

# NTT INDYCAR SERIES

## News Conference

Sunday, May 28, 2023

Indianapolis, Indiana, USA

**Roger Penske**

**Tim Cindric**

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: The celebration continues for Team Penske, and honored to be joined by Roger Penske, now a 19-time winner at the Indianapolis 500, and longtime Team Penske president Tim Cindric.

Roger, How thrilling there the last several moments of this race?

ROGER PENSKE: Well, I took my car owner hat off and became a car owner there the last two laps. But Tim had it under control. I listened to the radio all day long, and quite honestly, to get up there and work our way through the day was amazing.

With the red flags, everything, it could have been anybody's race. But I think Newgarden showed what he's really made of today. He was, I think, confident but yet cautious there at the end, and when it was time to go he made it happen. We can't thank him enough from the team.

THE MODERATOR: Tim, your thoughts?

TIM CINDRIC: It's amazing. Anytime you win this race, obviously he's done it twice as many times or more than I have been a part of. But from the point in time where obviously we always want to win this place, but 2019 was the last time that we had won and somebody else owned the place before.

I apologize it's taken four years to get him to start the race and put him back up there at the end of the race. We feel really good about that.

Then for Josef, obviously he's shown throughout his career that he's a championship-caliber driver, and he's wanted this place so bad that it was kind of going to be checkers or wreckers there at the end. You kind of knew that.

The crew, I can't say enough about. All day long it was

flawless. I think the guys, all the engineers worked together, not just from the 2 car team but everybody else to really give him a great car today.

Fortunate to execute. Obviously it can be anybody's race there at the end.

THE MODERATOR: The margin of victory was .0974. That's the fourth closest finish in Indianapolis 500 history. The top three, '92, Al Jr. over Scott Goodyear, then 2014, Hunter-Reay over Helio; and then 2006, Sam Hornish Jr. over Marco Andretti.

So incredibly tight finish there at the end.

**Q. The celebration Josef did at the end, he goes into the grandstands, celebrates with the fans. You own this place; are you going to charge him a ticket?**

ROGER PENSKE: No, I think he's just trying to beat Helio and get up in the stands with the fans. We wouldn't charge him for a ticket for sure. It's great.

**Q. I know you said your goal was to get to 20. That's now one win off. How achievable do you believe that is now?**

ROGER PENSKE: We're certainly not going to stop here, I can tell you, with the team we have and the depth of our drivers.

The competition, though, everybody here today knows it's never been tighter. You could see all during the race, maybe within four or five seconds you had 20 cars, and that's what we're racing every day. We seen it when we qualify. I think 16 inches was the difference between 1 and 2 in qualifying.

We're going to be back next year. I think Newgarden, this is one he wanted to check off for years. He didn't understand why he hadn't won the race today. He earned it. He won the race today, which is certainly to his credit.

**Q. For Tim, the tail of the dragon worked for Marcus last year. Do you think this year it was a case that Josef beat him at his own game?**

**ASAP** sports . . . when all is said, we're done.®

TIM CINDRIC: Well, I know Josef, he knew in his mind what he had to do if he got the opportunity. We just needed to try and get him up in the right position, and between what he was able to do on the racetrack and what we were able to do in the pits today, we kind of methodically got there.

I think I told him at some point during the race that we were kind of ahead of schedule because there was a point there where certainly didn't want to lead, and it's hard to tell yourself that you start 17th and you don't want to lead. But that's the way it played out.

For us, we've been trying to get Shell a win here for a long time in that Shell car, and to have the contingent in the sport that we have from that group and to have all their top executives here and for what they've done with the renewable fuel and that type of thing for INDYCAR and the series to really set the stage, it was awesome to bring them home something that's got the biggest trophy in the world on it.

**Q. Mr. Penske, where does this rank in terms of your wins as a team owner?**

ROGER PENSKE: Well, I'd have to say the first win here back in '72, but to come here and be the steward of the track and have the opportunity -- I had to step away. I loved being on the box, running one of these cars here every year as I have been.

But I was up on the top there. I had my scoreboard where I could see what was going on, but to see him go down by the start-finish line number one was pretty important. I guess it goes almost to the top.

**Q. Marcus Ericsson was fairly upset afterwards. He felt like it was unfair the way the red flags were managed at the end, and he felt as if the final red flag should have been flown earlier and that one lap wasn't enough for a shootout to finish the race. I just wanted your thoughts on that.**

TIM CINDRIC: Are you asking me or him or both or what?

**Q. I'll start with you.**

TIM CINDRIC: Yeah, I think it's more of a race control program. Obviously you're sitting there and it's really hard to determine how that's all going to play out. Each restart could have played out a different way, and I think Josef, when you look at the fact that we lost the lead on one of the restarts, as well, it can kind of go either way, and that's kind of the way this place is now.

I think somebody has got to win and somebody doesn't. We've been on the other side of that, too.

**Q. Any thoughts, Roger?**

ROGER PENSKE: Really I don't have any thoughts. I had nothing to do with it, obviously. We have a group that is certainly the officials of the track, and to me, we've said this before, I think all of you had said, we want to see a checkered flag, not a yellow flag.

