

NTT INDYCAR SERIES

News Conference

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Alex Palou

Rinus VeeKay

Felix Rosenqvist

Jack Harvey

Press Conference



stay flat for four laps, and the ECR Bitnile crew gave me the best possible car for this moment.

Q. Do you think back lap by lap where maybe you could have picked up a tenth or a thousandth here or there, or was that a perfect four-lap run for you?

RINUS VEEKAY: I'm not sure how much better it could have gone. The car felt the best it's felt in qualifying trim, and yeah, should have had a bit less lunch. I think that's it.

Q. You mentioned the emotions that go into today, knowing you've got to make two attempts, throw in what happened in that practice this morning. Talk about not getting too high or too low throughout the day and the emotions that were brought out of your today.

RINUS VEEKAY: Yeah, it's a long day, actually longer than last year because there was a big break between the two, the Fast Twelve and the Fast Six. But I think I was the least nervous for the Fast Six because I already made it that far -- I'm sorry, worst-case scenario I'm starting sixth. So emotions were pretty good, and also within the team was very chill.

Just very happy to have it done now and focus towards the race.

Q. You probably know the F1 race was canceled due to bad weather. Do you think you can now beat your countryman Max Verstappen for popularity in Holland?

RINUS VEEKAY: It's definitely nice that -- not nice; it's terrible what happened there. But it's good that all eyes are on INDYCAR this weekend.

I wish they'd move Monaco next weekend a bit, but at least, yeah, there's a lot of people tuning in. That's very nice. I hope the popularity for INDYCAR grows very fast in the Netherlands and all over the world.

Q. Rinus, of course there's tomorrow's practice, Carb Day. You're sandwiched with McLaren and Ganassi in the front row. What's going to be instrumental to get that car and in order to get Ed that big win over the

THE MODERATOR: Good afternoon, wrapping up qualifying at the Indianapolis Motor Speedway in 2023 setting the field for the 107th running of the Indianapolis 500. Jack Harvey will join us here momentarily, as will the pole winner for this year's race, Alex Palou. Felix Rosenqvist will also join us here in just a bit.

But joined now by the young man that will start second in the race a week from today, Rinus VeeKay, 234.211. That's the second closest gap one-two in 500 history. It goes back to 6 thousandths of a mile an hour versus what Ryan Briscoe did with James Hinchcliffe in 2012, and that was three thousandths of a mile an hour. That's how close it was between one and two.

Rinus, driving the No. 21 Bitnile.com Chevrolet for Ed Carpenter Racing, the third straight front row start for Rinus. He was the fastest Chevy driver four years in a row, and ECR, Ed Carpenter Racing, now with their ninth front row start in 11 years. Rinus, it was that close.

RINUS VEEKAY: Yeah, it was very close. Wow, very happy, but also a bit bummed. We had that shot, and I wish we could have done it. It would have been so great for the team. But also I'm bummed to be starting the Indy 500 second.

Not bad, definitely, but yeah, I think it just has to sink in a little bit. What is in my head now is I lost, but no, I will enjoy this one, and it's my best starting position so far in the 500, which fourth, third, third and second, we all know what comes in my car number after second, and that's a 1.

Just very proud of the team, also. We had a tough morning, kind of went downhill for a bit, and we still -- the team still made it happen. The only thing I had to do was

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next few days?

RINUS VEEKAY: I think definitely the most important thing is staying out of trouble, having a clean race, and making sure we're there when we tune it up at the end of the race.

I know looking at the practice rounds we've done that the car is maybe even better in race trim than qualifying trim.

I was very happy on Thursday in our last traffic run, so yeah, just very excited to show that in the race.

Q. Was there any impact to not having a teammate this year in the Fast Six compared to having Ed the last couple years to maybe do some setup changes between?

RINUS VEEKAY: I think it definitely helped out like to have a teammate in there. It's always nice to have someone with the same setup, same exact car, do a run before and making some little tweaks.

But yeah, I wish Ed was in there and I could have battled with Ed or Conor. But I think for the underdog car in there, it was nice to have a good shot at it and almost hitting the bull's eye.

Q. The other morning we talked and I asked how you'd grade your season so far, and you said 4 out of 10. Does a day like today help morale?

RINUS VEEKAY: Yeah, definitely. This is the best qualifying result for the team since I've joined, so definitely not bad, and yeah, just very, very happy for the team that we got this, and I think it definitely helps morale, not only for me but for all the three car crews.

THE MODERATOR: Also joined by Alex and Felix. Jack Harvey has also joined us, driver of the No. 30 People Ready Honda for Rahal Letterman Lanigan Racing.

