

NTT INDYCAR SERIES

News Conference

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Romain Grosjean

Alex Palou

Press Conference



ROMAIN GROSJEAN: We tried very hard. It was good enough for P2 but not good enough for a win, so next time.

THE MODERATOR: Alex Palou joining us. Tell us about your day. You led for a while there and come home third in this one.

ALEX PALOU: Yeah, it was a good day for us. Started third. We had to be aggressive with the strategy there to try and beat Newgarden and Colton there in the first stop. We did, and the guys did an amazing strategy, amazing stop, and we came out in P1.

Then we were leading for some laps, but I could see that we were lacking a bit of speed compared to Josef. We had to pit because we pitted two laps earlier, so we had not a lot of fuel, and he got us. It was a good battle with him on track, as well. I think it was on the limit, but we tried, both of us. He won today.

And then on the restart with Romain, I couldn't really do much. I was really bad out of the hairpin and he was really good all the race and also with red tires, so yeah, not much I could have done. But it was a good day for the 10 car.

Q. After that first stint were you surprised to find yourself in the lead the way you did?

ALEX PALOU: No. Yeah, you are always happy but I was not surprised. That was what we were aiming for. That was the strategy. I knew we had a good stop. We had a really fast out lap, so I knew we were going to be in a really good position. Yeah, I was not surprised. I was obviously super happy that everything worked out and the strategy side went really well.

Q. Romain, could you describe where most of your Pushes-to-Pass got used up, and do you kind of wish that you'd conserved one or two there for that last battle with Josef?

ROMAIN GROSJEAN: You know, through the race, at the beginning, I didn't want to get stuck behind some drivers that were on a different strategy. I was behind Scott Dixon for a while and I knew he was on a three stopper, so I used some there before the pit and after the pit trying to make some good way ahead.

I think that was it. I had 30 seconds with 42 left, I used 15 on the straight with Alex, but he had a really good break to Turn 1. That was late.

ALEX PALOU: Yeah, that was late. I had no Push-to-Pass there. I had 11 seconds for the whole race, and I was like, oh, I'm not going to use it here, but still, you did a good job, man.

ROMAIN GROSJEAN: So there, and then tried again on my next lap, which was my 30 seconds gone.

It's a long straight line here. We trimmed a little bit to go fast on the straight, but that's the way it went. At the last pit stop I still had 100 seconds, and I thought I was good but they just disappeared.

ALEX PALOU: I thought somebody took them away from me, but --

ROMAIN GROSJEAN: Maybe we should inquire that.

ALEX PALOU: Yeah.

Q. Similar question for Alex. The battle with Josef for the lead after the second pit stop, I presume you pretty much knew that was going to be for the win, whoever had the lead. It seemed like it was very hard but clean racing.

ALEX PALOU: Yeah, the laps earlier, when I stopped I had an out lap and one lap, which always on the out lap in INDYCAR you always lose the position, but we always had to use the overtake. I had like 100 something seconds and when I looked down it was like 11 something seconds and I was like, oh, God. So he got me. I thought I could have got him back into Turn 4. It's not a place where you can overtake, but I had to go for it because otherwise I knew that he would get the tires into temperature. So I tried. I saw it was really close, and I didn't make it.



It was hard but clean racing. I think from his side, as well. He gave me enough room that I could try it but not that I could make it happen. So yeah, it was fun.

Q. Did you feel like if you get the lead there, you're in control of the race at that point?

ALEX PALOU: Yeah, obviously when you're in the lead, you always feel in control of the race. I think it's obviously better to be in the lead with zero Push-to-Pass than be second with the 50 Push-to-Pass. You never know what's going to happen, so I was trying my best to keep the lead on a different strategy. We couldn't make it today. Normally we were able to do it last year, but yeah, we'll try again.

I think we gave everything we had. We were lacking a bit of speed out of the hairpin, and that made it really difficult to try and defend and also to try and attack him.

Q. For Romain, I know you finished fifth at St. Pete but Texas didn't go the way you wanted. Did this feel more like what you'd expect out of Andretti and how have things gone through three races with Andretti now?

