

NTT INDYCAR SERIES

News Conference

Sunday, May 30, 2021

Indianapolis, Indiana, USA

Alex Palou

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: We'll continue with our press conferences here. We have now been joined by Alex Palou, driver of the No. 10 NTT Data for Chip Ganassi Racing with a second-place finish. It is his best finish in the Indianapolis 500.

Alex, you were competitive all day, battling for the lead. Tell us about your day.

ALEX PALOU: Yeah, thank you. Hello, everybody.

It hurts. It hurts a lot. I didn't expect that a second place would hurt that much until I crossed the finish line. But I'm super proud, super happy. I think the No. 10 NTT Data car was super fast. I had the best car for sure.

I was really confident. It was a close battle until the end. The good thing is that the two cars were Honda powered. That's good. Congrats to Helio and Honda.

Yeah, I tried everything. It hurts. But to be honest, it's good to lose against probably one of the best. Well, it's one of the best, probably the best. Yeah, it's Helio.

I don't know why, but he had three, and why he wanted four? He could have gave me one (smiling). I just wanted one. But it's okay. We'll come back next year, for sure.

THE MODERATOR: You have a lot more time to get that win.

ALEX PALOU: I know, but I wanted this one. It's okay, it's over (smiling).

THE MODERATOR: We'll go ahead and start with questions.

Q. You're now going into the doubleheader of Belle Isle with the championship lead. How do you feel about despite a shortcoming you're going into something else uplifting spirit after leaving Indianapolis 500?

ALEX PALOU: I'm not thinking about that too much. I think when you start thinking about the championship, if you're not executing on track, there's no point. If you are executing on track, it makes no point either.

We just try to make session by session as we've been doing. If we keep doing what we've been doing everywhere, I think we'll be able to fight until the end for this championship.

For sure it's good to get a little bit of gap now after the 500. I think we've been able to get a lot of points in our, let's say, weaker places like Texas and here. Super proud about that. Cannot wait to go to my area, let's say. I'm more comfortable there.

Yeah, super happy. We'll keep on fighting.

Q. It was really an intense battle. You have really high spirits, you're in a positive place after that. How do you balance what you just went through but keeping a positive mentality on all of it?

ALEX PALOU: It's racing. It's the beauty about racing. When it hurts, it's good because you know there's something better. When you win, it's like the most satisfying thing.

When you lose, for me, c'mon, we finished second in my second Indy 500. How can I be sad? I just hurts a little bit. Because I wanted that win more than anything, but Helio wanted it as well. I think all the 33 drivers wanted the same.

I'm happy. I'm living the dream, man. I'm able to drive the fastest car for the best team around Indianapolis and and fight for it. Everything was good today.

Q. Indianapolis and INDYCAR has been a dream for you for a while. How do you put in perspective everything you've just accomplished? What does it mean to you to even finish second here?

ALEX PALOU: Yeah, when I was at the pre-greet listening to the anthem, that's the most special thing. I don't know why. Maybe because when you're sitting at home and



you're a kid, I don't know, I think that's the best part about the race, apart of the race.

I was there. I was like, Man, we're starting P6, driving the No. 10. I'm here in America. I'm having a blast. I'm super proud of what we've been doing. But we got to keep on working.

THE MODERATOR: Was it more fun this year in your second 500 having the 135,000 fans out there?

ALEX PALOU: Is that a question (laughter)?

To be honest, I think I was lucky last year to not having any fans. Now every single person that I see, it's amazing, the energy that you get from them. Every single person, for me this was fully crowded today. On the parade lap, I was like, Oh, my God, I'm driving here.

Yeah, hopefully we got some good photos today with everybody, with all the fans. Yeah, hopefully next year we have full capacity.

Q. You could trade positions with Helio at the end, but last time he passed you, could you do anything?

ALEX PALOU: To be honest, I think when I say we had the fastest car, I mean because as soon as Helio was passing me, I was able to get him back before turn three or even in turn one. I was able just to manage when I wanted to pass him.

