

NTT INDYCAR SERIES

News Conference

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Alex Palou

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: Looking ahead to tomorrow's Java House Grand Prix of Monterey, wrapping up qualifying today, it's interesting that the top two in the NTT INDYCAR Series points standings are starting one-two in tomorrow's race. Pato O'Ward will be joining us momentarily. Currently joined by Alex Palou, driver of the No. 10 DHL Chip Ganassi Racing Honda with back-to-back NTT P1 awards here at WeatherTech Raceway at Laguna Seca, fifth pole of the season, 11th of his career in your pursuit of a third straight championship. This is a good way to win the weekend, correct?

ALEX PALOU: Yeah, absolutely. It's been an awesome weekend, an awesome year. Yeah, honestly, the car was really good already in practice 1. Nobody did practice 2.

But we didn't really know what was going to happen today. Just didn't know what the track conditions were going to be. We made some changes on the car, and we just kept them. We trusted that they were going to be in the right direction.

Yeah, super happy that we got to fight for pole, we got the pole, and starting on the best spot tomorrow.

Q. The series loves coming out to this racetrack. The track seems to have changed a little bit this year, certainly the repave a couple years ago but you guys are staying out in front of it?

ALEX PALOU: Yeah, big time. It changed a lot, honestly, how the car feels. I think last year already changed a little bit, but there was still, I would say, just a second off, maybe a bit less, and we were able to still carry a lot of speed on slow-speed corners, while today or this weekend it just feels like the track lost a ton of grip. There's different patches in 2, 3, and just low speed in general, which -- it's honestly good. It's still super fast, it's still a super cool track, but it's making it more challenging. I think it's going to open up different lines in the race, and hopefully we're going to see lots of overtakes.

Q. You just said you have made changes to the car

qualifying. Can you specify in what areas?

ALEX PALOU: Everything, honestly. Front springs, rear springs, ride heights. We've changed a lot of stuff. You wouldn't believe it. It was a big job list.

Q. You said as well that the track has been changed a lot. Has it even changed even more when they have rain in the morning? Did you feel some changes after the rain?

ALEX PALOU: No, honestly, we expected a little bit more change losing all the rubber. But I think as it was not raining, it was just, like, mist, I think it would have been a different story if it was proper rain, hard rain.

At least for us, we didn't feel like it was massively different. We were able to still use all the track. I didn't feel like there was any corner that was worse. I would say that overall there was even more grip than yesterday. So yeah, it was good.

Q. Are you excited that Pato is starting on the front row, just like you want to beat the guy who's challenging you, or would you prefer if he was starting closer to the back?

ALEX PALOU: I honestly, I've said it to the team, and I always think that it's better to have your closest competitor close. You want to be on the same -- kind of same strategy and you want to know -- yeah, I think when you have somebody starting on like 17th, it might look good on paper today, but then suddenly they do a crazy strategy and they cycle to the front and you have, like, no chance to fight for it on track.

I think it's great. I think it's good. It's for sure making it more challenging and more interesting for everybody. I like it. Honestly, I like it.

Q. 0.287 clear of second place. Tell me about that. We usually don't get those kinds of gaps on a road course. This place seems to speak to you in some kind of way. Tell me about that.

ALEX PALOU: Yeah, honestly, I was super comfortable



... when all is said, we're done.®

and super happy with my lap, especially the start of the lap. I guess everybody saw, I went out on Fast 12 when I was going a little bit faster, so I was like, man, there's not much room for error. But this time in Fast Six, I was able to stick it, and it stayed on the black. It was great.

Honestly, I guess they had small mistakes or whatever, but our lap was really good. There was not much margin, at least from my side.

Q. Thinking about strategy for tomorrow, thinking about Toronto and seeing the tire declaration list come out from the series a few hours before the race, in my eyes looking at what you guys went with, which I'm still trying to figure it out, thoughts for strategy tomorrow? Do we stay conservative, get good points, are we starting on wets? What are we doing?

ALEX PALOU: Well, it depends. If it's wet, I'll start on wets. If it's not wet, there's no way we'll do that.

Look, we thought last week -- obviously looking back it's super easy to say that we made a mistake. I didn't want to get trapped in traffic. I thought we had a lot of pace. We thought that one caution was going to be okay for our strategy and maybe two, but we got like four during the first stint.

It was the wrong decision, but ultimately we were trying to win. I don't know what we're going to do tomorrow, but we're going to try and go for the win. We don't want to give that up and just try and get points.

Q. Does the grip level at this track create a situation like you may have experienced at Mid-Ohio, where when you least expect it you might go in a little bit too deep to a turn and drop a wheel off course? How much do you need to be aware of that?

ALEX PALOU: Yeah, honestly, I think everybody saw what's been happening in practice and in qualifying. I went out and I saw a couple more cars going out. I think it's one of those tracks that rewards a lot when you push it, but it's waiting for you to make a mistake everywhere, and also the sand makes it really challenging. Like you cannot even touch that. It just gets you. It just sucks you whenever you touch it.

I think tomorrow is going to be challenging. I think it's going to be even more challenging with tire deg, and I think there's going to be a lot of tire deg for everybody, so it's going to be a tough race for sure.

Q. This track seems to favor the leader. How important is that start going into Turn 1 when you

know you have a bulldog starting next to you?

ALEX PALOU: Look, I started on pole last year, and I only led for Turn 1, like not even Turn 2. Kirkwood caught me there on the outside, and I think it's one of those tracks that maybe it's not a huge, huge difference between first and second. I didn't do a great job last year on the start, so hopefully I can do a better job this year.

Q. Running the hybrids here for the first time, not getting morning practice, how confident were you with the setup?

ALEX PALOU: Honestly, I didn't know. Like I knew we had speed, and yesterday you could see, you could get an idea of the speed we had. We didn't know about everybody else because especially group 2 on the alternates, there was only, I think, Colton that got a really good lap. The rest was like six-tenths or seven-tenths off, and I think it's just because of how the red flags fell off.

With the changes we did, I had confidence because I've been experiencing awesome things from this team whenever we make changes, and I know they're normally in the right direction. But you never know. You never know what the track is going to do. You never know what your changes are going to do.

Although I was confident, I did not know.

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