

NTT INDYCAR SERIES

News Conference

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Alex Palou

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: We're joined by the two-time and reigning NTT INDYCAR Series champion, Alex Palou, back in the No. 10 now DHL Chip Ganassi Racing Honda. Season-high five wins last season, nine now in your very young NTT INDYCAR Series career. How long has it taken you to get used to to look down and see these colors?

ALEX PALOU: I'm used to it. It's bright. It's easy to spot, and I think it looks racy.

THE MODERATOR: Fresh off a championship year last year, now you look ahead to 2024. Can you do it again?

ALEX PALOU: Yeah. Yeah, obviously. We've done it once, so we can do it twice. But it's going to be tough. It's always tough to repeat such a special and magical season like what we had with, yeah, five wins. It's crazy.

When I look back to see the races in a row that we got suddenly with starting the month of May, getting the pole at the Indy 500 and then we went to Detroit and Mid-Ohio and Road America, it just felt magical.

Yeah, it's going to be tough to repeat or to be close to that. But we've done it once, so yeah, there's no reason why we shouldn't be able to do it twice.

Q. There's no surprises anymore.

ALEX PALOU: Yeah, I mean, the team has won 15 championships in INDYCAR, so it's not a surprise that they're putting everything that the driver needs to win. All the engineers, all the mechanics, everybody, the 180 people that we have at the shop are ready to give to the drivers what we need to win.

Q. Lessons for the new dads out there?

ALEX PALOU: Patience, sleep whenever you can. Yeah, sleep whenever you can. That's the best thing.

They told me and I didn't actually put it on practice. I was

like, yeah, yeah, don't worry, I'll sleep whenever I have to. I didn't put it to practice the first couple of weeks, and then I was like, oh, my goodness, I need to do it. So as soon as the baby was closing their eyes, I was like, I need to fall asleep for one hour.

Obviously it's been super fun. It's a lot of work. But the emotions and the feelings that you get, it's crazy. It's beyond everything I've felt before. So yeah, learning a lot, not sleeping much, but it's been fun.

Q. Speaking from experience, I know bringing that into everything that you deal with on track and with your job will just be a new thing to try to experience and balance as you've kind of slowly gotten back into the swing of things with the season still a couple months away. How do you envision having a new daughter and that experience changing Alex Palou as an INDYCAR driver?

ALEX PALOU: Yeah, as a driver, I don't think -- I don't know, but I don't think it's going to change much. I think with the jobs that we have, we are actually really lucky that we can spend so much time with the kids. Maybe not with the family, but we can with the kids. We can travel together. I can be on Monday a full day with her if I want, on Tuesday, on Wednesday, and I can travel with her to races if I want or if she wants or depending on how old she is.

Yeah, we travel a lot and we're busy, but at the same time, we have a lot of free time, as well.

I don't think it's going to change much. I don't know, but yeah, as a driver, I think I'll just have to take care and work even harder because it's not about myself alone now. I have to win for myself and for her. Also for my wife. But it's not the same as having a daughter.

So yeah, it's just giving me a different kind of motivation that hopefully pushes me forward like it did for Dixon having three kids.

Q. It's been a little while since we've had a repeat champion here in INDYCAR. You went through this title defense experience before in 2022. I know there

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were some special circumstances that you've talked extensively about that made that season a little bit more difficult that you hope not to experience this year, but just from the on-track perspective side, what do you anticipate being most difficult in trying to repeat as a champion here in 2024?

ALEX PALOU: It's always tough. It's always tough in INDYCAR. It's tough from year to year because the drivers can catch up. They have time. The teams, they have time to find whatever they were missing, like what we did in 2022 to 2023.

But being a champion and trying to be a champion again, I think I'm really lucky that in INDYCAR we don't really have a lot of champions that repeat. So there's no pressure at all of like having one champion that suddenly wins six in a row. We don't have that.

I think it's more of a shock if we see a champion repeating than if we don't see him repeating.

I think that the opportunity I have in front of me, it's great. The team is the same. The key people in my car is the same. The colors are different. But that gives us also another opportunity to try and give them some wins and some excitement on track.

So yeah, I don't really feel the pressure of trying to defend a title because every time we step on the track, we need to win. Even if you are a champ or you're not, you need to win. The good thing is we know we can be champions, that we can win after a season, so we just need to repeat and try and work a little bit harder than what we did last year.

Q. Assuming you do this, how fast can you change a diaper?

ALEX PALOU: Yeah, yeah, I do. Obviously I do, otherwise I get -- you know, at home.

But how fast? We did actually a competition yesterday with Dixon at the shop. He won. I tried it too fast and I broke the diaper. He was like, he is as a person as he is on track. He was just doing it and he won.

I think I'm really good, but then when I told my wife that I think I'm really good, she was like, are you sure that you're really good?

