

NTT INDYCAR SERIES

News Conference

Sunday, June 4, 2023

Alex Palou

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: We are joined by Alex Palou. Picks up his second win this season, sixth of his career, third podium of 2023. Most notably amongst all that, two-thirds of the way to the People Ready Force For Good \$1 million Challenge. You have a road course, street course, next opportunity would be on the oval at the Iowa Speedway. Could be adding up to a great season. Of course, you also lead the overall NTT INDYCAR SERIES points as well.

Tell us how you did it.

ALEX PALOU: It was a busy race honestly. We had a really fast car. Yeah, we were really good on the first stint. I think we did the right strategy of just pushing. We knew the tire deg was going to be high. I think it was going to be high anyway if we were managing or not.

I think we got a gap that gave us the opportunity to fight with Will. He did a tremendous job. At the end it was too busy for me. I wanted to be more calm end of the race.

Honestly it was a great day for us, for the No. 10 Ridgeline car. Couldn't be prouder of the work we did. My first win on a street course. My first win with a Ridgeline Lubricants car.

THE MODERATOR: We'll start with questions.

Q. You were one of the drivers that was pretty vocal about the track being not wide enough, too bumpy. What happened when you started to run out there in the car?

ALEX PALOU: Well, I mean, I was on a positive note giving comments. Honestly, it was tight. We saw that.

It was a really fun race. It was a lot better than I expected. We had a lot more grip today than what we did. I think the track evolve a lot during the weekend.

I will watch the race obviously because I had a clean race, let's say. But honestly Detroit did a tremendous job. The fans were amazing. I was mind blown of how many fans

we had today being a first-time event. Also the podium on Victory Lane was really fun.

Yeah, hopefully we can tweak some stuff and make it even better for next year. But, yeah, cannot wait.

Q. Have you ever seen a fireboat?

ALEX PALOU: Yes, I saw it during my podium, right?

Q. Have you ever seen one before?

ALEX PALOU: No.

Q. That was a surprise?

ALEX PALOU: It was a surprise. They were celebrating with us. It was really fun.

Q. How much are you looking in the mirrors on those restarts? Are you just head down, do your thing, come out on the other end?

ALEX PALOU: Honestly I was struggling a little bit more than I wanted on getting the tires up to temperature. I saw Will was probably one of the best cars doing that. Yeah, I was watching the mirror, but there was not much I could do what was going on.

I would say that I got a bit lucky on our restarts that I could get a gap of like a second, then he would close a little bit, then my tires would be up to temperature again by turn three.

Yeah, it was busy at the end.

Q. I asked you yesterday about the roll you're on here. Is it pinch yourself time or does it feel y'all are on a roll?

ALEX PALOU: Yeah, I mean, we are for sure. We got the pole. We got the win at GMR, got the pole at Indy, got the pole here and the win here. Obviously we're in a roll.

As I said, we'll try and keep the wave rolling if we can because it's a great moment for us. We know this is not



going to get until the end of the season. We'll try to get advantage of that. The next couple of races are really good for us. We'll try and, as I said, keep it going.

Q. Back to Laguna last year, have you had a string of races where it's gone well pretty much every race?

ALEX PALOU: Well, yeah. I mean, we didn't really have a really good start of the season this year. I think we could have done a little bit better. Like our car was better than what we finished.

No, honestly, we had a great, I don't know, seven races if we count Laguna. They've been amazing. I had fast cars every weekend. Yeah, couldn't ask for more now.

Q. No driver likes to finish second when a win is close. Will Power seemed pretty happy. Can you describe your experience racing with Will?

ALEX PALOU: He was really fast. He did a really good job on getting through the field on the first stint, then also when he overtook me. I had the gearbox issue that we solve it really, really quickly. But, yeah, he was tough to beat.

Yeah, I mean, he's done a really good job obviously. He has a great team around, as well. He was a headache on the last two, three restarts where he was getting super close, and he was very aggressive. Obviously, like he had to be.

But, yeah, it's always good racing with him.

Q. Every win is sweet, is there any additional sweetness about this race given this is a Chevy race and you're driving a Honda and you got them?

