

NTT INDYCAR SERIES

News Conference

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Alex palou

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: How is your day going so far.

ALEX PALOU: It's going okay. I have more energy than the past two years.

Q. Why is that?

ALEX PALOU: I feel like it's going very smooth today. So far it's been good. Except lunch.

Q. How much are you looking forward to getting back to it?

ALEX PALOU: I'm very excited. Yeah, I'm very excited to start the season, to see what we have in Sebring, then Phoenix, and then St. Pete. It just feels like we have a very long off-season, and then suddenly once we start we never stop. I'm excited for that. I'm excited to get back on track.

I think I've been lucky to go to Daytona and kind of get a rhythm, a small rhythm and be at the track and driving a little bit. But I'm excited to get back to my car.

Q. So much of the talk over the last couple days with all the people we've talked to and the drivers has been about how dominant you've been, especially the last year. From your perspective, what type of pressure does that put on you just trying to hold off the field and trying to maintain that top spot?

ALEX PALOU: I think 2025 was so strange, so good, so magical, in a way, for the 10 car that everybody understands that it's very hard to get there. That doesn't mean that nobody can or that I cannot do it again, but you need so many things to go right to get eight wins, to win the 500, to win the championship.

Like it's what, if we win six now it's going to feel like a failure? Because I've never won six before. Like I think 2023, which felt like an amazing season, we won five there, and it felt like it was impossible to do it again.

Although I would love to have another season like 2025, I am pretty certain that it's probably not going to happen again for me. But I'll try. I'll try.

So I don't think I have added pressure for that. Obviously we need to go out again and see if we can be successful and fight for the championship and the 500. But I don't think that adds pressure. Everybody needs to do that. That's why they pay us, to win.

Yeah, I'm excited to see what we have, and I'm excited to see if we can do it again.

Q. When you look at the consistency of your drivers all being there on Ganassi for at least three years now and the team personnel, as well, how do you feel like that helps you guys excel as a team?

ALEX PALOU: Yeah, that's huge, and especially for the 10 car. I've had the same group of people, let's say, since I started. Julian Robertson, my engineer, has been there since day one. Ricky Davis, my chief mechanic, has been there since day one, as well.

Then I have a lot of engineers, performance, data, and a lot of mechanics that have been there since day one, as well. It just helps when you have the same people communication-wise. Julian knows when I'm like, this is not very good. He knows what not very good means for me. Is it like a 5 out of 10 or a 7 out of 10.

And that's why I think we're able to recover from bad starts over a weekend or stuff like that. Same goes with Barry, my strategist.

I think we have all the tools we need. That doesn't mean that the recipe is not going to change. We need to keep on evolving and keep on trying to improve.

But I'm very lucky that my core team is not being changed.

Q. Then of course last week the UK court finally made their ruling on the lawsuit between you and McLaren. What are your thoughts from that to what you can or are willing to say?

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ALEX PALOU: Yeah, I wish I could really elaborate a lot, as I do on all other questions, but it's probably a bit too early to go and just with give a lot more comments than what I've already given on the statement.

I promise that one day I will, and I will explain all my thought process before, during, and after. But I don't think it's probably good now.

Q. Yesterday and today earlier you've been the guy that's on other drivers' minds. A couple of them won't even mention your name --

ALEX PALOU: What do you mean?

Q. Who's on Alex Palou's mind or who is on Alex Palou's mind entering the 2026 season?

ALEX PALOU: Everybody, man. Everybody. You never know. Is it going to be Power with Andretti, is it going to be Malukas, Dixon, Kirkwood? I think it changes every single year, and you cannot count one person, one driver, one team out. I think that's the beauty of INDYCAR.

Yeah, I have everybody in mind, and at the same time I don't have anybody. Just it's too early. I know that to have somebody in mind we need to be in the fight, as well.

I'm focused on that 10 car, trying to get to Sebring test as ready as possible and then trying to get to St. Pete and see what our speed is. Is it going to be the same as last year or better? Hopefully better.

