

NTT INDYCAR SERIES

News Conference

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Alex Palou

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: Alex Palou, driver of the No. 10 DHL Chip Ganassi Racing Honda with the second NTT P1 award of the season, 8th of his career, second straight on the Sonsio Grand Prix. Tell us about your day. How was it? How would you describe it?

ALEX PALOU: Amazing. Oh, boy, that's loud.

THE MODERATOR: Coming in hot.

ALEX PALOU: Yeah, amazing. It's been a busy day. Really fun day. Lots of activities on track and being here, again, it feels sweet.

Yeah, the car has been really, really fast all day, but especially qualifying. Qualifying was really, really good. I had a couple of moments there locking a couple of tires, especially on Fast Six. That was big.

Yeah, I've been struggling. I think everybody has been struggling a little bit unlocking. I think the track grip is super high. It gives you a lot of confidence, so we start pushing, pushing, pushing, but we get to a point where the tire says no, which makes it really fun to drive, but then suddenly you get moments like that where, yeah, the tire doesn't like it. We're going to have to use that tire tomorrow, so it's going to be exciting.

THE MODERATOR: Back-to-back sweeps. Pole and win.

ALEX PALOU: That would be very nice. I don't know if many people would be happy with that. Yeah, that's what I would like.

THE MODERATOR: Open it up to questions.

Q. (Off microphone)

ALEX PALOU: Yes and no. I mean, yes that they were all three battling, but they have been really good here. In INDYCAR you never know. If you look at Practice 2 results, there was no Penskes and no Andrettis in the top 10 or top 15, and then suddenly we got two Penskes in

Fast Six.

It's tough. Whenever you don't get everything super right with the car or driving or you don't feel 100% comfortable, it's tough to get an edge, but it's cool to see them here. They're going to be fast tomorrow for sure.

Q. With the changes in the tire rules, it didn't sound like people were very optimistic yesterday. From what you learned today, is there any reason to be any more or less optimistic of the impact of that rule?

ALEX PALOU: I don't know. Honestly I have no idea. I think it's one of -- I don't know. It's going to make it interesting in a way of like if the primary or the hard tire is bad or the red tire is bad, bad in a way of not being fast and having more deck, you're just going to have to do it again, and everybody is going to go through that.

I think all the cars, they have -- or all the drivers they have a preference on which tire to run always, and tomorrow you cannot have that preference. You need to be good. You need to be fast on both of them.

So I don't know what's that going to do for the race. Hopefully it's going to mix up a little bit of things. Not on our end hopefully. I have hopes that it's going to make the strategies a bit crazier.

Q. We asked you lots of questions about this run that you're on. Are you aware of the historical rarity of what you are attempting to do tomorrow, win four out of the first five races of the year? We've had a couple of drivers do that during the split, and outside of that in INDYCAR, haven't seen it since the 1970s.

ALEX PALOU: Nice. No, I didn't know. It's pretty cool, but even if that was not -- like that makes it extra, extra special. Like probably extra, extra, extra special, like three times extra specials.

But even if it was common to have these kind of runs, it's super sweet, and it feels amazing for everybody. You can see in the team, myself, my confidence, and it just feels amazing to be in this position. But, yeah, I mean, I didn't know that, and hopefully we can make it happen.

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That's what we want to do, right? We want to win every single race, which is really tough, but whenever we have a chance of having a lot of confidence on driving a really fast car like what we have here, it's up to us to try and execute.

Q. Alex, your personality has come out more over the last couple of years. You've seemed to relax a lot more. Is the relaxation making you faster, or are you faster because you're more relaxed?

ALEX PALOU: I think I had a couple of issues off track that maybe didn't allow me to be very open. Anyway, I'm a person that doesn't really like to show myself on a way of how I am or how I feel, but no, I think it's a mix of everything.

