

# NTT INDYCAR SERIES

## News Conference

Sunday, September 10, 2023

**Alex Palou**

**Dean Kessel**

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: What a way to wrap up the 2023 NTT INDYCAR SERIES season. Alex Palou obviously coming home third, led 51 of the 95 laps, driver of the No. 10, The American Legion Honda with his 10th podium of the season. All told, five wins, 10 podiums this year, 13 top fives, 17 top 10s, 18 straight if you go back to the win here last year at Laguna Seca. A couple of NTT P1 awards. Finally you got an opportunity to hold the trophy, touch it again. What does it feel like to have another championship under your belt?

ALEX PALOU: Yeah, thank you. I don't know what to say, honestly. It's been an amazing year. We had fast cars everywhere. It's been so fun.

I'm a bit sad that this season is over honestly because it seems like we go out on track, we know that we have a chance to win the races. So, yeah, we had a chance today as well. It was a shame that we couldn't finish. I think it would have been, like, the best season ever in my career. It still is (smiling).

Yeah, for the some donuts at the end. I guess that I hope The American Legion is happy about the work we did this year. And, yeah, honestly it's just been an amazing year.

THE MODERATOR: Also joining us Dean Kessel, chief marketing officer for The American Legion.

Dean, we talked about how you were hoping to get a win, some pole positions. You got much more than that out of this year.

DEAN KESSEL: I tell you, to say we're happy is an understatement. Just elated. It's kind of non-traditional for a charity, veterans service organization, to be in a position like this, to be partnered with Alex and the entire Ganassi organization. They've really rallied behind our mission, launching not only a brand last year but also our Be the One platform, which is all about destigmatizing veterans asking for help.

I got to tell this room, it's working. Alex talked about it, if you didn't see the pre-race, then Lee talked about it a little bit there.

When we started this whole deal with The One, we want to talk about the one we can save today, not the 17 that are dying every day. If we save one, the other number goes down by default.

Actually, at the first race of the year in St. Petersburg, we had a young man come forward who is active duty and said he needed help. He said he was supposed to go back out, said that the only way he felt like he wasn't going to go out is to not be here any longer.

We have resources at every racetrack. We have resources with the Veterans Administration. We got this young man some help. We check on it every couple weeks. He's doing great.

Chip won the race, as you remember, with Marcus Ericsson. I called Chip from the airport and said congratulations on the win, but we had two wins today. I told him what I just shared with you.

To be able to have an impact, Chip's response was classic. I don't know if y'all know, but Chip's father served, drove a tank. He said to me on the phone, I've sold a lot of product for a lot of companies, but I never had an opportunity to save somebody's life through a sponsorship.

That's why we're here. That's why we're doing what we are doing.

We couldn't be prouder of Alex with the visibility that he's done for us this year. It's off the chart. Our 1.6 million members across the country, it's amazing.

I want to thank you again, thank Chip, thank INDYCAR. We're the official charity partner of INDYCAR as well. Couldn't be happier with this year and what we plan to do next year.

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



**Q. Thank you for supporting INDYCAR. I'm a paid-up-for-life veteran. Every time I see the logo go out and I see the winning attitude of Alex, it just grips me. This isn't put on. I can't talk like this. It's just that good. It's a great marriage. Alex probably won't talk about this, but he's the kind of a partner you would want with The American Legion. He got a little trophy for showing up at the bullpen, press bullpen, for every bullpen done this year. He's a champion, too? In other words, you would think that would just be something he'd maybe gloss off. Everything is important to Alex. I think this marriage between you two is superb.**

ALEX PALOU: Thank you.

DEAN KESSEL: Thank you for your membership and for your service. This is why we're doing it. This is absolutely why we're doing it.

**Q. Alex, take us through the race today. You already had the championship locked up. You didn't get to do a victory lap. Take us through your race.**

ALEX PALOU: Yeah, it was an interesting race. Lots of action honestly. Started fifth. Knew that there was going to be some drama on the first couple of laps. I was lucky that I was out of the first lap incident in turn two.

