

NTT INDYCAR SERIES

News Conference

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Simona de Silvestro

Tatiana Calderon

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: This weekend the NTT INDYCAR SERIES back at it heading to the historic 4.0 mile road course at Road America. For the first time in some nine years two women will be competing in a significant number of races during the NTT INDYCAR SERIES season.

This weekend Simona de Silvestro returns to the series, first of several races in 2022, as Paretta Autosport expand their program this year after doing the one-off Indy 500 last year. She will drive the No. 16 Paretta Autosport Chevrolet.

Preparing for her sixth start of the season, driver of the No. 11 Rocket A.J. Foyt Racing Chevrolet, it's great to have Tatiana Calderon with us as well.

Simona, certainly you've been in the simulator, this is a program that was announced in April with KiwiCo onboard. How excited are you to get to Road America?

SIMONA de SILVESTRO: I'm super excited to get back in the car. Yeah, it's been a while since we announced it, so there was a lot of time to think about it, maybe overthink it. Talking a lot with the engineers and stuff like that. I'm just really glad to be in the week of the race now, kind of just getting down to work and get going.

So, yeah, I can't wait to be back in an INDYCAR. I've been waiting for this for a while now, especially on the road course. So, yeah, pretty excited about it.

THE MODERATOR: Obviously Paretta Autosport, Female-Forward team, bringing back most of the team both over the wall and when it comes to the commercial side as well.

Even those no longer with the team, Caitlyn Brown, she did the inside front tire last year's 500, she is now with Scott McLaughlin's car as a junior mechanic. Lauren Sullivan is now a coordinator with Team Penske. Madison Conrad did the inside right tire. She is now involved in NASCAR.

The women's program that has and is working providing a lot of opportunities. So I guess the question is, how excited are you to see what this next step looks like with Paretta Autosport?

SIMONA de SILVESTRO: Like you just said, I think it's really important. I think what Beth has put together last year, just doing the Indy 500 with these women, seeing three of them really kind of taking off and doing some really important jobs on some other teams, I think it just really gives a lot of credit to her.

I think if she wouldn't have put this program together, I don't think these women would be in those positions now. I think that's something really special. I think it's something that Beth can really be proud of.

For me as well, I think the last seven years I've always tried to come back to INDYCAR. It was really a struggle, to be honest, to get a seat or something like that. Trying really hard to do it because I think for me INDYCAR is very special and I think it's something that really suits me, where I really wanted to race.

She putting this program together, especially now doing more races, I think it's really important, a really big step forward actually for us as well, just to see how we're doing, and hopefully we can really build on this and become full-time.

Yeah, I'm super pumped. She's an amazing person. I wouldn't be here without her from that point of view. I think all of the women involved, me, myself, the other ones, I think we're pretty grateful for her really fighting for this and getting it going.

THE MODERATOR: Also welcoming Tatiana Calderon. Tell us about the first few races this season for you and what you are learning and continue to learn about the race team and about the NTT INDYCAR SERIES.

TATIANA CALDERON: Yeah, first of all I'm super happy to see another female driver joining the grid, to see women in motorsport. I think it's great for the series, great for the sport. Is another very competitive driver joining the grid that is already quite competitive. Yeah, looking forward to



see Simona and compete against her this weekend and in the next couple of rounds.

But also, you know, it's been very tough for me coming as a rookie with very little testing. So I think we have improved particularly, like, in the road courses where I can, like, explore the limit of the car a little bit more. These street circuits are really tough here, compared to Europe even or some other places. The bumps that you experience in Detroit, for example, I think that's unique from INDYCAR that you can have all these kind of tracks.

I've been enjoying suffering a little bit, as well. It's tough, but we like the good competition. Yeah, hopefully once we get to places where I've been before, like Indy GP again, Mid-Ohio where I tested for the first time last year in July, to go to familiar places, I hope that our performance can continue to improve.

THE MODERATOR: That's what makes the championship all the more special and difficult because of all the disciplines involved.

It's back to Road America really for both of you. Simona, you were in Atlantics in 2007, 2008, and Tatiana in the old Star Mazda Series. Your thoughts about going back to a big track like Road America?

TATIANA CALDERON: I think it was 2011, 2012. All I remember was the carousel and I really liked the track because it reminds you of, I don't know, like Spa-Francochamps or something, flowing elevation changes.

I will be in the simulator just to remind myself of all the corners and stuff. Yeah, happy to be back in a road course. I think everyone enjoys Road America quite a lot, so looking forward to the weekend.

THE MODERATOR: We'll open it up for questions.

Q. Tatiana, through now a handful of races in your rookie INDYCAR season, do you feel like you have a grasp of where you've improved the most so far as well as maybe one or two areas that you're supremely focused on trying to improve as the season goes on?

TATIANA CALDERON: Yes, certainly. I think the first time I did more than 20 laps in the car was, like, in the race in St. Petersburg. Then to understand a little bit the tires like I'm used to, like Pirelli, the Yokohama I was running in Super Formula a few years back. It's a very different type of tire and style I think you need in INDYCAR.

Just getting a little bit of the specific style for this type of

car, a bit heavier, but good power. I think it took me a little bit longer than I would want to. Also because we started with the street circuits. It's a little bit more challenging to explore the limit of the car when you know the wall is right there, and if you miss the track time in a place like this.

Yeah, I think just understanding a little bit more of the car behavior and the tires is what will bring me more performance towards the end of the year.

Q. Simona, you've done full seasons in INDYCAR, but it's been a long time. What do you feel like is a realistic expectation for you and the team?

SIMONA de SILVESTRO: Yeah, I think the last time I was at Road America was 2009. Yeah, it's been quite a while.

But I don't know. For me, the expectation, I think at the end of the day you want to do the best job you can. I think we have to be realistic as well. We have not tested. It's the middle of the season, all these guys and girls have been running half the season already. We need to see where we kind of stack up.

I think for me in a sense, I'm really looking forward to getting back in an INDYCAR. So from that point of view I think I'll push quite hard to get up to speed as quickly as I can.

Yeah, I don't know. I think if we do our job correctly, I think we can be on the competitive side for sure. I don't think we can win the race or be a podium. I don't think. I think that's really unrealistic. Even if we see Will qualifying 16th and stuff like that, I think the field is super deep.

From that point of view, yeah, I think we have to be realistic. We just need to do our job correctly and just kind of, yeah, keep chipping away at it, finishing the race. I think if we do everything correctly, I think the race could be all right.

Q. A decade or so ago it was more common to see a handful of women racing in INDYCAR. Nine years since we had two or more outside the Indy 500. What do you feel getting back to a trend where we see women racing in INDYCAR on a more regular basis, what that can potentially do for the growth, from the fan side or potential future driver side?

SIMONA de SILVESTRO: I think, like you said, for me personally, when I got into INDYCAR in 2010, there were quite a few females. Danica was driving. We were quite a few.

It's interesting the last few times it hasn't really happened.



I think in a sense, seeing at a top level it's only going to be the two of us, but I think the trend has changed a little bit, there's some up-and-coming. If you look at the junior series, I think it's much more common to see female drivers, which I think is really positive.

But for sure, I think being the two of us in a top series, also hopefully get results, I think it can encourage even more girls to go driving and all that. I think it's really important that we are able to be competing in INDYCAR, yeah.

TATIANA CALDERON: I saw you race when I was doing Star Mazda. I look up to Simona, Danica. There was Bea at some races when I was there, as well. It's a shame it was a long period the last couple of years that we hadn't had somebody in the top level of single-seaters.

I think sometimes you have to see it to believe it, for the young generation to say I want to be in INDYCAR, because there are females that can compete against men in a very competitive championship.

I hope that together we can keep that momentum going and to see more females starting also in single-seaters because at the end that's what we need. It's a circle, so hopefully there will be more and more joining us in the future, and we can stay and represent women in the best possible way.

THE MODERATOR: Tatiana, did you look up to Simona, watch her drive?

SIMONA de SILVESTRO: You make me feel old (laughter).

TATIANA CALDERON: Let's just experience looking at that (smiling).

She was doing so well. I wanted to be in INDYCAR watching her and Danica being very competitive. I think great news to have her back, to have more females. The more the better. The more normal it becomes.

THE MODERATOR: You're both way younger than any of us on the call, so don't go there, Simona.

