

# NTT INDYCAR SERIES

## News Conference

Saturday, July 5, 2025

Alex Palou

Christian Lundgaard

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: Wrapping up qualifying for tomorrow's Honda Indy 200 at Mid-Ohio presented by the all new 2026 Passport here at Mid-Ohio Sports Car Course, Alex Palou, driver of the No. 10 OpenAI Chip Ganassi Racing Honda, the third NTT P1 award of 2025, a second straight at Mid-Ohio, ninth career pole position as well.

Tell us about your afternoon, Alex.

ALEX PALOU: Yeah, it was great. Really fast car since practice one. A good exchange with Power after practice 2, and then off to a great --

THE MODERATOR: Did he give you advice on what worked?

ALEX PALOU: He gave me some compliments. No, it was all good. He was frustrated about traffic. Yeah, it wasn't too bad.

Yeah, then qualifying was interesting. We had a ton of speed in Q1. Then Q2 we struggled a little bit with the balance and also speed-wise. We're still in and we're still like P3 or P4 but we were still two tenths off, so we wanted to go aggressive. We went on a brand new set of softs for Fast Six instead of keeping it for the race, like I think three guys did it, to try and get that pole, and it worked out.

**Q. Your thoughts on your teammate starting behind you, third?**

ALEX PALOU: Amazing. He's been amazing this year, especially road courses. He's been super fast. I would say that when he did the -- when he was super confident, I would say it was like Indy Road Course, he had a bad qualifying, but in practice he was always top 5, top 6. I would say since then, he's been always really, really fast.

It's amazing to see that. It's not only good for the team but for him it's huge. Hopefully this gives him the confidence to

know that he can do it every single weekend and he's up there. Not too fast, like not faster than what he's done, but consistently there would be -- yeah, amazing.

THE MODERATOR: Also joined by Christian Lundgaard, driver of the No. 7 Arrow McLaren Chevrolet with his second front-row starting position of the season, matching a second-place starting spot at Thermal. Best starting position here at Mid-Ohio in now his fourth start at Mid-Ohio Sports Car Course. Tell us about your qualifying session, Christian.

CHRISTIAN LUNDGAARD: Yeah, pretty straightforward I would say. Really wasn't the most entertaining. I think we were one of the few cars that decided to run a new set of primes in Q1 and Q2 as a bank lap. We knew we were going to be on the alts anyway, so we were in debate if we were going to use the third set or not. We ended up doing that in the Fast Six.

Yeah, the worst that could happen was we started sixth, so at least we're in a good spot to fight for it tomorrow.

**Q. Alex, I know this has been an incredible track for you since you joined Chip Ganassi Racing a couple years ago. What does getting pole and starting out front at this track specifically do for how you can control the race and ultimately your strong odds at hopefully winning tomorrow?**

ALEX PALOU: It's one of those tracks that you think it's huge and it's a very, very big advantage, but it's not one of the most. Actually last year I started leading. I actually opened a gap to Pato, and then we lost it on pure pace in the second stint and we couldn't really pass back.

It's for sure good, but I think a fast car or a fast pace, driver and car, it's more beneficial, actually.

The other years I've never been starting on pole, and we were still able to make it on pace. I like where I start for sure, but I know it's just going to make easier the first lap, hopefully.

**Q. For both of you guys, I know you both mentioned that you used three sets of reds during qualifying. I**

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**look at a guy like Kyle Kirkwood who just barely missed out on the Fast Six who only used two sets and has an extra set to use tomorrow. Some guys that have that extra set of new reds, what kind of an impact could that potentially make in how tomorrow's race plays out?**

ALEX PALOU: Even Kyffin has -- he's starting third and he has one more set of alternates than us. It's big. It's big. It's a huge advantage.

We were debating. I think everybody was in the same boat of do we try and shoot for pole, start up front, try and keep position during the first couple stints and then try and be okay, or do we give the pole away or fighting for pole away and start from fifth or sixth.