But yeah, that's what I have in mind, honestly. I think everybody is capable. I think nobody expected the 10 to win eight races last year. Nobody expected Kirkwood to win three on the first six, as well. He won -- without the 10 car, Kirkwood would have had one of the best starts lately of the seasons. Then he was part of it to finish it off. I think you cannot count anybody out.

Q. Chip and Mike have said the last couple years about the importance of that 2020 Indy 500, how you were pitting the Coyne car next to their car and you've talked to Dario and kind of introduced yourself. How much of that moment is a reflect back as a big reason you're sitting here as a four-time series champion, that just putting your place in that right moment, talking the conversations with Dario and where you are today?

ALEX PALOU: Well, I actually introduced myself to Chip, not to Dario. Yeah, I had conversation with Dario, but I introduced myself to Chip. That's not an advice for young drivers.

But I don't want anybody to take my spot.

But yeah, I think it's all about timing on everything. On sports, in life. I was very fortunate to have a seat in INDYCAR, to have a great month of August. I believe it was in August. And suddenly being next to their pit, it could have been that I was three pits in front or three pits behind and they would have never seen that Coyne car.

Yeah, I'm very fortunate that everything went well. The risk they took, the gamble they took, now everybody is like, oh, yeah, Alex whatever, but nobody wanted me then except Mike and Chip.

So they gave me that opportunity from just having a good month of August and then a podium in Road America, which is good, but it's not outstanding, to have a championship-winning car.

Q. How did that go when you introduced yourself to Chip, by the way?

ALEX PALOU: I felt a lot of pressure, and it was -- he's one of those team owners that you see on TV, and he kind of has a big character, so I felt very small. I just didn't want to say something that was not appropriate. But I just said that I was Alex Palou, that I was an INDYCAR driver, and that I wanted to drive for Chip one day.

Q. How much does winning the Indianapolis 500 now motivate you even more to do it again? Obviously you win a championship and that motivates you to do another one. Now that you've won the 500, checked that off the box, are you more motivated to win a second time?

ALEX PALOU: Absolutely, 100 percent. Before winning the championship I never thought that somebody that's already won it could want it more than somebody that is still trying to chase it, but it's true, because you get that feeling. You know what that means. You know what winning the 500 means.

I thought I knew, until then you're the winner and you need to do all this stuff and you get recognized in so many different places or you get to do so much cool stuff throughout the year that I just want to feel the same way again.

Fortunately we only get one try a year. It's pretty tough to win it. But yeah, 100 percent I need and I want to do it again. May hasn't even started. I feel like May is going to be probably the best month for me because that's when you are really the champion, when every fan is like receiving you as a champion. You see your picture of your

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car and yourself, your team when you enter every single morning.

That's what I think is going to make me want it even more.

Q. What did you do in the off-season to reflect on that 500 win and the championship, and then when did you close the box on 2025 and start gearing towards 2026?

ALEX PALOU: Honestly, I got to celebrate with my family back in Spain and with the team here in the U.S.

But once -- I don't know exactly what time, but I would say like two months after the season finished, you need to close that chapter and start preparing for the new one, start preparing for the new season, because everybody starts with zero points on the board in St. Pete.

If I finish 18th, you guys are going to write about 18th and not how I won eight races in 2025. That's the truth.

I think it's very cool to win, but it's more for when I retire one day and I look back and I'm like, oh, I won four INDYCAR championships or hopefully seven or eight or whatever. But it's more for then than for 2026. Like you guys are not going to -- and myself, I'm not going to care much about 2025.

Q. What challenges do two of the first three races being new on the schedule pose to you with going to Phoenix and Arlington?

ALEX PALOU: It's going to be tough. It's going to be very tough for everybody, for the new people and for the people that it's been in for longer. I think for every single race team to put a setup together, that it's going to work for practice one, I think in Arlington we have two practices, but Phoenix we'll have one practice and then you go.