Q. Simona, an unusual situation where when you leave a series for seven years and come back, the car isn't often the same. I guess the chassis is the same fundamentally but a lot of changes to the car. What are you feeling like is going to be your main challenge this weekend, what aspect of the car will be most difficult?

SIMONA de SILVESTRO: Yeah, in the sense when I'm in

the car, it feels pretty similar because, like you said, it's the same chassis. But definitely with the aeroscreen it seems the behavior of the car has changed quite a lot, as well as looking at the onboard looks different than how I used to drive it.

To be honest at the moment, I haven't driven it. I'm a bit maybe overthinking sometimes a little bit. I need to go into the weekend and see what we got.

The good thing is it's been quite a while. I think in a sense I won't really remember how it really felt like so I can start from a blank sheet and work from there. I think a lot of the guys who have been running a lot, I think the aeroscreen changed that a lot. I think they've been trying to get the feel they used to have without it. In that sense for me it's been so long that maybe I'll just hopefully adapt to it a little bit quicker.

But the other thing, I only haven't done a really long race, like an INDYCAR race in a while. I did GT last year where I think we were in the car for like 45 minutes. I think that's going to be interesting to be back in the car for two hours.

I don't know. For me, I feel like a little kid again getting to drive an INDYCAR. Yeah, I'm really looking forward to it. Hopefully I haven't forgotten how to drive so I think we'll be okay.

Q. Can you tell us who your engineer is? Have you been able to establish a relationship there?

SIMONA de SILVESTRO: Yeah, little bit. I actually was in Detroit with the team as well, with Ed Carpenter Racing, kind of integrating. I know a few guys there that I worked with in the past, so that's kind of positive.

John Gentilozzi is going to be my engineer. He's really well-integrated in the team. I think the guys they have there are really strong. From that point of view, even my teammates, I think they're really strong. I can just kind of feed off them, try to get up to speed as quickly as I can.

I know they are quick and that will help as well.

Q. Simona, right now the plan is still Road America, Mid-Ohio and Nashville for you this year, no other races at this point?

SIMONA de SILVESTRO: Correct, yes. At the moment it's those three that we announced.

Q. Because Beth wants to obviously build out Paretta Autosport, Female-Forward, how has the dynamic changed with the female personnel, given three of last



year's members of the team have left? Have they been replaced with other females? What's the female dynamic right now?

SIMONA de SILVESTRO: Yeah, so there's a few that are coming back. Like you just said, three of them left and got different opportunities, which I think is really positive.

But I think what Beth really is going to try to do is really find more girls that can kind of train, train with Carpenter, kind of build them in. Just actually giving them their, let's say, first step into it.

I think she's been able to do that last year. I think that's kind of how she's looking at it: giving the first step. Hopefully they will grow enough within the team that we can start really running with those girls and kind of they can really do the changing tire and all that, really be pointed out to be left front or something like that.

But that will take a little bit of time now, especially with our new association with Carpenter. This is all kind of a work in progress. But hopefully with this year and having even more races next year or something like that, this is really kind of the first steps towards that goal.

Q. Simona, how beneficial was it for you to be integrated with ECR in Detroit? What do you think you learnt over that weekend that you can bring forward to Road America this weekend?

SIMONA de SILVESTRO: Quite a lot. I think the biggest thing was just the process of the race with strategy and all that. It was actually cool to be on the timing stand because in my career I never really did that because I was always driving. You kind of see a little bit all the stuff behind the scenes, you kind of learn and understand a little bit more what the engineers are going through, things like that. That was good.

Also kind of just getting back to how an INDYCAR race unfolds. I haven't been around it for a long time. It was just good to see how this kind of all works.

It's still pretty similar to what how I'm used to, but I think it's always good to get a bit of a refresher, let's say.

Q. Tatiana, Kyle had a great race on Sunday. What do you think the race on Sunday is going to do for the team's confidence this weekend going into Road America?

TATIANA CALDERON: I think it's a very different type of circuit, and the setup will be completely different to a street circuit. Yeah, I think Seb, we were looking a little bit on his

data, the comments he had from the car back in Road America. I think we have a good baseline to start off with.