ALEX PALOU: Yeah, I mean, it's super special, but it's more special because it's my first street course win. I've been fast. We've been there. We've been on the podium many times on a street course, but I didn't really had a win. Today we got it.

Yeah, having a Honda car, all the power that we had, the fuel mileage that they gave us for this weekend obviously makes it extra sweet.

Q. Do you already have someone figuring out where you're going to get chicken tonight?

ALEX PALOU: Well, I have a flight tonight, so I don't know. Maybe on the plane. Or at the airport, whatever. We'll find something for sure, 100%.

Q. I heard you say in Victory Lane the stall issue, you had to go into emergency mode. Can you explain that?

ALEX PALOU: It was because I was trying - I think, I haven't spoken to the team yet - but I was trying to warm up the rear tires obviously. I up-shifted onto second when we were wheel spinning. I got stuck in first. I got stuck. I couldn't really shift.

Before they told me, because I was already heading to turn two, I switched to emergency mode because that's the only way to take all the issues out, let's say. It went well, but you lose a lot of performance up-shifting. That's why Will got us, until exit of turn three I got it back to normal, then it was all right.

It was not something from Honda or the team. It was a driver issue that we had, yeah.

Q. Was that the most nervous moment you had? Was getting through the last few restarts difficult?

ALEX PALOU: Well, that was really a panic mode because I didn't really know what to do. I didn't know if it was going to work or not because if you get stuck in one gear, you're done.

That was a pretty busy moment.

Q. Chip has been saying since St. Pete if you want to come back, he wants you. There's a lot of speculation. Is this team doing enough to bring you back?

ALEX PALOU: Absolutely, we're doing great, so...

Yeah, with the experience that obviously I had put myself into last year, I'm not going to comment anything before I announce directly. I learn that from last year.

Obviously yeah, I mean, as I said, we had great race cars every weekend. We had chances to win every weekend. Yeah, we'll keep it going.

Q. You said earlier this track raced better than you expected. In what way?

ALEX PALOU: Well, I think we had more grip than I expected. The track kept evolving with our sessions and with other series, like INDY NXT and Trans-Am cars. You could see the driving lane, it was black, all full of rubber. That allowed for some more overtaking. I was able to pass some cars that were a lap down or on the back. I was able to pass Will. He was able to pass me, as well. Was able to pass Rossi, as well.

long way to go.

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I thought there was going to be zero passes honestly without a crash. So, yeah, it was better than I expected. Obviously we had quite a lot of yellows, but everywhere you go, if there's a street course, you're going to have a lot of drama.

Q. A couple drivers said they felt one thing that stood out that could be improved was doing some sort of repave on the backstretch that might lead to even more passing. What do you feel that would do?

ALEX PALOU: Yeah, I think it would help. There's big bumps on the right side, so it's quite easy to just go on the left and defend.

Yeah, when you go on the right, it's not that it's bumpy, but you lose a little bit of speed by just touching. That's why it made it more difficult.

Yeah, it would be a good step.

Q. (No microphone.)

ALEX PALOU: Before turn three. Yeah, no, the back straight before turn three.

Q. I think this is the biggest championship lead you've had in your INDYCAR career. How do you try not to look to the end of the season?

ALEX PALOU: Yeah, I don't know. Is it big? I haven't watched it yet. Honestly, there's a lot of races to go. We got the lead two races ago, now suddenly we have this amazing lead.

On the same way that we go up, there's somebody that can go up as well, and we can go down. That's INDYCAR. That's the high competition that we have here. There's a lot. I think in 15 weeks we can have 10 race weekends. It's going to be tough to keep the energy up for everybody. But having that lead, it's going to help us. Hopefully we can keep it going and getting bigger.

Q. Who do you feel one driver who is your lead rival at the moment, someone who stands out to you?

ALEX PALOU: Dixon, Ericsson, Power, Newgarden, McLaughlin, Pato. I could keep going (smiling).

I wish I could only name you one, but unfortunately or fortunately, I think that's the cool thing about our series, there's more than 10 drivers that I'm looking at.

THE MODERATOR: 51-point lead with 10 races to go. A