ROMAIN GROSJEAN: Yeah, I think it's going well. We had very, very little testing before we got to St. Pete. We were one day in Sebring and then St. Pete, and then two days that we wanted to test it snowed. Eventually got a test in Barber after Texas and got the car to better position.

We had a small issue on Friday sadly so we lost Friday as a session on my side, so it's never ideal, and I think looking at the race maybe, there's stuff we would have done slightly differently, but yes, I think we had the right strategy. We had a good pit stop from the guys, good communication, and then a P2, so that's pretty good.

The car is straightforward to drive. There's one thing I need to improve to make it a touch more to my liking, but I think we've got a very strong baseline and a car that can go super fast. It was my fault, just didn't qualify well. If I had started P2 today, things would have been a little bit easier.

Q. The scoreboard shows Penske has three wins, three races this year, but I would presume both of you feel as if it's a little tighter and Andretti and Ganassi are a little bit closer?

ALEX PALOU: Yeah, they did an amazing job at the start of the year. The same way we started really good the past year, they started really good this year I think with the three cars they have. Yeah, that's going to change soon. I don't

know if next race or if two, three races, but that's going to change, and we're still there. Everybody is talking that they've won three races, but I think we are only 15 points away from them.

We are always there. We are trying the best. We got already two podiums this season, so yeah, I'm feeling confident.

I think this start of the season for us was tough. We didn't get good results last year with these first three races, so yeah, I think we're improving the results we got last year, and we'll get back hopefully at Barber.

Q. You mentioned, of course, you elaborated on going into the month of May with Barber where you got your win and of course Indianapolis, a strong point where Scott had an interesting day. Just the mindset going into that.

ALEX PALOU: Yeah, I think we had, as I said, a really good start of the season. We are now heading to some of the tracks that we know we can be a bit better, that we have better cars that I'm more confident. We tested at Barber, as well, two weeks ago. It felt amazing to be back there, and then we go to the month of May, which is the best month of the year, a part of April which is my birthday, also. So yeah, April is good. But I cannot wait for the month of May. I think it's really special for everybody, all the drivers, all the crews, the fans, so yeah, hopefully we're already carrying good momentum, but hopefully we can carry better momentum with Barber and Indy GP before the big one, the Indianapolis 500.

Q. Coming out of the pandemic and the chance to really interact with fans again in the open paddock setting and that kind of thing, what's special particularly about Long Beach, about INDYCAR in general, the ability to kind of develop those personal relationships with fans in that setting again?

ROMAIN GROSJEAN: I mean, Long Beach last year was already very impressive. This year I think it was even more, just so much fans, such a good event generally from the racetrack as I said, location ready, everyone wants to be in California, right, and enjoy this. It was great.

Honestly, I don't know how much a pack of signature (indiscernible), I would say 150 or at least through six or seven during the weekend, which is great, and people are just loving it and just having a good time.

St. Pete was very good, and here has been also very good.

ALEX PALOU: Yeah, I agree with him. Last year was

already like really good to finish the year here. Such an amazing atmosphere that we always get here. But the past two years has been amazing, and yeah, today it was pretty impressive. When we did the parade lap it was pretty good, all the atmosphere, and all the energy we got from the fans. Can't wait to be back here next year.

Q. For lack of a better term, Colton had a stranglehold on the weekend and the first part of the race. When he had his contact, how much did that change the way you looked at the rest of the race and how you approached the last part of the race?

ALEX PALOU: So I didn't know what -- I was focused with Josef there. My battle was with Josef. Obviously with Colton, as well, but was primarily about Josef, so I didn't know what happened. I still haven't seen what happened. But it didn't change much. Like suddenly I was P2 and Colton was not there, and it was I think Marcus at that time. So yeah, didn't change much.

ROMAIN GROSJEAN: Yeah, I had to ask Michael at the end of the race what happened to Colton. I didn't know. I didn't see it. It was just a bit of the race I was on my own and then eventually I could catch those guys, got lucky with a yellow and wasn't red, and it was good.