Obviously, you know, every year every driver is a little bit different in terms of what they like of the car.

But, no, I'm happy. I'm confident the team has been very motivated to keep trying to move up the grid. Yeah, I'm happy with my engineering group and everybody just really listening to my comments and trying to make it better for me.

Hopefully we'll have an entertaining weekend.

Q. How are you feeling about getting back into a road course race after almost seven years? What are your thoughts about not getting a 500 drive but a three-race program for 2022?

SIMONA de SILVESTRO: You know, I'm really looking forward to get on a road course, street course, because I think that's really where I've in the past my strength in a sense. So from that point of view it just gives me a bit of confidence. When I look back at races, I was kind of all right, so I think I can get there again. That's pretty positive.

I think getting the three races instead of the 500, in a sense it makes a lot of sense. I think the situation we would have been in, Ed couldn't run a fourth car, there wasn't enough people to run a fourth car, so it didn't really make much sense to really try to do something that wasn't really possible to do just to do the 500.

Coming up with those three races I think in general, as well, to where Beth wants her team to go, how she wants to grow it, I think it makes a lot of sense for us to be a bit more on track as well, getting this experience.

Also all the women that are involved, to get to experience different things, hopefully we'll get some momentum through that to do this.

Q. Simona, being out for a bit, a lot of talk has been about the road course. Do you think the physicality of the race will be much of a challenge for you?

SIMONA de SILVESTRO: Well, I've been training really hard the last few months. I think for sure when you don't drive for a while, yeah, I think there's always being fit, but then there's driver fit. I would ideally for sure liked to have had a test day to be in the car, seat position, all that. Right now we did everything at the shop and I'm going to go in the first session, and hopefully it will all be good. I think having a test day would have been really good.

But, yeah, I don't know. I've trained a lot. I've been in racing for a long time. Hopefully what I've done is enough. Yeah, you know, for sure I think it won't be a walk in the park. I think these cars are quite tough to drive. You don't have power steering, things like that. The carousel, it will be quite a lot of Gs going in.

For sure it's not going to be super easy, but at the end of the day I'm a racing driver. When opportunities like this come up, I need to be ready for it, and hopefully I am.

Q. You're a racing driver. Put your INDYCAR racing hat on. Do you see yourself as a female INDYCAR driver or an INDYCAR driver who happens to be a female?

SIMONA de SILVESTRO: Yeah, well, definitely more the second one. I think for me throughout my whole career I've always just been a driver. You know what I mean? I think for sure as the years went on, I realized I definitely can have an impact as well because I just kind of went my way. I didn't care that I was a girl, I just wanted to be a racing driver, I wanted to win races. That's how I went about it.

In the sense I think racing is a great platform to show that you can compete against the guys. I think I've shown that in the past. I think that's a really important message. Also I think in business and all that, if somebody is good enough, they should get the opportunity.

I think that's something I've always fought for. I'm still fighting for this, to really show that, yeah, anything is possible. Yeah, for sure it's not an easy walk and stuff like that, but hopefully if we get good results I think it will create even more opportunities for young girls to follow their dream and not be afraid to try something different.

Q. Tatiana, would you mind answering that one, too, on the gender part.

TATIANA CALDERON: I totally agree with what Simona said. I feel like a racing driver first who happen to be female. I think it's the same way Simona has done it: you have to be measuring yourself against the best to be better. I think in this sport is one of the only sports where we can compete in equal terms. We can prove that we can do the same job or better than anybody.

It's been just more about having those opportunities and maybe sometimes you have to knock the door, use some other tools that you have as a female, and explore those because that's something you have.

But certainly I hope that having more females at the top level and doing well will then open more doors for the

generation that comes underneath us because it's not easy to get those chances.

THE MODERATOR: Tatiana, obviously when you go through a paddock area and see little girls, young women that aspire to do racing, maybe haven't thought about racing as a place of employment or job opportunity, there's a connection you guys make that no one else in the paddock can make. Do you sense that, feel that? How important is that and how special is that?

TATIANA CALDERON: Oh, absolutely. I think that's one of the things I love most about American racing, that the paddocks are open for more kids, for more people so you can interact with some of the little girls. Just a handshake or a picture can change their view on the sport. That's something you feel with their parents, as well. It's like, Look, this is a girl, you can do this.

