

# NTT INDYCAR SERIES

## News Conference

Wednesday, June 18, 2025

**Alex Palou**

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: Fresh off a pretty packed, action-packed night at Worldwide Technology Raceway, the INDYCAR Series gets back into this with the annual trip to beautiful Road America, Sunday's XPEL Grand Prix at Road America presented by AMR.

After eight races this season, Alex Palou leads the championship by 73, thanks in large part to his five wins so far here in 2025 and heads to Road America where he's already a two-time champion, and the driver of the No. 10 Solo Cup Chip Ganassi Racing Honda, new sponsor this weekend, joins us for the next half hour.

Just in time for the summer parties, red Solo Cups for the team this weekend?

ALEX PALOU: Yeah, it's amazing. Did you see the car? It looks great. I'm excited.

THE MODERATOR: Certainly been a hectic couple of weeks for you coming off the Indy 500 win. Does this week at Road America signal a bit of a return to normalcy for you or are you still coming off the high of the 500?

ALEX PALOU: No, I would say already St. Louis was kind of -- I had like a week, week and a half of a little bit of work on the media side, but it wasn't too much, so I was able to rest quite a lot and get back on track with preparation with the team and so on.

Yeah, I felt good at St. Louis even though it didn't really go smoothly in our way, but yeah, I'm excited for Road America. It's a place I love. It's a place that we've done really, really well in the past, and it's one of my favorite tracks in the calendar for sure.

### **Q. Why are you so good at Road America?**

ALEX PALOU: I don't know. I guess I had great cars there. Honestly, even my first year with Coyne, I got my first ever INDYCAR podium there, and I had a great car, great strategy, and then with CGR we've always been running very fast.

Last year we kind of struggled a little bit, especially in the race with those three Penskes finishing one, two, three, and we were kind of there alone in fourth place. But I feel like this year hopefully we can get back on speed and try and fight for the win.

### **Q. When do you start looking at the points and what you have to do in the races, upcoming races, to win the championship?**

ALEX PALOU: I mean, keeping track of the points, like you always keep an eye on it, obviously. But I would say that focusing on the championship, that only goes on the last two races, whenever it's like you already know that hopefully you're in the fight or not. Hopefully it's only yourself and three other drivers and you know what you need to do or you know who you need to fight for.

Now we're fighting against everybody, so it just doesn't really make much sense to count points. It's good to have a look at them when you're leading and see that hopefully we can extend a little bit more the gap, but I think now -- the way we got here was by racing hard and going aggressive on strategies and trying to go for wins, and I think that's the way we need to continue racing.

Hopefully we can have a look at who we're racing against towards the last two, three races of the year.

### **Q. Did you notice anything different last week going to a track with the hybrid for a second time? I want to say last week was the first time you did that.**

ALEX PALOU: No, not really. I think that nowadays it's already, like, part of us. Like probably the beginning of last year whenever it got introduced, it was the biggest topic on how it was going to change the way we race or the car balance, but nowadays, everybody kind of already knows what you need to do in terms of driving and in terms of team setup to try and have the same balance or improve the balance that you had without the hybrid.

It didn't really affect much the way we were racing or qualifying at St. Louis.



**Q. Chip Ganassi said right at the start of the season that he feels like you're getting better and better. Is that something you feel the same from your perspective, and if so, what do you still feel you need to improve on?**

ALEX PALOU: Yeah, I would say that you always -- it's the beauty of the sport that you can always get better at everything. You can always get better at going a little bit faster, getting more speed, just saving better the tires, saving more fuel, managing better how you are aggressive in defending or overtaking. There's so much stuff that you can always be a little bit better that I think there's no limit, and you can see that in amazing drivers like Dixon, Power, these guys that have been around for so long, and I think Power said the past weekend that he's been driving the best that he's ever done.

I believe in that, and I think that it's the beauty of motorsports, that you can always keep on pushing yourself to try and be a little bit better.

Where do I think I can get better? Well, everything. A little bit faster, hopefully better on short ovals, better on qualifying up front and defending moves or overtaking. I think there's always stuff that you can improve on.

**Q. We've seen Kyle Kirkwood in a good run of form significantly. Pato O'Ward has gained a few points on you, as well. Do you feel any more pressure for the championship than you did after the Indy 500 and does that change the mentality coming into each race?**

ALEX PALOU: No, I said it before the 500 and after the 500, that the same way we won like four or five races in like a very short period of time, there could be somebody else could do the same because it's not impossible. We've done it, so somebody else can do it, as well, and we've seen that with Kyle. I think obviously without his penalty at the 500 he would be even a lot closer.

Yeah, it didn't add any pressure at all just because I didn't ever think that it was done or it was ours or anything like that. I knew that we just had a perfect start of the season, and obviously you could see a big point difference.

But yeah, I expect that it's going to get very tight. It's going to make it interesting. I just hope that we are there at the end to fight for it.