So we decided to go that route. But yeah, he's starting third on another set of alternates. I think Siegel --

CHRISTIAN LUNDGAARD: I think Siegel has two alts, too.

ALEX PALOU: So there's three guys that have better tires than us.

CHRISTIAN LUNDGAARD: Yeah, I kind of agree with that.

**Q. Christian, he doesn't work directly with you but he directly works over all of the drivers at Arrow McLaren, Kyle Moyer seems to have been an instant success with Nolan Siegel. From what you've seen of what Kyle brings to the team, what is it that helps benefit the operation?**

CHRISTIAN LUNDGAARD: From my side there is really no difference. Really whatever goes on behind the scenes, I think, is sometimes also some of the stuff that us drivers don't really -- we mind our business, and he's on the 6 car, so he helps Nolan, but I don't think anything is different for me this weekend.

The 7 car has had the speed all year, and there's been weekends where we've executed and we haven't, and I don't think this has really made a difference for us. I think that's too early to say.

**Q. Alex, do you think a lot of people are waking up and discovering that Kyffin Simpson can actually drive a race car because a lot of people look at him and see the background that he came from and figure out how he's involved in INDYCAR, but so far he's had a pretty good year. What do you think people are realizing about Kyffin Simpson in?**

ALEX PALOU: Yeah, we need to remember that he's very, very young. I think he's -- how old is he? 20. He's 20. He's very, very young.

He's been picking up a ton of speed, especially this year, as I said. I think he's in front of one Penske car in the championship standings now with a couple of incidents and mechanical issues that he had.

If you look at the performance he's had, he's been really, really fast, and it's not been just by luck. I think he just finished in Road America sixth or fifth, so that was pretty good.

Yeah, it's amazing. Honestly, I don't think he cares or I care or anybody cares about what they think about him, but yeah, he's good. I'm very happy for him.

**Q. Also, half the Fast Six are Simpson, Siegel, rookie Louis Foster. We're beginning to see those guys in the Fast Six more often than guys like Scott and the three Penskes. What does that say about the future of INDYCAR right now? Are we starting to see this group step to the front?**

ALEX PALOU: Yeah, for sure. Everybody is pushing. But yeah, Foster has been doing a tremendous year knowing that it's his rookie year. I was very surprised in Q2 and also Road America, but Q2 today as well.

It's great to see that there's different drivers different weekends up there and fast. Hopefully they don't do it too often.

**Q. Alex, you sat on the front row last year. We've seen cautions three of the last four years on the first lap but there's not a lot of cautions in this race. How do you start the race? Are you going straight forward, going for it, knowing that there might be a yellow and that might be the only one or are you trying to get your gap early going into the esses there?**

ALEX PALOU: Yeah, you try and always expect no yellows or no incidents, try and expect a clean start and just go for it, if then suddenly there's yellows or not. But yeah, I would say the last six races there's been a yellow in the first two or three laps, so it's going to make it interesting. I think once it gets going and with the different strategies, that's why probably we don't see as many cautions, which I think is a good thing because we're going to see like two, three different strategies or maybe one less stop, one more stop, like just different fuel mileages, and that's when you start seeing overtakes and just good track action happening.



Yeah, I think it's going to be a good race, a good show. But yeah, from my standpoint, you just go and try and keep the lead, which is number one. It's not always a given. And try and run your rhythm, take care of the tires and stuff like that.

**Q. Hot start for you for the season, kind of up and down since. Is this kind of the reset button to start the second half, do you feel that coming into this weekend, especially knowing this team won here last year?**

CHRISTIAN LUNDGAARD: Yeah, obviously we're going to try to replicate that.

But no, I think ultimately we've had a very good season with ups and downs, as you mentioned, but there's so much good and there's very little bad and obviously the small mistakes are expensive in this kind of championship. We see the run that Alex has been on as well.

Someday it's going to be someone else, and I think we all know that. It's kind of trying to grind on that momentum, and we've been a little out of it, I think, in certain parts it's been expectations. In other parts it's just been simple, stupid mistakes that have cost dearly.