Jack, seventh start now in the Indianapolis 500, knocking out your teammate. What were the emotions there towards the end, Jack?

JACK HARVEY: Just drive, initially. We had done two attempts. Neither of them seemed to be enough to get it done, and actually on the final one, I said to the guys, do you even think we can do this. The car is hot, engine is hot, and they said, yeah, you've got to try; it's the Indy 500. In that moment just tried to forget about everything else for a moment.

It's not a good feeling, to be honest with you. It's not a moment necessarily for celebration. As a team we're going

to be starting 30th, 31st and 33rd, and I hated it today, felt like we were in the Hunger Games with our own team.

But of the four people driving, three of them are in. I know it's not great odds and it's not a great feeling. To be honest, it's unbelievable relief. I've got to be honest with you. It's actually quite hard to process it.

There's a lot of emotions. Like massively grateful to be in the race, massively sad that we bumped out a teammate because I know what that means for the entire team.

I was just looking -- I didn't really get to see any of the pole shootout for the Fast Six, but obviously congratulations to these guys, but when I look at the speed that they can do, we're comfortably five miles an hour off. There's an enormous amount of work to try and do, in truth, and hopefully we've got here to try and figure it out. For anyone who thinks we're jumping up and down celebrating, there's a little bit mistaken today.

Q. You said a sigh of relief; maybe that's the best emotion that comes out of this.

JACK HARVEY: I think the best emotion is going to sleep tonight, to be honest. I reckon the sooner we can get done with this day, the better.

Q. You managed to speak to Graham afterwards, and if you did, what can you say in those scenarios, whether it's to try and console him? I know you're close in the team and it must be a really difficult situation to be in.

JACK HARVEY: Yeah, obviously you have a professional side and you have a personal side, and I think professionally Graham is one of the most underrated drivers on the grid. I think he never really gets the respect he deserves. He's a fantastic team player. He's a great guy.

On the personal side, Graham is a very close friend of mine. The guy texts when I've got issues or I want his advice or want to pick his brain on something. Not fun, essentially not only knocking out a team car but one of your mates at the same breath.

Obviously me and him chatted about it. We kind of felt like it would be me or him that gets knocked out, and obviously everyone knows it's not personal. He wants to be in the race, I want to be in the race, and the tradition of this place is tradition for a reason.

Bump Day is notorious, and as soon as there's 34 cars -- maybe these guys are confident, but I don't think anyone is

confident as soon as there's a car that you know is not going home.

It's a tough day, mate. I said to Graham, I'm sorry, I'm not sorry. What do you say to someone in that moment? I want to be in the race. I want to be in the 107th running of the Indy 500. I want to do it for me, for my family, my friends. I want to do it for the mechanics on the team, for everybody on the team, for all of the sponsors that we have on the No. 30 car, especially for people ready this weekend.

I hate what it means for the 15 car and for Graham and all his crew because at the end of the day we are one united effort, and we know there's a lot of work ahead, but I just said to him, I just wanted to do the best four laps I could. I'm sorry it's bumped you out.

Q. Did you say you had spoke to him before the qualifying about the potential of one of you knocking each other out?

JACK HARVEY: Well, yeah. I think it was kind of clear that realistically I think Katherine has been the fastest of our cars this month, then followed by Christian.

Honestly, I thought it was a little bit of a toss-up between me and Graham. We threw a Hail Mary last night, I think trying to look for the holy grail, and didn't seem to find it today. We made some changes taking some parts off of our primary car on the road course, putting it on the oval car. Didn't work.

Huge mountain as a team that we're trying to climb, but I think burying our heads in the sand and not acknowledging that, not admitting that is the wrong thing to do, and what we have to show now is the same level of grit and determination that we just showed just to make the race is to now improve so that we aren't in this situation again.

Q. Jack, track temp dropped about three degrees from your second run to your third run. Do you think that made a difference, and did you change the way you drove between the two runs?

JACK HARVEY: A tiny bit. I was a little bit loose on the first couple runs, which some people might find hilarious the speed that we were going, but I kind of felt a little bit loose. The final change took a little bit of front wing out, and maybe I was a little bit more Johnny-on-the-spot with a couple of changes in the car just to try to limit that sliding as much as we could.

But that time of day it's just going to get cooler and cooler, and I'm not sure I really like the process they have. They

do this -- you think about it, really it's a little unfair that we got to do three efforts and the other guys only got their first original shot because if it was based on the first shot, we for sure weren't going to make it.

I don't know if there's a better way of potentially doing that, but I sure am grateful that the mechanics and the engineers were able to turn the car around in time, and ultimately I'm not going to say we did good laps, but we did four laps, enough to get us in the race.