True that we're going to test there now, everybody, but still, it's very tough to put a car together that is capable of being fast. I think everybody is going to struggle, and hopefully we end up happy after that.

But I think it's super cool to have new challenges, new tracks added into the calendar, old tracks that are coming back. So let's see if we can put on a great show, and it's a great event.

Q. From when FOX had you on Big Noon Sunday before the UCLA game in Bloomington you became a big IU fan. What did you learn by observing Curt Cignetti and the way he coaches? Because it's the clinical coaching mentality that you use as a race driver. You think of the next turn, the next lap, the

same thing he does in football, thinking the next down, the next play.

ALEX PALOU: Honestly, when I got invited to that game, it was my first college game and I had so much fun that I truly became a fan. It was so much fun. I told you, I was like, man, it was probably one of the best sporting events that I went. And that was only the sixth game of the year. Like I cannot imagine the last couple of events.

It's been very cool to see. The coach, I can only see what I see on TV, but obviously the flip that he's been able to do in two years, it's been impressive. And you can see that he doesn't show emotions. I'm sure that he's celebrating whenever they do a big touchdown or a big turnover.

But it just feels like he has that mentality of just minute-by-minute, play-by-play, and then we see what the outcome is.

Yeah, I would love to meet him and see really what he thinks and what his methodologies.

Q. An athlete prepares for success, he works for success, does all the hard work like you do in racing, but as you said, you know this streak isn't going to go on forever. How difficult is it to prepare for the opposite of success? Not to prepare for it but to prepare to accept it.

ALEX PALOU: Yeah, I don't think you can prepare for that. I think it is what it is. It's the nature of the sport and every single sport. As long as I keep on putting everything that I have in me and the work and I'm giving 100 percent every day to prepare for it and then leaving it on track, I think that's what I have to do. Just giving everything back to the game and to the team.

Yeah, hopefully that doesn't come soon.

Q. I don't want to harp on this subject and I don't want to ask details, but to have that lawsuit in the back of your mind for as long as it was, how much did that affect you as a person, as a driver? And now to not have it kind of hanging over your head, is that good for you?

ALEX PALOU: Yeah, for sure, 100 percent. I feel like 2022 was really rough. It was new for everybody. It was new for me. It was a lot of drama involved. 2023, as well. But it was towards, let's say, the beginning or mid season.

It's tough. I don't wish that for anybody, the pressure that you feel on yourself your mind. Although you just want to think about racing, you cannot only think about that. You

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have calls with lawyers here and there. It's not nice. It's something that I don't wish for anybody.

But it is what it is; it's the position I put myself into. I think I learned a lot from that. Once I was in that position, I just had to learn as much as possible and try and take the benefits or the positive sides from it, which is like being under extreme pressure. That's extreme pressure, not driving cars around. It's that.

Now that it's over, it's for sure a relief of knowing that, okay, it's over, that's it. It's in the past. It's been in the past already last year. Although it wasn't going, it was already, hey, I'm just focusing on racing.

It was true. I was only focusing on racing, but now it's like, hey, I don't have anything else.

Q. Last year in 17 races you had 13 podiums. How difficult is it to look back and try and find all the little things that went wrong and think, well, we could have realistically in a perfect world had 17 podiums and just think, it wasn't perfect?

ALEX PALOU: It's very tough. It's very tough to go now and look at last season and know that we need to do all over again because it was a lot of work and a lot of luck, as well, that we had.

I feel like last season, again, was magical. Yes, we could have made even more. But at the same time, everybody could have.

I am happy the way it went, and I am excited to see what we can do this year. I know we can deliver really, really good results, really good consistent results and a lot of wins.

Now that we know it's doable to make it, we know it's very tough, but I think that's what we need to chase. We need to chase that, trying to get those podiums, those amount of podiums, those amount of wins, and trying to get both the 500 and the championship.

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