I think this weekend is just trying to replicate what we were doing at Road America but just do it better.

**Q. We saw some big names out early on in qualifying and some of the younger guys are going to be starting further up the front. How much of a difference do you think it's going to make in the race starting with a bit of a mixed-up grid?**

CHRISTIAN LUNDGAARD: I mean, I don't know. I feel like there's more and more young drivers that are kind of showing potential, I would say, throughout this year, and I think Kyffin is definitely one of them. He's been very competitive lately.

I know what Nolan is capable of. I know he's fast, and it's nice to finally see him do it this weekend, get into the Firestone Fast Six.

But racing in the front is kind of a different animal, and I think Alex will agree with this. As soon as you're starting to check out, it's the small details that matter. Some of them haven't been exposed to that in the past, and that's why I think you see the veterans always kind of making their way forward in the race even if they're having a bad qualifying.

**Q. If OpenAI is going to create an INDYCAR driver are**

**they using you as the template --**

CHRISTIAN LUNDGAARD: I think he is the template.

ALEX PALOU: Hopefully not. Hopefully they don't do that.

It's great, honestly. They joined us this year, and it's been tremendous the work that we've done together. I think it was not expected to run a full car with them, but yeah, they got into INDYCAR, they liked it, and they were like, let's try something bigger, which is amazing. I think it's great for INDYCAR to get these big U.S. companies that are joining INDYCAR for the first time. Young companies, as well.

I think it's amazing what they do for us. I'm not going to tell you. So hopefully we keep that for us. Hey, any advantage is good. It's been a big help, especially just analysis and stuff. Anything new, fresh they can bring to the table, it's good.

**Q. When you saw Will coming towards you, did you know what he was mad about? Was there anything you could or should have done differently?**

ALEX PALOU: Yeah, I knew. I knew. I don't know. Look, I think if you look at practice 1 or 2, everybody is complaining about traffic, and we're all angry that we don't get clear laps. But maybe he thought we did something personal to him. For sure that was not the intention. I don't know if you saw, but I was always like a second or two seconds in front of him. He was just having to back off. I never tried to defend or anything.

I think he was just a little bit upset, and that's okay. But yeah, I knew what he was coming -- I just didn't want to start to get into an argument. Yeah, it happens. It was my first time with him, so it's good.

**Q. For both of you, just curious how the Iowa test went last week and what's the challenge going to be to do back-to-back races there next week?**

CHRISTIAN LUNDGAARD: It's going to be hot. I mean, I don't know. I think all of us are going to think that it's going to be very similar to last year, in a sense, and even with the race being a little longer than last year, I still think we're going to see a pretty straightforward single-lane race. At least that's my opinion. Do you disagree?

ALEX PALOU: I wish. Yeah, honestly, I think the test, we were trying different stuff. We were trying everything we could, INDYCAR in general and all the teams, trying to get a package that was going to be better. I don't think we found it. But maybe it could change.



**Q. You said you each have one set of new red tires, but you still have used reds for tomorrow's race. If you're on the blacks, though, is there anything you can do to defend from someone on the reds, maybe used Push-to-Pass or the hybrid or together because I don't think it's that easy to pass here?**

ALEX PALOU: Yeah, it's not easy, but I think there's a huge gap in between the primaries and the alternates, which is good. I think everybody loves that. That creates different strategies and different opportunities. I think it's going to be tough if somebody is on primaries and there's a fast car as well on alternates, it's going to be tough to defend it. You're going to be burning on that OT and the hybrid. But it's going to be tough.

CHRISTIAN LUNDGAARD: Yeah, I think it depends. I don't know, did you see that big of a difference between the tires? I was surprised how big of a difference there was on a new set of alts versus a used set. We didn't really run a used set but we saw the difference from the other cars, and I think that helped us make the decision to put a third set on in the Fast Six.

But how they're going to do in the race, I don't think we really know yet. I think some cars are very strong on primes, some cars are very strong on alts. Again, I think you can make both strategies work.

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