THE MODERATOR: I thought Rahal Letterman Lanigan Racing handled this situation with about as much class as can be expected.

JACK HARVEY: It's a fantastic group of people. People don't realize how much hard work goes into this. We're certainly not at the factory just being complacent, being blase about any of this. This is an enormous amount of effort that we put in to try and make it good, and clearly it hasn't come into fruition yet, but I think -- don't anybody think this isn't through lack of trying.

They built a brand new shop in Zionsville. That is the commitment of the team. I think in our press conference on Friday, Bobby said, it doesn't make us a better team, but it lets you know the desire of the team.

Today is about as humbling a moment as I've had at a racetrack. I don't want to do this dance again, and neither do the team. There's a lot of responsibility for all of us here. Just everybody please remember that we're trying. We might not be trying the best way, but not one person in our team is happy with our performance, from the very top to the very bottom.

We're going to work as hard as we can. We've just got to find the grit and the determination to make it happen. But it's a great group, and I'm excited that we're going to be in the race, albeit last. We'll do our best now.

THE MODERATOR: Front row now for the 107th running of the Indy 500. We'll start with Alex Palou, quickest pole four-lap qualifying speed in Indy 500 history, 234.217, driver of the No. 10 the American Legion Chip Ganassi Racing Honda. For a Spaniard to win the Indy 500 pole, second front-row start, second in a row, first pole of 2023 in the NTT INDYCAR Series and second of your career. We can go on and on here, but how proud, how special is this moment for you, Alex?

ALEX PALOU: Yeah, amazing. Amazing. Last year we were really close. Sorry I lost my voice there.

It was really close last year. We lost it against Dixon,

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which he did an amazing four-lap run. This year we knew it was going to be even closer against these two guys. They were really fast all month.

We went aggressive. It worked this time. Super proud.

Been a good month of May so far.

THE MODERATOR: I don't know if you heard, this is the second closest gap between one and two in Indy 500 qualifying history. The margin is six thousandths of a mile an hour, the record is three thousandths of a mile an hour that was set back in 2012 between Ryan Briscoe and James Hinchcliffe. That's how close things were today.

ALEX PALOU: Yeah, it was really close.

THE MODERATOR: Also joined by Felix Rosenqvist who will start on the outside of row 1, driver of the No. 6 Arrow McLaren Chevrolet with his first front-row start. By the way, once again, for the second straight year, this is the fastest front row in Indy 500 history, making up, once again, the fastest field in Indy 500 history.

Again, Felix, congratulations. Your thoughts about starting on the front row.

FELIX ROSENQVIST: It's mixed feelings right now. I think overall it's a very good day for us. I think these two found something in the Fast Six that we didn't find. We felt like we were kind of on top of it going into it. We were not confident, but we felt like we put the best possible scenario on the car, and big thanks to all the group for Arrow McLaren and Team Chevy, as well. I think the whole team came together for this final run where we threw everything we had at it, and we missed out, and it's the second time in not so long I'm sitting here and missing pole with I think one or two thousandths. It's what it is, but overall we have to be proud to have all the cars in the top 12. It's just been a phenomenal month for us so far.

But yeah, big congrats to Alex and also to Rinus. That was a hell of a run. We couldn't match that today.

THE MODERATOR: Fastest field in history, 232.184 miles an hour, breaking the record last year we set, 231.023.

Q. Alex, I guess you proved today why Chip wanted to keep you so bad.

ALEX PALOU: Yeah.

Q. As far as being able to get him on the pole for the Indy 500, he's been there a lot with Scott Dixon, and now you've got your name up there. Nobody has done

a pole run faster than you in the history of this place. When you look at it that way, what does all this mean because it's been a bit of a magic ride for you since you arrived at INDYCAR back in 2020.

ALEX PALOU: Yeah, it's been amazing for the 10 car, honestly. This start of the season, especially the month of May, couldn't be better with the GMR Grand Prix and obviously the pole today. We knew we had a fast car since the beginning. We had to take advantage of that. Yeah, enjoying my time here. Last year, as I said, we were really close, learned how we could go be more aggressive if we were in that position again, and lucky if we were in that position again today, we took it.

THE MODERATOR: For Felix, fast guy yesterday, fast guy in the Fast 12. Were you a little bit surprised that you didn't have the speed there at the end when it looked like the track conditions were probably the best they'd been all weekend?

FELIX ROSENQVIST: Yeah, I don't know. It didn't feel like it. I could feel on the run pretty much on my warmup lap that it didn't feel as sporty as it did earlier today, so kind of had to look what went wrong. Obviously we didn't change a bunch on the car. We were pretty sure what we put on was the best we'd done all month.