**Q. As a track owner, I don't know if you had a chance to assess this during the race, but there was a tire that went over the fence in Turn 2. Have you had a chance to look at that?**

ROGER PENSKE: Yeah, I saw what had happened; saw it bounced on top of a building and went and hit a car over there, which obviously is very concerning. We have tethers on the wheels, and it was a rear wheel that came off, and I'm sure the guys at INDYCAR will look at it, will determine what really happened.

We haven't seen a wheel come off in a long time. We have high fences here. But we were very fortunate we didn't have a bad accident.

**Q. Question for Tim. How is the 2 car in terms of downforce? It seemed as the race got hotter, slicker as it went on. How confident were you in the 2 crew's setup and how good the race pace was all month?**

TIM CINDRIC: Yeah, I felt as a race car we just needed to get Josef's confidence around it. This place is all about -- especially with drivers that are going to need to pass from a little further back.

We just needed to be sure that -- you see him do it at Texas and Gateway and Iowa and all these other places, and once he has the confidence, that's what we needed to build on.

My hats off to Luke and that whole group because we didn't touch the downforce. He didn't ask about it. We didn't even touch the front wing today. It was amazing, really, just the tools in the car. Getting the track position was really the key and trying to put ourselves in a position relative to fuel and all the rest of the things that happened.

Yeah, you have to have a flawless day here, and then sometimes you still don't win, especially with the way the category is right now and the series and how competitive it is.

I'm surprised because I'm not sure I've ever been in a race here that we haven't at least changed the front wing at some point during the race, so it was a pretty solid effort from that whole group.

**Q. Tim, what made it so difficult for Josef to win here for so long?**

TIM CINDRIC: I think some of it is circumstances. Some of it I think is developing a bit of a feel, because it's different than any other place. You see people that come here and run really well, and we go to these other ovals and you wonder, why not. It's vice versa. You see people on the other ovals -- I mean, and I don't think he's ever -- I think we've had a shot to win it here a couple times and it hasn't really chosen us for different reasons.

It's a track position game and it's a bit of chess, and you see it no different than the Daytona 500 in some ways as far as how you position yourself at the end and what you have to -- where you have to be throughout the race. It's becoming closer to that.

Don't get me wrong. It's not a stock car race. But I think you have to be in that -- you saw where he restarted third and was able to take the lead, and you see where you're the leader and you've got to figure out, okay, how to give up one position but not give up two positions, because it's really not a question whether you're going to give up one, it's just how you position yourself to get back to the next stride.

**Q. Roger, you had a great crowd today, a great show. You won the race. You go to Detroit next week to throw a big party there. You go to Le Mans the week after that. Talk about what all of that means to you and what you're looking forward to in Detroit next week.**

ROGER PENSKE: Well, I guess when I think back, I think back about coming here in 1951 with my dad to see the first race of my own with him, and of course never realized that many, many years would pass and I would be here today, our family as the steward of the track, and also to have 19 wins.

But we're competitors. We love this business. We're committed to this track, to this series, to make it better. And when I see the people today and the demographics and the kids and 70,000 people here on Carburetion Day, and we had the biggest crowd we had since probably 2016. You saw it yourself. Amazing.

But we go on to Detroit, and we're excited because we're trying to make this series not just Indianapolis, but it's all around the country. I think we've got the fastest cars, the

high tech cars. I think our group of drivers are amazing and teams that's competitive. We just want to take this on to many, many key cities around the United States and maybe other places.

Next week to be able to come to Detroit. It's ironic last Wednesday or Thursday the mayor and the City Council president took the speed limit signs down to 25 miles an hour in front of the GM Building and put up 200 mile-an-hour signs, so that's what I'm counting on for next week.

**Q. I know a lot of the races, a lot of this race is kind of out of your control, but what do you feel like is the biggest thing within your control over the past three years that's helped you get back to Victory Lane again here?**

TIM CINDRIC: Really I think it's just a continuation of building forward and executing on race day. Last year I thought we had cars that were capable of running up front, and unfortunately every one of them we either made a mistake or we put ourselves in a position where we couldn't get there.

I think halfway through the race last year, I remember pretty vividly we were up to fifth and it was going to be a really good day, and the engine shut off in the pit or we stalled or whatever happened there, and that ended the day halfway through. And we had a couple other problems coming along.

We needed to execute, and you have to have a good car. I think, like I said, it's about the people, and the group that we have there on the 2 car this year, although we have a new chief mechanic, a new race engineer, people that haven't been in their positions here at the Indy 500, I think Josef was really good at ensuring that he has the confidence in the group.

Before the race he made it clear that he felt like he could win from anywhere. Obviously he proved that today.

**Q. The gaps in 2019 without a victory, how heavily has that weighed upon you and how much motivation has that given you to turn things around for this year?**

TIM CINDRIC: I think it's great when they talk about four years being a drought here, because I see some of the biggest teams here that went on 10- or 11-year droughts or whatever else.

So I think it's a testament to the legacy that Roger has built here and the expectations we have.