I think it's a mix of having more experience, maybe not having so much noise out of track, but also having a really fast car and an amazing team behind. I wouldn't say it's all up to myself. I would say that the car that I have now is very, very quick. I feel super comfortable.

There are times where you struggle. You struggle to get that feeling from the car and to make those changes or those goals for the changes that you need, and today actually we made pretty big and different changes throughout the day, and they were all working for us.

Yeah, I don't know, but I feel very relaxed and very happy.

Q. When did you decide you go to qualifying without practicing reds in practice?

ALEX PALOU: Well, this time we had one set of tires less than normal, especially to what we had this season. Instead of five and five, we had six and four, and the same amount of practice.

We didn't have to use a brand new set for the race. Like, we can start on used, but obviously that puts you in a not ideal scenario. So, yeah, there were some cars that run it in practice, which I think they got benefit from. Like I think all the three Rahal cars ran in practice, and then there was people that run two sets of alternates brand new in Q1 to try and make it. But we're confident that we were going to be able to still make it on blacks and then one set of alternates and keep one brand new set of alternates for tomorrow.

Q. So it was surprising for you getting the setup really right from the very beginning of qualifying?

ALEX PALOU: No, not with the team we have behind. I have a lot of -- yeah, I think they know exactly what I need

when we go to reds. That's why we didn't use it.

There's weekends where we've been using double set of reds in Q1 to make it through and to get couple of changes and to see how the driving is, but this one we felt confident.

Q. As you've won more and more poles and races, especially this season, some drivers might experience more and more pressure week after week after week. Have you felt that same pressure? Also, how do you deal with it?

ALEX PALOU: No, I would say it's the opposite, right? I mean, there's always pressure. Chip doesn't care if I won at Barber last week. He kind of forgets about it, and it's normal. Everybody does in the team. You cannot say, Oh, yeah, I won last week, so I can take a week off. You need to still perform.

That's what I like. I like to be up front. We don't do it to win and celebrate and then that's it. I think the pressure is still there, but it's a good kind of pressure.

Yeah, asking or hearing about the amazing run within, it's adding good confidence instead of just putting pressure. I think it's more what if we make it happen tomorrow instead of what if we don't make it happen?

Q. You locked up on the lap before.

ALEX PALOU: Yeah, big-time.

Q. It set a lap that was four-tenths faster not only than Graham Rahal, but I'm sure four-tenths faster than any other lap that's been run this entire weekend. How?

ALEX PALOU: Well, I think there's a couple of stuff there. The first one I believe I was the only one on sticker alternates in Fast Six, which that's why the bigger difference to P2. I was surprised as well about the total lap time. It was super quick, and it felt amazing.

I don't know if the track improved a little bit. Probably yes because also everybody was like in the 69s, right? Everybody was super fast.

So, yeah, I don't know. Maybe it was the wind that changed a little bit, but I could see on the delta that I was gaining like half a tenth, half a tenth, and I was, like, all right, I'll take it.

Q. You mentioned some concerns with those tires, using them tomorrow. Kind of expand on that.

ALEX PALOU: I mean, it's never ideal, right, to make a big



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lock-up. I did another one in Fast 12 in turn 7. Yeah, I mean, they are okay because we got pole with those, but obviously it's not ideal to have a big clock up on them. Yeah, I'll be crying during that stint tomorrow.

Q. Do you think going off of David's question, do you think maybe you had more left in the tank? You saw tenths going down, down, down. Do you think even after that lap there was still more to even gain?

ALEX PALOU: No, I don't think so. I think the tires were already on the limit. Like, you had two good laps. In our case it was the second lap. Locking on the first one didn't help, but we didn't really lose a big first lap because we were always, like, two-tenths slower. Then after that the tires just started giving up.

Also, from the driving standpoint, even though I saw that that was going fast, you never know if somebody else is having the same thing, right? You keep on pushing. Yeah, obviously there's always time that you can find, but it was pretty good. I think if somebody would have beaten us, it would have been just because they were faster, yeah.

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