But man, it's tight, and if you don't get it 10 out of 10, there's going to be two other boys sitting next to you with better lap times.

I think anyway, it's just been incredible, and just to have the privilege to drive a car that looks that good and is that fast I think is -- yeah, it makes it pretty cool.

Q. Felix and Alex, back in Europe the 500 feels a bit further away and the focus is on more circuit racing type stuff. Can you kind of talk from the background that you grew up in what the kind of qualifying what you did today means and how big an occasion the 500 qualifying is just based on everything that's happened today?

FELIX ROSENQVIST: Yeah, it's huge, man. I remember when Kenny Brack, who was the first driver I grew up watching actually before F1 or anything, and he had a big shunt, he came back, and I think he set a really good lap time after his injury, and that was a big deal in Sweden, and that was kind of my first memories of racing. So it's a big deal, and in Sweden it's huge because he won the race, and now obviously Marcus won it last year.

So Sweden is pumped in this race right now. There's a lot of Swedish flags out there already, and everyone is sitting



back home and watching late at night.

It's incredible to see the interest has grown, and I think people in general get a better understanding of the ovals. When I came over here, it was like, what's the difference, like how do you go quicker on an oval. You hear that question a lot. And now people are already looking at ambient temperatures and humidity and wind, and everyone is becoming like experts at analyzing the drivers and lines and stuff.

It's cool to see. It's definitely on the upward trend.

ALEX PALOU: Yeah, I would say in Spain they are not as sophisticated with ambient temperatures. They are discovering a bit. The Indy 500 obviously with Fernando here helped a lot. I remember as a kid probably the first driver I saw winning here or being up there was Scott Dixon, so as I said, it's really cool to be sharing a team with him.

I think it's growing a little bit in Spain, not as much as we would love, but yeah, if we keep doing a good job like we're doing, obviously it's going to be a second Sweden.

Q. Rinus, I believe you started on the front row already, but what's it like outside front row going into Turn 1? You ought to be a master at it by now, and the fact that you start so far up has to give you a really good strategic edge or tactical edge in the race.

RINUS VEEKAY: Yeah, definitely helps. I feel like even if race running when we did that in the beginning of the week, you definitely feel there's a bunch of cars in front of you, more than three, it gets very hard to pass. This way if you are in the top 3 you can basically save fuel and focus on that kind of stuff to move your way forward. That helps, that definitely helps, and we've got to make sure we stay in there for the last part of the race, and then I think everyone tears it up.

Q. Felix, this is a pretty big accomplishment for you starting on the front row of the Indianapolis 500. You're having a great, great weekend so far, great week, a lot of speed. I know you're probably living in the moment a little bit, but your future is a little bit uncertain right now. You're sitting next to the guy. How much confidence does that give you even about your career, about how you're doing this week, and even maybe going into next year, do you think this is a time where you can really build that resume up and show everybody, not just Arrow McLaren, that hey, I belong here, this is what I'm meant to do?

FELIX ROSENQVIST: I mean, it doesn't hurt. We always

try to be quick, and I feel like most of the time we are. INDYCAR racing is not easy, and it doesn't always go the way you want, but no, I feel like it's been a good year so far, even with two DNFs to start the year. It's obviously super difficult to crawl out of that.

But on top of that, it's been great. Everywhere we've gone, we've been quick. We've been qualifying up front. We've been good in the races, good strategy.

The whole team has just come together so well that I just feel like there's quite a lot in store for us for the rest of the season, and obviously now we're here again on the front row in the second race in a row.

It's awesome. We just have to ride the wave, and I feel like that way is going to get bigger as the year goes on, and what happens for me in the future, I don't know, and I don't really think about it right now. I just try to be in the now, extract everything I can every race, and I always tell myself things work themselves out if you just focus on what you do in the car.

Q. Alex, that was a very emotional emphatic celebration, not just by you but your team members. I know it's the Indy 500 pole, but was there something more that made this so emotional?

ALEX PALOU: No, that we just did a good job. I don't know, we just live. We know that this time doesn't come very often. We celebrated last week because it was a big win, and today we were the best on track, so we had to celebrate.

We couldn't celebrate last year, and we don't know if we're going to be able to celebrate next week.

Yeah, when there's chances like that, especially nowadays in INDYCAR, you have to celebrate. You could see on everybody, it was not just me, that I lost my voice, which maybe it was too much, but I'm Spanish, so...

You could see on every mechanic, every engineer, even Julian, my engineer, that -- he's really quiet -- when we win, he's normally like yeah, that was a good race, good job. But he was super excited today. It means a lot. It's a big deal. It's the pole for the Indy 500.