**Q. It's still relatively early into your career. You've won three championships, won an Indy 500 which is what every INDYCAR driver dreams of. At this point what aspirations do you still have now you've got both those boxes ticked?**

ALEX PALOU: I've never had a goal of, like, getting an X amount of wins or championships or Indy 500s. My goal has always been to, first, be able to race and be able to race at the highest level with a great team, and then to win every single weekend. That's what I like.

It's the feeling that I like the most. It's not when the season is over and you kind of get the trophy and photos and all that stuff. What I like is going to every single weekend, fighting for the race, having fun, getting the car a little bit better, getting myself a little bit better.

Yeah, what else can I achieve? Like win this weekend and then the following one. That's what we can still achieve and keep on counting on those wins. Hopefully when we look back in a long time from now, we can maybe count those wins and those championships and Indy 500s.

**Q. You're obviously a Pacers fan. Sure they can turn it around still?**

ALEX PALOU: Oh, yeah. We started really, really good, and then we're struggling a little bit now, but I'll be cheering as much as I can to see if we can win it.

**Q. Road America is often called a national park with speed. The race this weekend is 65 laps around the park's famous four-mile track. The last four races have varied wildly between different types of tracks and physical challenges. How are those variables taken into account when it comes to preparations before the weekend begins during practice sessions or anything like that?**

ALEX PALOU: Yeah, I think that's what makes INDYCAR so challenging, as well, is you go from a really small track at Indy Road Course, then you go to a superspeedway, then you go to the bumpiest track that we have in the calendar with Detroit and very tight walls, and then you go to St. Louis which is a completely different track and now you go back to Road America, which it's like going back to the circle of Indy Road Course.

Preparation-wise, I would say for the driver it's not as hard as probably for the team, the mechanics, the engineers, getting the setup right and also building the car to, like, the different specs.

But for the driver it's just amazing that you get to focus on different places and different techniques of driving. It just keeps you sharp, keeps you studying a lot, and I enjoy that. I enjoy that part a lot.

**Q. This season we've been seeing fewer and fewer**

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**cautions on street and road courses, only seen seven cautions in the first six races. Do you think you'll have a bigger test of endurance at Road America if that pattern continues?**

ALEX PALOU: I think it depends. I think it depends how the race plays out. Whenever you have really fast cars starting up front and opening the gap, kind of makes the race very fast and then you see less cautions, which is what we've seen at the beginning of the season. I think the hybrid is playing a big role, as well, and obviously luck, as well.

We've been very lucky in some situations at the beginning of the season in street courses like St. Pete, Long Beach, where you would see a crash coming up and then it never happens.

I think now everybody is also playing a little bit more aggressive than probably at the beginning of the season. Everybody just wants that spot that they can gain. Yeah, I expect to see some cautions, and you never know if Road America -- I think Road America, having so many passing opportunities can be really caution-ish track or it can be like no caution at all because there's so much space and people can run so fast that suddenly you don't get many.

Yeah, I cannot really tell you how it's going to be, the race.

**Q. With Solo Cup coming in as a sponsor for this weekend and being heavily featured in so many celebrations across the United States, with a possible win on Sunday, what will you have in your Solo Cup?**

ALEX PALOU: Yeah, I don't know. Hopefully something fun. Obviously it makes it super fun and I think it's perfect timing, as well, for Solo to enter INDYCAR for the first time and for us to run the car, and I would say probably Road America is one of the coolest atmosphere tracks that you see, like kids are on vacation, they are camping, people are having fun there all around the track. It's probably the best weekend to start out with Solo.

Yeah, I don't know what I'm going to have yet in case we win, but that's something that hopefully it's a good problem to have after the race.

**Q. In looking at the standings and the guys around you, is there an advantage that you've obviously been through this before and someone like Kyle Kirkwood and Lundgaard and Pato, they've not been in that championship fight going into the last few races before?**

ALEX PALOU: It depends on the driver, I think. I mean,

Pato and I in 2021 it was for both of us the first time heading into Long Beach fighting for the championship.

For me, heading into 2023, fighting for the championship again with the experience I had in '21, it helps me a lot, like knowing a little bit what to expect, how to react or just what to -- what to expect from outside, like the media or the people or the team or other drivers.

But there could be some drivers that don't care at all. They just behave as if they won many championships before. So you never know.

Yeah, I don't expect that to be, like, a big difference on, like, let's say going into the last race of the season and having one person that has won the championship and the other driver that has never won it. I don't expect that to be a bad thing for the person that has never won it.

**Q. Now that we're a few weeks past the Indy 500 win, what's maybe some of the favorite things you've done over these last few weeks? I know you went on the whirlwind tour in New York and threw out the first pitch at the Mets game. What's some things you've done so far?**

ALEX PALOU: I have to say, my favorite thing was just celebrating at the track with my -- as soon as I got out of the car, the emotion there. Like I could barely breathe because I was screaming so much and I was getting so -- I would say so excited that I could barely breathe.

Then also the victory lap with my family on the van and Chip on the van and saying hello to all the fans that were staying at the track, it was pretty awesome.

