

NTT INDYCAR SERIES

News Conference

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Alex Palou

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: Now joined by the four-time NTT INDYCAR Series champion in Alex Palou in the No. 10 DHL Chip Ganassi Racing Honda. His last front row start was pole position on the Milwaukee Mile, and then first on a street circuit since Toronto last year, first front-row start. What did you think? Happy with P2 today?

ALEX PALOU: Yeah, very happy. It was a lot of work. It was exciting to see what we could do on this Fast Six. It was obviously the first goal we had today was to try to get to Fast Six. It's been very close throughout the field, and you had to nail all the laps.

Yeah, happy with a P2. Just a huge margin. Hopefully it's because of tire temp, but it's great to see, as well, so many Hondas up front. Seeing Marcus standing up front. It's good.

THE MODERATOR: Seems like you're getting faster and faster as the weekend has gone on.

ALEX PALOU: Yeah, everybody, right? I was P2 as well yesterday, too. Or this morning.

Q. The conventional thinking of the drivers was the sixth fastest of the Fast Six would have the advantage because he'd be first out and the cars would be hotter, the brakes would be hotter. It seemed to hold up until you took the track. You were able to go second fastest. Do you feel like that was a major issue in the fact that Marcus was able to be first out and hold on for pole?

ALEX PALOU: Tough to say, but yeah. I think there was like more than 20 minutes between my last lap in Fast 12 until my out lap in Fast Six. Only having an out lap just doesn't allow you to warm up the brakes or the tires or anything.

I was slower than what I did on old tires on the previous sessions. I think tire temp made a difference. Having said that, I don't know if I would have matched his lap time. He was pretty fast. I'm happy with a P2, honestly. I feel like

the lap that he did, it's probably close to what he did on new tires. It's a pretty good lap even on warm tires.

I wish that we had at least one lap to warm up, just so it would give us the option of pushing right away or warming up. But it's the same for everybody, so...

Q. Marcus was a former mate of yours over at Chip Ganassi Racing, and he's struggled the last couple years at Andretti. How does it feel to see Marcus back up there at the pointy end of the scale?

ALEX PALOU: Yeah, I have a great friendship with him. I think he deserves it. He's a really good driver. Happy to see him there.

Hopefully not tomorrow, but happy to see him there today.

Q. You've won the last two races or points races at new courses. Is there anything that you feel you do well to adapt to new places?

ALEX PALOU: I didn't know.

Q. Thermal and --

ALEX PALOU: Oh, Detroit maybe. It means nothing. It means more the team does a good job not having data and being able to put the car. But yeah, I felt good at both Detroit, Thermal, and here as well. I feel we have a good car. I feel very confident with the track. I feel like nowadays, with the tools we have on the simulator, you just need a couple laps to try and get your references, figure where the bumps are, and start pushing 100 percent.

Q. The wind has kind of picked up for qualifying and there's supposed to be more tomorrow. Where does it make the biggest impact on the track?

ALEX PALOU: It was not too bad, although it picked up quite a lot. I don't think it was affecting the car much. I feel like if we would have had tailwind going into 10 and picking up those extra five to ten miles an hour, that would have made a big impact on car balance.



Hopefully, if it stays just sideways like it was today, I think it'll be all right.

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Q. If it does get maybe out of control when it comes to the wind tomorrow, how do you plan to try to negate that in the car?

ALEX PALOU: I mean, there's not much you can do as a driver. Just trying to adapt -- obviously we have tailwind. Just going to have to brake earlier, because we're going to get so much more top speed.

If we have just headwind, it's going to be fine.

I feel like, hopefully it's not straight into the race, so we can at least adapt in warmup, or it goes throughout the race. Because if it's on the first couple laps, it'll be tough for everyone.

Q. What have we learned about the tires, because the alternates seem like they fall off pretty quickly, and it seems like we might end up with a primary race tomorrow.

ALEX PALOU: Yeah, they behave very differently to what we've seen in St. Pete, and it's the same exact tire both, the primaries and the alternates. Yeah, for some reason this track and this tarmac seems to like -- I mean, the alternates are faster, but it seems to be that they're having a lot more deg than what we saw in St. Pete. Having said that, there was a lot of cars struggling with tire deg with the alternates in St. Pete, as well.

Yeah, it'll be interesting because everybody has to run two sets of alternates. Let's see how many cautions we get. I feel like it's going to be a ton. Let's see what the strategy, how it shakes out.

Q. Where do you think the cliff is? Do you think that we want to get off of those as quick as possible?

ALEX PALOU: Honestly, I have no idea. I don't think as soon as possible. I just think that there was at least six to eight tenths difference between a brand new set of primaries to a brand new set of alternates. I feel like if you take care of them, probably you can do a full stint. It's just going to be tough, and it's going to be tough to manage or understand what's the trade-off point of when the primaries start being faster.

But for sure there's a couple laps, like maybe it's five or six or ten laps that the alternates are faster than the primaries. I don't think it's what we had last season of, like, you do one lap and you're done.