It's not the win for the race, but it's as best we could do today.

Q. You've celebrated wins before certainly, but you've never I'm sure celebrated a pole that way. Did it surprise you that that was how it felt and that you lost your voice?

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ALEX PALOU: I knew that it meant -- it doesn't mean more than a win or a win doesn't mean more than this. I think they're very separate. This place is so special. We've been here for more than two weeks, working on this race car for more than a year. As soon as we finished Indy 500 last year, they started working on Indy 500 2023.

There's so much effort that goes into this, not only from myself, the engineering team, the mechanics, everybody back at the shop, that it means a lot.

It's different, as I said. It doesn't feel better or worse than a win, it just feels different, and as I said, I think we couldn't do a better job until today, so that's why we celebrated that way.

Q. Where would you rank that in your celebrations in your career, top 5?

ALEX PALOU: Yeah, top 3. It was pretty cool. It's my second pole in INDYCAR, also, so my first pole on an oval. That means a lot, get my confidence pretty high. Yeah, maybe that's reasons why.

Q. You said you went aggressive. You guys went aggressive. Explain what that means to me like I'm as dumb as I am.

ALEX PALOU: It means just the way to go faster here apart from having a fast car that I knew I had, a fast engine, which I knew I had, it's to try to start trimming the car out, taking downforce out, sliding into corners a bit more but going faster on the straights.

We did that. We went aggressive. We were the car that was more trimmed yesterday I would say and also today.

It's what we had to do. It was the way that we could fight for pole, and I'm glad that it worked. Last lap was really, really tough. But that's why also we dropped so much on speed.

Our first lap was amazing, but our last lap was pretty slow compared to our first lap.

Q. What is it like, most people will never, ever get a chance to drive a car like this, hanging it out. What is it like out there? Do you feel raw emotion, or is there a little bit of scared going on when you're hanging the car out? What is going on, Felix, when you're out there in a run like that with everything on the line?

FELIX ROSENQVIST: For me it's like the most focused you can be. You're just very -- it's like a very high level of

discipline, and knowing yourself, knowing the car, trusting the car, trusting your engineers, trusting your mechanics, but at the same time you kind of just have to shut everything off.

But it feels cool, man. Yeah, it feels quick. I don't know how else to explain it.

You're so focused --

ALEX PALOU: It's a bit scary.

FELIX ROSENQVIST: Not scary, but you know it's big consequences, and when you feel the car start sliding, you kind of have to just bury it and do some changes to your tools, and then you're just hoping it's not going to be the same in the next corner, and it's kind of a funny thing, but like one press wrong on that button can be the difference of being P1 or being in the wall.

It's a fun dance, I guess, and it's fun when you're out there, but when you're done, you're also quite happy.

Q. Alex, touch on that scary part.

ALEX PALOU: I mean, I would say that yeah, he's totally right. I would say it's scary because you know the consequences, and as he said, you touch a button because you adjust, but you don't know if that's going to be enough or if that's going to be too much or if that's going to work. So that part -- until you get to that corner and out, that's scary. You're just like, okay, I hope it sticks.

Yeah, it's a bit scary, but it's also what makes it so exciting.

Q. You're touching so many buttons, making all these adjustments through a run like that, does it take away from the fun part?

ALEX PALOU: No. Well, at least for me no. I would say it makes it more fun that you have so much stuff to do. It's challenging.

It's not supposed to be easy. I'm glad that we have to lose so much stuff, right?

FELIX ROSENQVIST: Yeah, it's so tight now, man. It seems every time I'm here for qualifying, it's a record of some sort. It's the tightest field or the tightest for pole or we have the tightest Fast Six on the GP here a couple of weeks ago.

I think we just have to exploit everything we can get our hands on. If there's a button to press and you go a bit quicker, we'll press it.



I feel like it's getting busier and busier as the years go on. Like you see a couple of runs from the past where maybe you could analyze as well with simulation and computers and stuff, but you just kind of hang on, and now it's more like being on the very, very fine limit which you can do when you have all the resources that both our teams have, and then when you're there, you just have to extract every little thousandth out of it. I think it's pretty cool. It's sporty, and I think it makes it harder.

Q. First Spaniard to win a pole for the Indianapolis 500. What does that mean to you from an honor standpoint?

ALEX PALOU: I mean, it makes it a bit more special. I'll be the first Spaniard to be on pole for the Indy 500, but yeah, hopefully I'm not the last one. Hopefully there's more young kids that now they see that they can do well here, as well, in the future, not now.

But yeah, honestly, I think it's great. Hopefully as I said, just motivates young people to come here.

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