But the thing is that after three, four laps, he was behind me, he was able to pass me and I couldn't really do anything because it was overtaking me all the car.

When he passed me, I was like, Oh, maybe that's going to be bad for me just because we were reaching the traffic. As soon as you're on traffic, you're not P2 any more, you're like P8. When you are P8 on a pack, it was not easy to pass today.

So, yeah, I still tried, fight for it, turn three, turn four. It was not enough. For sure the traffic made the things a bit more difficult today. That's part of racing. At some other areas, some other parts of the race the traffic was helping me. This time Helio was a bit luckier at the end. Yeah, he deserve it.

Q. You have two starts here. Helio has four wins in 21 starts. When you look at the last 10 laps, is it just a matter of experience? Do you feel like you did everything you could do, but if you had experience you'd be able to battle better with him?

ALEX PALOU: I don't know. I need to ask him if he was going all out the last 15 laps or if he was waiting for the last four to overtake me. If he was waiting for the last four, then that was experience. If he was just going all out, he had better timing today.

For sure, if he had 18 or 19 more starts than I do, he had a bit more experience. But I had a lot of fun. I was able to really get the experience and learn a lot from him. Yeah, it was good.

Q. How much do you think you'll be rewatching the last 10 laps?

ALEX PALOU: Until from today every day I'll rewatch it for sure until Detroit (smiling).

Q. Two or three laps to go, what more realistically could you have done to catch Helio in the closing laps?

ALEX PALOU: I think I understood.

I was doing everything to catch him. I think my car was really good out of two, so I knew I had the really good shot for two and three. I was trying to prepare a bit.

But the thing is he was getting the tow from the traffic cars. He was not losing speed against me on the straight line. Yeah, that's all I could do. I think I gave it everything. I even had a moment in turn four where I almost went to the wall because I was trying too hard. Yeah, these things happen. He was better today.

Q. In your years of racing, have you ever seen a post race celebration comparable to what we saw Helio experience here?

ALEX PALOU: I did. That's what I wanted to do. But he got it this time (laughter).

That was fun. That was super fun. I'm super happy for him. He deserve it. But, yeah, I want to get those photos, those celebrations with everybody on the stands. Hopefully one year we'll get that.

Q. What is it with you young guys, you and Pato and Rinus? What are you bringing that's giving the veterans such a tussle?

ALEX PALOU: Thank you (smiling).

I don't know. To be honest, we didn't win a championship, so we are just doing good races for sure. We are up there. But the guy that's been winning most championships is

Scott Dixon. Until we don't win a championship, I don't think it's fair for them to say that we are taking over.

They are always up there. Look at Helio. He won today. The past races also Scott won. Yeah, I think we're doing a good job, for sure. I think Rinus was up there, Pato was good. We had a good battle.

Yeah, we want to take over, but these veterans, they don't allow us to do it.

Q. How much were you thinking about last year? Obviously you had the incident in the race. Last year's event was so important to you because it got you recognized by Ganassi. How much were you thinking about last year's race at the end?

ALEX PALOU: Yeah, last year was different to this year, for sure. I had no experience. I didn't know what to expect on the start, restarts, pit stops. Today everything went super smooth. I was able to just battle.

Yeah, it was close at the last straight. I think the experience I got last year was that you cannot relax here. I did relax a little bit last year and I ended up on the wall. This year I was with high tension all the time. This place is amazing. That's why it's so special.

Q. Do you think you've taken your driving to a new level this year? Do you think you've stepped things up to match your new team this year? Do you think fighting with someone like Helio across 500 miles in the Indy 500 proves it?

ALEX PALOU: Yeah, for sure I'm better than last year. Still, Scott was starting P1 today. If he didn't have the issue with the fuel, he was up there fighting. He's tough to beat. Every time he's out, he's super fast.

I'm super proud that we are doing well on ovals because, as I said, I had no experience before. I'm feeling good. I don't think we're doing any crazy moves or anything like that. We're just learning lap by lap, yeah, having fun.

But there's a long way to go to reach these guys.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you, Alex. Congratulations on your finish. We'll let you go and continue with questions for Simon.