It's been really nice to experience that kind of thing. With little changes you can maybe change the perception of somebody or get them interested. I have felt that more in America than in any other place. So hopefully we start to change some stereotypes and some beliefs and we get more young girls involved very early on because I think you need that in sport as well, to start early.

THE MODERATOR: Simona, you agree?

SIMONA de SILVESTRO: I totally agree with Tatiana, what she says. If I look at myself when I was younger, I didn't really realize, but in a sense I have, like, a really big impact in making people believe that really they can do anything.

I think also seeing the women that are in the team, that there is a lot of opportunities out there, not to be afraid to go that way.

I think sports is the perfect platform. Especially I think INDYCAR is the perfect platform because it's quite accessible to fans. That makes it really special.

Q. How do you see the future of women in motorsport? Do you think in the future they will be more opportunities or do you think it will be maintain those opportunities? We know Tatiana has been in the past few years in important championships around the world. We're seeing more girls in junior categories. How do you see the future in these important categories around the world like INDYCAR, F2? Will women be more competing there more than now?

SIMONA de SILVESTRO: Well, I hope so. I think it's still a bit of a fight in the sense, yeah, if I look at my career, I

think in 2013 I was really kind of at the top where I should be. I was really competing up front in INDYCAR.

To be honest, there wasn't really an opportunity to go into a bigger team. I think that still is something -- I think that we need to fight for. I think if we are able to be really competitive, I think the last 10 years things have changed a lot, that there is in a sense more people willing to maybe take a risk. I think it's still a bit of a work in progress.

I think we still need to prove that every weekend we can be running up front and get those results. Hopefully that will even push more opportunities for women to really be at the top level in racing.

TATIANA CALDERON: I agree 100%. We need more opportunities with more females starting. It's a long process. I think it's been changing, but not at the speed we would like it to change.

Like Simona said, I think we still need that big opportunity. Look at Formula 1 as well, 45 years since a female was on the grid, right? In Formula 2 there has not been that many. We still need to get more opportunities at all levels, not just as drivers.

I definitely see people want female drivers more and more, to give us more opportunities. Hopefully we will see them in the upcoming years. But, yeah, it's a long process.

Q. Is there any chance to speed that process that you're talking to, what would it be?

SIMONA de SILVESTRO: I don't know. In racing definitely money makes a big difference. If you have sponsors that are really helping teams that also really want to see you successful, I think that will really I think push things forward.

At the end of the day, if I look back, like I said before, I think in '13 I finished in front of Josef in the championship. He ended up going to Penske and then won the championship two times.

At the end you need to get the right shot, you need to get people behind you who really want to support you. I think as a female driver, we do get the opportunities, but I think also sometimes it's really quick when we have a bit of a bad season, not get dropped but the support then isn't really right away.

I think with some guys, they get more chances at it. I think that is sometimes something we fight a little bit more for, what is a bit trickier in that sense to navigate.

For sure I think if you find good sponsors, a really good team that wants you around, wants you to succeed, I think we can really change that.

THE MODERATOR: Tatiana, the scrutiny is a little different, isn't it?

TATIANA CALDERON: Sorry?

THE MODERATOR: The scrutiny is a little different, to Simona's point, that maybe a weekend that doesn't go as well as you would like is looked at differently.

TATIANA CALDERON: Yeah, you know, sadly that's the way it is sometimes. We get judged in a different way that maybe some guy does a mistake, it was a mistake, but if it's a female driver then it's because she's a female sometimes.

But I think we've been changing that perception. Like I said, I think it's just taking time and getting those opportunities to perform at a really high level with a really good team behind you.

It's about also the management side believing truly in what we can achieve in a good sort of team atmosphere. Yeah, at the end of the day performance is all what matters. Hopefully we can show that and earn those opportunities once we are up there.

THE MODERATOR: Simona, what do the next 24, 48 hours look like? Are you going to be in the simulator tomorrow?

SIMONA de SILVESTRO: Yes, I'll be in the sim getting through all the procedures and all that, then on Thursday I'll be going to Road America, so looking forward to it.

THE MODERATOR: The countdown is on. We'll wrap things up from here.

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