From there, honestly we just had a lot of pace. Was able to overtake Felix, just get a gap. The car was amazing. I thought our strategy was amazing, as well. It was also hard to judge the yellows. Like, we couldn't really predict what was going to happen.

That yellow hurt us, I think it was third or fourth yellow. It hurt us a lot. We had to drop back to like 15th. We were on a bad spot.

But, yeah, never gave up. We started saving fuel that we needed. Yeah, got into an accident when I was restarting in 15th. The car survived. We survived. Everything survived. I'm happy with the P3 honestly. I think it was the best we could have done today.

I wanted to win, honestly, to celebrate more. Honestly, with the race we did, I feel like we won our race. Super happy. We got to do a lot of donuts for myself, for the team, and for the fans, which I was waiting for.

I just enjoyed a lot this race. So hopefully INDYCAR is going to give us those points that we got here for next year, and we can start with a little bit of advantage next season. I think it would be fair, right (smiling)?

THE MODERATOR: You're asking the wrong guy. Don't look at me (laughter).

**Q. Alex, when you pulled away early on, if the race had stayed green, what kind of margin would you have had?**

ALEX PALOU: I don't know. But, yeah, it would have been pretty big just because I felt like one with my car. It was just amazing. It felt like back to last year. We just had a ton of speed.

But I knew it was not going to be an easy race. I knew there were going to be some yellows coming. I was just praying to be lucky again like we were on the first yellow, but we didn't.

Yeah, it's okay. I mean, it's INDYCAR. You know there's stuff that you cannot control, like that yellow. Yeah, at least we got it back into podium position, which was the best we could.

Yeah, could have been a lot better race, but a third was amazing.

**Q. For next year, what are your goals apart from the Indy 500? What do you want to achieve?**

ALEX PALOU: Well, that would be a big, big goal. If we could get the Indy 500 next year, that would be already a really good year obviously.

We just need to continue working like we've been doing. I think we have chances if we put ourselves again during the Indy 500 to be up there in the top four, top five for the last restarts, we're going to be in a good place.

Also I can feel my hand a little bit more, like we spoke after the podium. I love winning, the feeling that you get with the fans, with the sponsors, with the family, with the team. It's just amazing.

So, yeah, hopefully we can win a little more next year.

**Q. As part of the Be the One initiative, since you won the championship again, will you run the No. 1 next year or stay with the No. 10?**

ALEX PALOU: I don't know actually. I'm going to push for it. I'm going to push for it.

Honestly, I love the No. 10. It was my first number when I started racing. That's why I wanted to keep it after 2021. But then during last year, I just kind of thought and was



like, Oh, man, we should have raced with the No. 1.

I'll have a lot of discussions with Chip. I'll come with, like, the Be the One. I think that's great. You have to push for it, as well, at the same time.

DEAN KESSEL: Not a problem (smiling).

ALEX PALOU: We will push at the same time for the No. 1 for the Be the One. I think it's just special when you can win the championship and you can just have the No. 1 for a full year.

DEAN KESSEL: Actually you were the champion, the first time, you let Tony Kanaan use it when we ran at the Indy 500 with Tony. Yeah, we're all thinking the right things.

**Q. Now with your success in INDYCAR, are you looking in other American motorsport disciplines to get involved?**

DEAN KESSEL: I'm sorry?

THE MODERATOR: Would you think about other motorsports?

DEAN KESSEL: You know, this just feels right for us right now. When you look at it from a marketing perspective, it indexes very high for veterans and active duty military. They love motorsports. That's why we're here.

I think we're not a big Fortune 500 company that can sort of spread those assets around. We just really like where we are here. INDYCAR has embraced us and let us do a lot of things from an activation standpoint. Then Alex, Chip, the rest of the Ganassi people.

That's a long answer to your question. We're not looking to do anything different right now. We love INDYCAR. We like what it does for our organization, for our brand, members, veterans in general. We're very happy where we are right now.

THE MODERATOR: We'll wrap it up there. Congratulations.

ALEX PALOU: Thank you.

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