

# NTT INDYCAR SERIES

## News Conference

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**Simon Pagenaud**

**Christian Lundgaard**

Press Conference



SIMON PAGENAUD: Great memory every time I come back here because this was my first INDYCAR race, replacing Beatrice with Dreyer & Reinbold back then. I finally finished the race fighting with Helio in my first INDYCAR race, which was really cool. He was a legend, still is a legend. That was pretty cool.

I have great memories. Always a pleasure to come back to such a beautiful track. Not only the layout is cool, but the surrounding, the atmosphere, the camping site. It's beautiful. Yeah, it's what INDYCAR is all about, this track.

CHRISTIAN LUNDGAARD: We were talking about it on the way here, coming up here, how awesome and fast this track is. It's amazing.

THE MODERATOR: Let's go ahead, Christian, talk about your day today, how special it was to get this team started on the right foot here this weekend.

CHRISTIAN LUNDGAARD: Simon just said it. We have not had a weekend this year, in my opinion, where we started the weekend off quick enough, just competitive enough, feeling great.

I did today. I went straight out and I felt great. Obviously having had the test here helped. I remember you were here, as well. We were competitive there, as well. So it means a lot now, but we got to keep that going into qualifying tomorrow.

THE MODERATOR: Questions, please.

**Q. How difficult has it been, fourth race of the season, how difficult is it to recover from the bad start of a weekend? How difficult is it to try to find anything over the next couple practices, qualifying?**

SIMON PAGENAUD: If I may, with my experience of INDYCAR racing, the format has changed quite a bit through the years. We used to have three practices, quite

a bit more time on track. We used to have a lot more testing also outside the race events. You could really tune up the car the way you like it for different type of tracks.

Now we get two days at Thermal, which is not a track we race at. You get basically one more day at a track somewhere what you choose, and that's it. A lot of it is done on simulators, so it's a very different approach to your work.

It's interesting, but, yeah, it's a different time. It's been interesting to see the changes. To me, if you don't unload quick, it's very difficult to recover.

CHRISTIAN LUNDGAARD: Yeah, I mean, what else is there to add? I mean, obviously we always want to roll off the truck competitive. That's what everyone wants because it sets your weekend, it sets the ground for the rest of the weekend.

It is tough. I mean, just from my own experience in St. Pete, we struggled a lot in practice one. I never really felt like we recovered from that. So this is a great start to the weekend for us, then we'll see what it leads to.

**Q. Does that lead to you not wanting the engineers to make any big changes? Is it scary to come here with a new package?**

SIMON PAGENAUD: That's funny.

CHRISTIAN LUNDGAARD: That's a tough question really.

SIMON PAGENAUD: That's a good question.

CHRISTIAN LUNDGAARD: I mean, if you're winning every race, probably just leave the car, roll with that. But obviously we're always trying to find things. It's tough.

Like Simon said, the track time is so limited now, you have to spend every minute on track you can and learn as much as you can.

SIMON PAGENAUD: My dad and Jim Meyer would tell you the same: when it's good, don't change it, don't touch it. Put it in the truck and go away.



There's more than just that to what we do. It's all about the finest little details. That's why we've got engineers and drivers. I would rather not touch it, but the track is going to change.

**Q. Simon, did you see Helio's off and did that concern you?**

SIMON PAGENAUD: I heard, but I did not see because obviously the stand got really quiet and I'm like, What's going on? I guess Helio was flying, as he always does, in many different ways (smiling).

But, no, everything was fine. The car was fine. No problem. It concerned me for the curb usage there. Obviously I'm sure all of us will look at videos tonight and understand that curb, similar ways it happened in Long Beach.

**Q. Are there changes from Long Beach or is it year-over-year changes when you get here, engineering changes? Was there time to make changes since Long Beach or do your engineers have cumulative notebooks from last year?**

SIMON PAGENAUD: Well, you're comparing a street course to the road course and the setups are vastly different because of the tires. Firestone brings us a tire for the street course, road course and oval. It's a different type. We have to adapt the setup of the race car to the tires to make it work the best way we can.

We go back through the years, yes indeed, with the experience that we have. Like I said, today we use simulators. They are great help at knowing what to do and which direction to go toward on the setup.

**Q. INDY NXT was on track before you. Does the rubber work so you can push immediately or you have to feather it a little bit for the first couple of laps?**

SIMON PAGENAUD: Go ahead. I talk too much.

CHRISTIAN LUNDGAARD: I don't know.

SIMON PAGENAUD: The stage is yours.