Yeah, I need to take my time, and sometimes everything goes out of control and she doesn't let me do it, and that just gets messy. But yeah, I wouldn't say I'm the worst, and I'm not the best for sure.

Q. Looking forward to this season coming up, for you to repeat as a champion, within the team, who are you most concerned about, and outside your team, what maybe couple of drivers do you feel will be the toughest to beat?

ALEX PALOU: Dixon inside and out and the series in general. I know that he will have the same tools as I will, and he's always there. He's always there. Even on the worst days he's always there.

It will be tough. I think they found something or he found something towards the end of the season as we saw with the results they got, and hopefully he forgot about that stuff. I will talk to him about other stuff during Daytona to see if he forgets.

But yeah, Dixon.

Then outside, Newgarden. He's always there. He's the same as Dixon, that even in the bad days, he's able to get the maximum out of the car. I think he was a bit unlucky during last season, but he's always a threat.

We saw McLaughlin getting super consistent, as well, and I could name all the drivers, but I would stop there, otherwise I'll keep on...

Q. In 2022 had you not had some outside racing distractions, do you think you could have won that title?

ALEX PALOU: I think that didn't help. Do I think that I didn't win because of that? I would say that's -- yeah, I cannot know that. I cannot know. Yeah, I hope that's not the case.

But yeah, it's tough to know. For sure it didn't help, but I don't think that we were at the beginning of the season -- we were really consistent but we were not winning, and we, in fact, only won one race at the end of the season.

I think we were missing just a little bit, that little bit of speed that you need to win a championship.

Q. Last year, all top 10s. Can you explain how hard that is to actually do in INDYCAR? It's not just you, it's the entire team.

ALEX PALOU: Yeah, top 8s. Big difference there. No, only joking.

I don't know, honestly. It's tough. It's tough. I remember with my first year in INDYCAR finishing in the top 10 was a

win, and then even in 2021, finishing in the top 8 was like, hey, man, it was a good day because you know that you're going to have a bad day, and a top 8 is not a bad day.

Having our worst day and being a top 8, there was a couple or three top 8s that felt amazing. Looking back, it's crazy.

It's not like we didn't have difficult races. We had Indy 500 that at some point we were completely last, from first to last. We finished fourth. Long Beach, we were in an accident with Pato and Scott. We got trapped and we were in the back.

Toronto we almost didn't finish with a front wing.

Yeah, it was a magical season that I know it's going to be tough to repeat because even on the bad moments we were able to get amazing results, even podiums. So yeah, I know that there's seasons that everything that can go wrong goes wrong, and it was not the case for 2023, so hopefully we can repeat that in 2024.

Q. In '21 you guys went from three to four cars and won a championship. Now you're going from four to five. What are some advantages or disadvantages of adding another entry to an already established organization?

ALEX PALOU: I would say that if you don't really know how big the organization is, you could say, oh, man, adding one car or two cars, it's a big change. But we have 180 people at the workshop. We have different series and different people that has expertise here and there.

Getting five really good mechanics, it's not tough, out of 180 people, and you can add five more.

I don't believe there's disadvantages apart of headaches that Chip might have apart of putting one more trailer or I don't know how he's going to do it. But in terms of the team performance, I don't really see it. It might change. It might be a disadvantage. But I don't think so.

Then you just get more data. More data is crucial for the team.

If we can have 20 more laps out of free practice, it just adds on -- I remember Detroit having Armstrong and Ericsson and Dixon and myself, we only had like four laps, and if you add one more car, it might be five, and you get so much data for the next day, and you can get a little bit of an advantage.

Yeah, I think even if Linus is half rookie and Kyffin is

completely rookie, they are always going to be able to give us some good data and some resources to try and improve the car performance and driving, as well.

Q. You're going into your fifth full-time season in INDYCAR, you've won two championships, but one of the things that's kind of followed you has been speculation about your future. If you had to say today where you'd be at five years from now, where do you think you're going to be at?

ALEX PALOU: Five years?

Q. Five years from now.

ALEX PALOU: (Laughing) I know where I want to be, but I don't know where I'll be.

Q. Where do you want to be then? Let's put it that way.

ALEX PALOU: I want to be here with you guys. With Ganassi.

Q. You've pretty much decided you do not want to go to F1 at this juncture?

ALEX PALOU: Yeah, I already talked about that. I tried. It didn't really work out. Yeah, that's okay. We'll try and get many championships if we can, and we'll try and fight for as many championships and Indy 500s as possible.

Q. Hypothetically if Chip decided to either buy into or maybe even try to get his own F1 team, would you consider going in that direction if he was the man behind it?

ALEX PALOU: If he wants me to, yeah. Whatever -- yeah. I don't know, hypothetically. Wherever he goes, I would try. I tried to test a NASCAR, and he didn't like that. He was owning the team, so...

Even for him to have an F1 team or whatever, that doesn't mean that he would want me to drive it.

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