a celebrity. I get asked non-stop, How is Norman? Where is Norman? What is he doing? Why is he not with you.

I can't drive with him. He's often in the motorhome. I miss him dearly. It's hard not to have the family here at the Speedway. For me he's been an incredible companion to have.

Q. How is Norman getting along with Marley?

SIMON PAGENAUD: Great question. We study a lot with Hailey, before Marley was born, on how we could bring him into the house, which is Norman's territory. Let me tell you, it's his house. I work so he can have his house.

We try to understand. That's when I learnt that golden retrievers are the best dog for babies, number one. Unfortunately Jack Russell was not on that list. Norman can tend to be a bit anti-social at times.

We brought the baby. It's better not to bring the baby to the door, leave the baby in the car seat, have the dog smell the baby. We had a blanket as well during the hospital that one of the grandma brought back home. He slept with the blanket the first night.

When Marley came to the house, he smelled, went around the car seat, didn't think too much of it. A few days later he kissed him on the forehead. So we knew that was a big leap forward. Obviously we need to keep doing work. The biggest thing is attention.

But it's fun. I think he's going to be the best brother.

Q. You said last Sunday, Did anyone watch the first 15 minutes of practice? You felt pretty good. You looked good today. Feel good for Sunday?

SIMON PAGENAUD: What do you think?

Q. Roger Penske said his cars are always good on Sunday.

SIMON PAGENAUD: That's a good one to hear.

We learned a lot. I think we looked very good today. It was interesting, it looked like a flawless session. We went through a lot of iterations of downforce packages. We learnt a lot. I was very pleased with that. We even learnt

some gears which you saw in the case of pit lane. Testament to my crew guys. I felt strong. I felt like I could pass cars.

It's not going to be easy. I'm not going to lie. It's not going to be easy starting that far back. If I started on pole, I think we would see a 2019 all over again. We have some work to come back. I am going to have to be more aggressive than I can usually be. That's probably the only way to go to the front.

I felt very confident today. I felt like we got something for the show.

Q. Cool weather would help you?

SIMON PAGENAUD: I think this was too cool for us. I think it unfortunately made other people look better than they really are. Us, we kind of were already good. It's not like you could get better than better.

I think if it's a little hotter, which we know it's going to be 75, it should be right in the middle and that should work out really well for us.

THE MODERATOR: To wrap things up, Julius K-9 donating \$5,000 to K-9 Comfort. What is the impact it will have for you guys?

TIM HETZNER: We never go where we're not invited and we never charge those we serve. The volunteers, the handlers, the dogs, we go just by donations. This allows us to continue to go and to stay and to come back. We don't just come in for a while, leave, never come back again. We are still doing work here in this city, still doing work in Boulder, still doing work from Katrina and Sandy Hook and Orlando, Austin.

THE MODERATOR: Sounds like a labor of love for you.

TIM HETZNER: Yes, because to see in somebody's eyes that have lost hope, to see that hope come back, yeah (tearing up).

SIMON PAGENAUD: I think this tells you everything right there.

TIM HETZNER: The world needs it. World needs it. Got a lot of people that have lost hope. The dogs are the tool.

Dogs are one of the few animals that will look you in the eye. That's why a dog can spot across a room when somebody is hurting. I used to think it was smell. It's their eyes. Eyes don't lie. Faces can. Dogs can spot when somebody's hurting. They can point. They lean in.

They're big pillows. Sometimes people walk up and say, Is that dog alive?

I say, I don't know. Why don't you pet it and see.

But you see they're safe. You can talk to them. I'll never forget a boy, fourth grade, Sandy Hook. After the shooting, he never talked for four days. His parents knew that we were out at a community center with the dogs. At that time I had an old dog named Howie, Howie liked to lay down. His parents brought him out. They saw him. The boy just stopped. I motioned to the parents just move away from your son.

Howie looked at him, got up, moved over, leaned into him. Together they went down. This boy laid on top of Howie. The parents are like... Just leave him.

After about two minutes, the boy lifts up Howie's ear and tells Howie the comfort dog everything that happened in that classroom that day when he lost some of his classmates. For the first time in four days he shares it, and it's to a dog. Why? It's safe. Non-judgmental. Shows unconditional love. That's what it took to break that ice.

So the investment in training dogs. Training dogs is the easy part. It's the humans.

SIMON PAGENAUD: I concur, absolutely.

THE MODERATOR: It's wonderful work you're doing. Thank you and congratulations to Julius K-9 as well.

TIM HETZNER: Thank you.

SIMON PAGENAUD: Thank you. It's awesome to be able to use this sport to do amazing things like this.

TIM HETZNER: Dogs have one request of you.

SIMON PAGENAUD: Cuddle?

TIM HETZNER: They'd like to go around the track in your car all together.

SIMON PAGENAUD: Might be a problem (laughter).

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