CHRISTIAN LUNDGAARD: They only ran with us this year in St. Pete, then we've done Texas and Long Beach since then.

Obviously not having been on track before, we don't know. We don't really have a reference. I wouldn't say it's a bad thing. I think Firestone rubber either way is good for us.

**Q. The preference tire-wise, do you think this track for the race would be using the option tires versus the black primary tires?**

SIMON PAGENAUD: Tell me everything you know (smiling).

CHRISTIAN LUNDGAARD: To me it seems like there's more deg on the blacks this year here.

SIMON PAGENAUD: Is that so?

CHRISTIAN LUNDGAARD: I felt like it. I also only did two laps on the red, so I don't know (smiling).

There's going to be someone that's going to try one strategy and someone's going to try the other one, and one is going to be faster than the other one depending on how the yellows fall, in my opinion.

SIMON PAGENAUD: Till the warmup we won't have any idea, quite frankly. Only doing three laps, trying to go as fast as we can. The tires get really hot, they tend to overheat, you lose some grip on the fourth lap. In the race you try to manage your tires better, they can hold on better.

Also in the race the rubber comes down because there's more cars running longer, so it is a different story. Before the warmup, usually it's hard to know if it's the rear or front that's going to go away, the red or black tires are going to be preferred.

A lot of time we look at history, the history of the previous years. Depending if the tire is similar, we have a better guess.

**Q. The top 19 drivers are within one second of each other in practice. I would imagine they all tried their red alternate tires. How do you compete with people when it's that close?**

SIMON PAGENAUD: It's so competitive now. Always has been. Now every team's on top of their game. Every driver's on top of their game. There's no slacker out there. I tell you, it's very impressive. Then you get young kids like this guy coming in and being just incredible. Yeah, no, it's just incredible the talent at every level.

It's cool to see how the series has become, how impressive it's going to be in the future.

CHRISTIAN LUNDGAARD: I didn't hear the question.

SIMON PAGENAUD: I said how good you were (smiling).

CHRISTIAN LUNDGAARD: You're not too bad yourself. I haven't won the championship, so...

**Q. You came here a couple months ago, considerably cooler outside. What were you able to actually use from that test session considering the tires get hotter quicker, ambient temperature?**

CHRISTIAN LUNDGAARD: I felt like the track was pretty good in the first run. It's so difficult because there's so many cars on track. Obviously I feel like there were a lot less cars at the test, so there was more clear track.

This is it. Like I always feel like everyone's talking about there's traffic. I could have done this lap if I didn't have traffic. I felt like the test translated quite well for us, at least. You were probably even better than you were at the test. I don't know.

SIMON PAGENAUD: Yeah, much better.

CHRISTIAN LUNDGAARD: There you go. So you learn something. What did you learn? Tell me.

SIMON PAGENAUD: I'll tell you everything.

CHRISTIAN LUNDGAARD: I'll call you (laughter).

SIMON PAGENAUD: We learned a lot because we were out of the window on the test. We couldn't get the front tires to work. We are figuring out how to do that.

Obviously temperature are helping us because it was cold and the tires were not coming up to temperature on the front. We've made changes in that direction. Seems to have worked.

We definitely learned from coming here testing, yeah.

**Q. Simon, when you said you were outside the window, do you sometimes learn a lot more when you're outside than when you're in the window?**

SIMON PAGENAUD: That's a great question.

CHRISTIAN LUNDGAARD: If you can find your way into the window, yes.

SIMON PAGENAUD: Exactly. That's the toughest part, is to actually understand what it is that you need to undo to get back into the window.

It's such a small margin, right? The cars work in a very, very small window. That's why you see some guys winning

one weekend, 15th the next weekend.

You're talking about in INDYCAR. Talking very French here, you suck when your 1/10th off, okay? Any other series in the world, you don't suck when you're 1/10th off. We work in a very, very small margin.

Yeah, being out of the window is all relative.

**Q. Simon, obviously you haven't really had the best start to the season. Do you think this turnaround today, has it come at the right time for you guys heading into the month of May.**

SIMON PAGENAUD: I mean, yes, it's only Friday, but it's a big step forward. We were lacking pace, success in many ways. We just need momentum.

Even though it's only ninth position, I think it showed a lot of potential, and makes me feel very, very excited for this weekend. I know I have a great car underneath me. Smelling the blood of the first few places is really exciting (smiling).

THE MODERATOR: Christian, Simon, thanks for coming up. Good luck the rest of the weekend.

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