But then yeah, I got to do cool stuff. The first pitch with the Mets, I don't know if you've seen the video, but it was terrible. Like it was not 50-Cent level, but it was like very, very bad, so I was not very proud about that. But I got to do cool stuff in New York.

I would say getting some cool stuff like the Empire State Building visit that it was very special. I did that as a normal tourist, but getting that properly done for us was amazing. Visiting the Pacers after the race win, and just getting into a fan base that it's not our fan base and getting recognized in front of that, that was pretty special.

**Q. From the outside, it looked like the 10 car was in trouble during the race, and maybe the problem with the pit could affect your final result. But are you worried about the situation considering there are more short oval races in the future, and the lack of performance that -- from the outside it looked like**

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**happened? And the second one is you have the perfect start to the season. Now you experienced two bad races. Are you in kind of an urgency situation to go back again to the success? Road America is the perfect place for that.**

ALEX PALOU: Honestly, I'm not concerned. I wasn't happy about St. Louis, obviously, but yeah, it's true, we were lacking -- we had a lot of issues that didn't help us progress. Like it was a very busy race for us. But we didn't have performance, either, although we got the fastest lap. It was just because we had a lot of clean air and we just went as fast as possible.

But yeah, we were lacking performance and we struggled a lot. It's not concerning, like, urgency, but it's obviously not good.

We're excited to test in Iowa next week with all other teams to see what we can improve, and then no, there's no urgency. There's always urgency to win. Nobody likes to see somebody else win.

But I think at the same time, we got used to too much success. Not we as the team but everybody, and expects us to win every single weekend. It's not possible, unfortunately.

Although Road America is a really good race weekend for us, I love that track, the car has been really good there, so hopefully we can go back there on Friday and practice and have already a good start of the weekend.

Yeah, I'm excited and I'm hungry to get back on the top, but there's no urgency yet.

**Q. You're really good here at Road America, first podium in INDYCAR here. Take me inside baseball a little bit; what parts of the track do you like and what makes it good for you as a driver?**

ALEX PALOU: I honestly love every single corner. There's not one corner that I don't look forward to going. There's sometimes in some tracks that you don't look forward to going to, like Turn 4, because it's like sketchy and you never get the balance right. But actually Road America it's super fun. The way you need to drive the car, the way you are allowed to push, it's just amazing, especially with the new tarmac that we had a few years ago. It allowed all the drivers to just push the limits a lot more.

Yeah, I just like the combination of really high-speed corners, like you go to 1, and then slow-speed corners like 4, 5, 6. Like the car speed is amazing, as well. We were

able to do it completely flat two years ago in qualifying on alternates for just one or two laps.

It's just a complete track that it's awesome to drive it.

**Q. Despite running out of the top 10 at Gateway --**

ALEX PALOU: No, P8.

**Q. Well, you were running outside for a lot of the race --**

ALEX PALOU: Oh, yes, yes, yes.

**Q. Two big things, getting to that P8 and also avoiding the crash with Louis Foster at the halfway mark, how much do you point to moments like that because like last year at Gateway, you avoided that restart wreck with Will Power on your way to your third title.**

ALEX PALOU: Yeah, I mean, we had a top of stuff happening to us at St. Louis. Also sometimes you put yourself in those positions, but like with Lundgaard on the pits, getting stuck there, not being able to release and losing like 10 places, we couldn't really do much there.

But then I did a couple of restarts where I put myself in a bad scenario and ended up losing a lot.

But yeah, with Louis, I could see the car on the fence for a long time, but at the same time, I couldn't really go a lot slower because it was not yellow, and I was fighting with the leader, not for the lead but for the lead lap. That's actually even tougher than fighting for the lead sometimes.

I was lucky there. I had to take a decision of going up or going low, and I went up because I saw that the car was potentially going to go down, and Josef unfortunately didn't have that option.

Yeah, I mean, those moments sometimes you are lucky and you get it right, and sometimes you don't. I'm glad I was on the right side there.

**Q. The new INDYCAR got pushed back to 2028. How important is it for INDYCAR to take time developing this new chassis and engine as a driver to you?**

ALEX PALOU: Yeah, honestly, at the end of the day, I don't care. Would I like a new car that looks a little bit better and has more power? Yes. But do I really care at the end of the day? No, I don't care. As long as everybody has the same exact car and the racing is good, I do not care what we do.

I think it's important that whatever we do, it's good, and it's not going to affect our product, which is just fun racing, really close racing, and just like the pure INDYCAR that we have.

As long as we keep that in mind, if it delays one year, two years, I do not care, and hopefully that gives enough time to everybody like all the teams, Dallara, INDYCAR, to come up with a great solution that everybody is happy about visually and also, like, speed-wise and power-wise.

So yeah, at the end of the day, I don't care. As long as we all get to do the same, it'll be good.

**Q. Are you going to sing "Red Solo Cup" if you win on Sunday, by Toby Keith?**

ALEX PALOU: I don't think it's a good idea that I sing, but I can play it if we win. So maybe that's close.

THE MODERATOR: So you are familiar with the song?

ALEX PALOU: I heard it from one of the engineers, yes. I was not familiar with the song before.

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