Q. Alex, what exactly was the communication like between you and the pit wall there as you came out of your first stop and you realized, wow, I'm actually in the lead of this one?

ALEX PALOU: It was good. I think we were really aggressive and I was not expecting to pit early. Normally an undercut in INDYCAR doesn't work. If it's a normal undercut there's no traffic or yellow or anything. It doesn't work just because you have to do a lap, warm up your tires and then start getting up to speed, and especially us, we've been struggling a lot with that.

We did that, I just listened, I went for it. The guys did an amazing pit stop, and nobody covered that, so they let us run while they were fighting on track, and we came out on P1, so yeah, it was amazing. That kind of made our race a little bit harder at the end, having to pit two laps earlier for the second stop, but anyway, I think it was a good try. We have to be like that. We have to try stuff like that more aggressive, and yeah, it was not enough today, but hopefully it's enough for Barber.

Q. Alex, what was the real problem in the second pit stop you made? People is hungry to hear from you. If you can answer in Spanish it would be perfect for us, but if not go ahead in English and thank you very much.

ALEX PALOU: (Answer in Spanish.)

Q. Romain, just want to talk to you about your street course kind of form at the start of the season. It's been very impressive and I know that wasn't something always very natural to you when you came into INDYCAR last year, so how much change is there at the team and how much of the change is the work you've been doing yourself on your driving and adapting to street course racing in INDYCAR?

ROMAIN GROSJEAN: Yeah, I know I was told that, and honestly I was a bit surprised. I think last year every street course was about St. Pete; I qualified in the Fast Six, so we were always very fast. We didn't always get the best strategy call or luck last year in the street courses, and the last one in Long Beach was my mistake where I brushed the wall.

But this year definitely I know I have to drive a little bit differently. I'm trying to go for the championship, and I cannot just go flat out all the time. Like in St. Pete in the race I was struggling a little bit with my front tent, so I kind of took it carefully. Today here I knew I wanted to go long on the first red, so I was driving around that, but then the car was good and gave me confidence. I still believe there's a couple of things we can do better, but yes, I just think that last year I was unlucky sometime. I was on for a really good one in Nashville, just the amount of yellow flags we had killed me.

We were on for a very good one in Detroit and then I had contact with Pagenaud that punctured my tire. That doesn't really happen often.

Then St. Pete was a bit of a hard one, was my first one. As I say, Long Beach was my fault.

I just think that I heard that comment. I don't think it's quite accurate. But I appear to be doing well this year.

Q. Do you think there's anything you could have done towards the end of the race to change how it worked out? I know you were talking about being in a race on your own and you can't always plan for how the cautions are going to play out, but just looking back on it now, is there anything you could have done differently to have had a better chance at the end there?

ROMAIN GROSJEAN: You know, you don't have that much option when you're on fresh tires or red versus black on a street course. You know it's going to equalize itself after a while. As I said, the first one on Alex, and he

defended really well on the inside, braked super late, and I think that one -- if I could have pulled that one out, then I would have been fine to get Josef on the next lap. But I did not, so by the time I got to Josef I didn't have much Push-to-Pass left and he had a really good straight-line speed, so it was just hard to get him.

Q. The yellow comes out with about a lap to go. How much of a bummer is that for you guys knowing that pretty much seals the victory? Did either one of you have something for Josef at the end?

ALEX PALOU: I didn't. Yeah, you always want to finish on a green flag, but you kind of understand that it's a street course and somebody touched the wall. Yeah, I didn't have anything for them, so for me it didn't really change much.

ROMAIN GROSJEAN: No, I think Josef had it. I was looking at Turn 11, the hairpin, making a last-lap lunge maybe if I was close enough, but I don't think I was close enough on that lap and Josef was driving well and not making any mistakes. It's not ideal to finish under yellow, but I don't think the result would have been much different.

THE MODERATOR: Congratulations, great weekend, Romain Grosjean and Alex Palou.

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