Yeah, we do expect to come here and have a shot to win at it every single year, and unfortunately we haven't been the ones at the front of the race when it starts the past couple years. I think that's been a bigger weakness, because 2019 and prior, I guess I call it the pre-wind screen era for whatever reason, whether that's basically a coincidence or not, we haven't been able to qualify where we are used to qualifying. It's a little harder to make your day exactly right from the front.

You saw today where a couple cars started in the front, had some problems, and were still able to be at the front at the end of the race. So it's a lot more forgiving if you're there in the beginning, and I think that's been the key.

**Q. When we talked in Mooresville three weeks ago and you were talking about how motivated you were to win and give Roger his first win as the owner of this place, he starts the day, you want to end the day with him, how did that feel to do that?**

TIM CINDRIC: There's nothing better. To check that box and to be able, like you said, to really as a team be able to reward him, and Josef in some ways. But really even Josef would tell you, to see Roger up on the lift that he put together, he made it what it is and made this place a lot younger, a lot more fan friendly.

It would be a shame if we couldn't get him back up on there. I think it's something that I'll always remember and the team will, being able to, as I said, have him start the race and the enthusiasm that he gives at the start of this race.

I've been around this place a long time, and I love the, drivers start your engines. I always have. I think the energy he puts behind that and the preparation he puts behind that is kind of second to none, and then to be able to hand him another one of these Baby Borgs at some point in time is really cool.

**Q. Tim, can you speak about the rapid evolution and training of Kaitlyn Brown, who I believe just made history as the first woman to win the Indy 500 going over the wall as a member of the crew changing a tire? She's someone you told me within the last year or so, we're going to try and get her ready, and look what she did today.**

TIM CINDRIC: Yeah, obviously Kaitlyn came -- she had been on our NASCAR team. First of all, I signed her up. I'm her agent going forward.

So I told her all the notoriety she has, she's going to have to have an agent, and it might as well be me.

She came to us on the NASCAR program and just wanted to work on race cars. When Beth Paretta's program started up here we told everybody internally what was happening there and wanted to know if there were any females that wanted to be part of that program, and she was the first one to raise her hand and say, hey, I want a chance.

We watched how hard she worked at it. They came in at 5:00 in the morning, doing pit stops before the rest of our pit stop practices started internally, and she worked her butt off.

She earned the whole respect of the crew, and obviously we had some of our mechanics on that crew while it was here and they said, look, she deserves a chance on these cars if she wants it.

And then she worked really, really hard to earn her way and earn her spot changing the left front tire on Josef's car.

She's solid. She is solid. She's all business.

I think she has the opportunity and really the work ethic to be one of the top people at the Indianapolis Motor Speedway. I think her runway is really long, and if she's patient and she continues to be in the right place and do the things she's doing now, kind of the sky's the limit for her.

**Q. Can you speak quickly about Team Chevy? Last year was a rough year here; an amazing year-to-year rebound. Can you talk about them? They were doing pretty big things.**

TIM CINDRIC: Yeah, they were. I think everybody there, they continue to get stronger. Mark Reuss and his group, they're here to win, and they've continued to put more and more resources behind it. It's the details that win this place, and when you look at last year's race, I think the Chevys needed a little more at the end when it was time to go, and they gave us more at the end when it was time to go.

I think we either closed the gap or at least gave us the tools to win as Chevy teams, and when you looked at it, there were quite a few Chevys. You look at going into whatever it was, the third to last restart, I think there was four Chevys up there in the top 5 if I remember correctly, and it's a testament to what that whole group has done.

It's been really good. The relationship they have with Ilmor and the two of them working together between GM there in Detroit and Ilmor has continued to pay dividends for us.

**Q. Mr. Penske, you told me a few years back that one of your favorite Indy 500 victories was when Sam Hornish won because you knew what it meant to Sam and his dad. Knowing what this means to Josef and his father, do you see a lot of similarities in those two Indy wins?**

ROGER PENSKE: I think it's for the family really. When Sam won that race in '06 it was the same kind of a race, coming from the back and executing at the end. His mom was in the car with us. She had his young son, Kota, and it was a family affair really, and that's just yourself. We.

See it in our gut, I guess, when you think about what's happening. But to see what it does, Josef is a proud guy. He's been a great assimilation with the team. Brought McLaughlin on, worked really well with Will, and I think he's 100 percent out for the team, and I think his parents were really focused on his future when we first met him, when he first came to work with us.

One thing Tim didn't say, we really worked on our cars for the race. As he said, we were disappointed in qualifying, but I think you could see when it was time to go, we were there, and I think, Tim, it's a credit to you and Ilmor and the guys -- the little things make a difference, it's so tight. I just wanted to say, I didn't get a chance to tell you, but under your leadership, and as you know, Tim, we got the award for the other night, obviously the Hall of Fame, and I guess he is a Hall of Fame guy now for sure.

TIM CINDRIC: Any club you're in is a good club to be in, I promise you.

**Q. How long will it take to replace Mr. Penske's parking permit down stairs? It's obviously 19 wins now.**

TIM CINDRIC: I hope it's already done. I think that group was on that when the flag flew.

But yeah, it's good to start looking at 19s around here. Yeah, glad we could be part of it.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports