

NTT INDYCAR SERIES

News Conference

Sunday, May 17, 2026

Alex Palou

Alexander Rossi

David Malukas

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: Good afternoon. Wrapping up qualifying ahead of the 110th running of the Indianapolis 500. Alex Palou already getting his photo taken, first of many. He'll join us here later. David Malukas is on his way as well as we wrap up the front row starters for next Sunday's race.

Alexander Rossi has already joined us. He's in the No. 20 Java House Chevrolet for ECR with his best starting position in his 11th Indianapolis 500 start. Second front row start in the 500. Best starting position of this 2026 NTT INDYCAR SERIES season. Alex, it was pretty close, man. It was fun to watch. I'm sure the anxiety was maybe a little different for you, but it was pretty good.

ALEXANDER ROSSI: No, I think it was an incredible day for everyone after the disappointment obviously of the wash-out yesterday, and seeing conditions that we hadn't seen all month for the first time in qualifying, it's pretty wild, but a huge testament to everyone on the 20 crew for staying with it and continuing to evolve and improve after each run. It's no small feat around here.

A great day. It's not often that you are happy with second place, but with some of the challenges that everyone faced, this is a pretty cool one.

THE MODERATOR: Congratulations. Open it up for questions.

Q. How busy was it in the cockpit today, because a lot of you guys looked like you were doing a lot there?

ALEXANDER ROSSI: Yeah, I mean, on days like this with the wind being as strong as it is, you know, both ends of the track behave differently. With the hybrid there's different option that you have from a strategic standpoint during the run based on those conditions, and it's always changing.

You have to kind of manage that and stay on it of the balance of the car. But, yeah, like I said, it's been an amazing car from a drivability standpoint, a speed standpoint all month. I would say today was our least competitive day from my side, so that's really encouraging going into next week.

Q. Just how big of a momentum shift is this for you going into next weekend?

ALEXANDER ROSSI: I don't know that it is. I think it's obviously great to be able to start pretty far forward here. As we all know, it's challenging.

TikTok guy over here. Whatever you want. Wherever your little heart desires. Big heart.

Anyways, what was I saying? I don't know. He was sick?

DAVID MALUKAS: I got the sniffles.

ALEXANDER ROSSI: Like I was saying, it's really hard to be in a big pack here. To be in the front group will really make your race day easier and allow you to be a little bit more aggressive on strategy.

THE MODERATOR: David Malukas in the No. 12 Verizon Team Penske Chevrolet. His best start in the Indianapolis 500. First front row start. I believe it's Team Penske's 50th front row start, all told. If somebody would have told you this morning when you wake up, you're going to start in the front row, what would you say? Happy with that?

DAVID MALUKAS: Yeah, very happy. That was the goal. We wanted to be on this front row.

To be honest, in this race everybody always says, You can get the win from wherever you start. Last year we qualified seventh, and I mean, we were fighting for the win very early on throughout the rest of the race, but it feels good.

This team did a fantastic job at getting the car where it needed to be and making me feel comfortable in it. Yeah, it feels good, front row.



Q. You talked the other day that you wanted to get all those laps because of the changing weather. Still, this weather was different than probably anything you did this week. How do you feel like that maybe helped you?

ALEXANDER ROSSI: It just gave us a bigger database, if you will to kind of draw from. That being said, today was still substantially different. We were still learning on the fly a little bit. It definitely was a benefit in terms of my comfort and various conditions and knowing what the car was capable of.

Q. Was there maybe an extra stress with how long today was and knowing you only had that one attempt to start today, or was it maybe different? How did you approach today from beginning to end?

ALEXANDER ROSSI: I think certainly the most stressful part of the day for me at least was the first run just because you didn't have that security blanket of being able to go again. Usually in qualifying here, if you get a poor draw or not a very good draw, you can bounce back from it, because you've got hours to go out and make changes and improvements.

It demanded very good execution from the team side and my side in order to ensure the transfer into the top 12. Then quite honestly, it was downhill from there.

DAVID MALUKAS: Retweet.

Q. I guess the perception is you were hired at Penske for what you can do on ovals, and so to come to the only oval that Roger really cares about and carry the Penske banner for the day, how does that feel?

DAVID MALUKAS: It feels amazing. For me coming in and Team Penske, I hear it's the 50th front row start, and it's cool to have that 50th under my name. There was a lot of pressure going into preseason, just even for this race, but also all the races.

It's just been an incredible start. I'm just so thankful, so grateful, and every single day I show up to the track a little bit more confident, a little bit more happy to just to be here and be a part of this Team Penske family.

Q. Alex, you start the week with an engine change. Has it been emotional, like, roller coaster, at all from knowing, gosh, what am I going to have to now starting where you are starting?

ALEXANDER ROSSI: Not really. Team Chevy does an

incredible job, and they've got plenty of, can we say bullets in 2026? I said it. So they've got plenty of opportunities in terms of the motors they bring to this place. It's obviously a huge importance to them to be successful here. It wasn't any sort of stress for me. Obviously it was unfortunate that the 20 car guys had to basically split the car twice from Saturday at the GP and then again on Wednesday night, but they were up to the task.

Yeah, it was drama-free from my side.

Q. Speaking of drama-free, there's been five days of on-track activity and nobody has crashed. Do you know why?

ALEXANDER ROSSI: We're just that good (smiling). I have no idea. I think it's -- I don't know. I didn't even think about that until just now.

DAVID MALUKAS: I think just we're that good. I like that.

ALEXANDER ROSSI: Hell yeah. Finish it there.

It's no easier, I can promise you that. That was one of the harder qualifying days I've had around here.

DAVID MALUKAS: It was tough. Scary.

Q. You had a fairly mixed run in the Fast 12, but we saw you get a lot more pace when you came into the Fast 6. What was the balance between conditions being different, adjustments you made? How were you able to find that speed when you got in the Fast 6?

ALEXANDER ROSSI: Just understanding more. Every run around here, you learn something new. And it's never the same just because the margins are so small. You start compiling the information, and you can kind of see what others are doing. Based on, you know, what you know you have, you can work to optimize it and maximize it, and that's what we were able to do today.

Q. Dave, can you speak to how the season is going for you? You were brought here for more than your oval capabilities. You were the top driver at Penske for more than half the races. Now you are performing here as well. You're delivering everywhere you go. How does that feel in such a short amount of time?

DAVID MALUKAS: It feels really good. For me, like I said earlier, it was a lot of pressure offseason, but with this team, the amount of resources that I have, and this leadership, you know, coming from JD and Dave Faustino, James Schnabel, Fernando, Mustafa, it's the best crew I've had. I've been on a fair share of teams, especially since

2024 from the wrist injury. Coming in now, this is the best team I've had.

The chemistry is so high. Everybody is having such a good time, but we're all very competitive, when you have a whole crew pushing 110%. But I get to go and sleep and get a full night's rest, when those guys are working their butts off, and I see the Notes app is getting updated at 1:00 in the morning. It feels good. I get to come back, and I have all these notes and information to feed off of that by the time practice, qualifying, or the race comes in, I'm a lot more calm. There's no sense to overthink since I have all the information I need in front of me.

Q. Alexander, can you speak to what I think of as a Ted Gelov effect of since his introduction to the team, everything seems to be on the rise. You sitting here is evidence of that, but it's been a pretty big change-maker here.

ALEXANDER ROSSI: Oh, 100%. I think that the potential of this organization is borderline limitless, and it's really cool to be a part of.

You know, this year has been a little bit has fallen to meet expectations in some areas and exceeded in others, but internally we're performing at a much higher level and doing a better job than we were last year even.

The competitiveness, as David mentioned, of the organization, you know. Last year if you got into the top 12 or, you know, finished a race in the top 10, it was kind of, like, a good day. So far this year if that's the case, people are pissed off, and that's the mindset and mentality you have to have in this championship and what we're going to keep as we improve. Hopefully one day can consistently be a part of these conversations.

Q. Alex, you won this race a few years ago. This feels like a real high point coming back up. What would it mean to you to reach the top step of the podium next week?

ALEXANDER ROSSI: I don't know if there's enough adjectives to really describe it. I think the first time -- it's kind that you said it was a few years ago. A decade. What were you doing ten years ago?

DAVID MALUKAS: How old was I? I was 14.

ALEXANDER ROSSI: That's older than I thought. Thank goodness. I thought you were going to say, I was 8.

It would mean the world to me just because I didn't understand the heartbreak of this place. I didn't

understand the magnitude of what this track means to not only the teams and drivers, but the people that come here every single year, the generations of families that turn up and support us rain or shine.

It transcends any other place that we go, and it would be pretty magical if it chose me again.

Q. For either of you, what was it like having the different kind of weather in terms of the wind going through turn one, two, three, and four?

DAVID MALUKAS: It was tough. It was tough. It was brutal. I mean, you come out of turn four, and you get the headwind, and all of a sudden it puts you in the front nose, down cars all over the place. Then you try to come out of turn two, and it just feels good, and then all of a sudden you lose all front. Now it feels like you're going into the wall.

No, it was really hard, and you have to be so busy on the tools, and you have the hybrid strategy. That was, for sure for me, the toughest qualifying I can remember in a while.

Q. For yourself, Alex?

ALEXANDER ROSSI: Yeah, I don't know that I can add much to that.

DAVID MALUKAS: Just say retweet.

ALEXANDER ROSSI: I was going to quote tweet it, bro (laughing).

I think that the challenge of it is really I don't think people understand how much harder it gets from 105 degree track temp to 120. Those 15 degrees are insane.

Q. For both of you guys, the margins are so tight. Is there anything that y'all left out there maybe, just even incrementally?

ALEXANDER ROSSI: There's always something. There's always something. Even that guy behind me can probably say the same thing. So we'll learn from it and try and apply it to the next time we're here. Retweet?

DAVID MALUKAS: Retweet. There's more there.

THE MODERATOR: Guys, congratulations on the front row. With that, Alex Palou joins us, of course, in the famous No. 10 DHL Chip Ganassi Racing Honda. Now a two-time Indy 500 pole winner. The first one coming three years ago in 2023. Third NTT P1 award of the season. 15th career pole. Fourth all-time pole on an oval, as Chip



Ganassi Racing also celebrates their ninth Indy 500 pole as well.

Off of Alex's question, did you have even more in the car out there?

ALEX PALOU: There's always more. Yeah, in racing there's always more, but I think we -- yeah, we put everything that we thought we had. Once you prove it, then you can try to go for more.

I don't know, if we would have gone faster, if there was, like, another Fast Six, but we went very, very aggressive to try and get the pole.

THE MODERATOR: Are you surprised by --

ALEX PALOU: Very.

THE MODERATOR: Really? You're surprised?

ALEX PALOU: Yeah, very surprised.

THE MODERATOR: Why?

ALEX PALOU: We did not have the speed. Even on Fast Fridays we tried and tried and tried to get more speed. It was okay. I think we were top 5, top 6, but then there was cars like Felix that just had a huge advantage on everyone.

This morning, even more. We barely made it into the Fast 12. But I think that kind of helped us. Just struggling a little bit on those conditions kind of made us work a lot and made us put our car for those conditions instead of this morning, which I believe they were better, and the car on Fast 6 was incredible.

THE MODERATOR: We'll open it up for questions.

Q. Alex, do you think that maybe starting 31st -- or drawing 31st helped you, because it kind of kept you off the radar and let you slide through all the way until you had that big last round?

ALEX PALOU: I think my wife helped me. She drew the number. She was very worried when she had that number.

But, yes, I think that kind of allowed us to work on those conditions. Like, it made it tougher. Getting into the Fast 12, we didn't have any margin, and we did everything. Like, that was our ultimate pace at that moment, but obviously I think the track conditions were, like, 15 degrees warmer than when all these guys had gone, because I think everybody was on, like, the top 12.

So it made us work on those conditions, and they were a lot more similar in fast 6. For us, qualifying just got better and faster, and for everybody else just got slower and greasier. Like, we saw a lot more mistakes or just people not being able to be flat-out, yeah.

Q. Alex, I wanted to follow up on that. What was maybe the whirlwind of emotions and kind of the strategy from you guys from Friday night when you draw 31st and at the time maybe that looks like a bad thing, and then it was, like, if you could go out there yesterday, that might be a good thing, and then it comes into today?

ALEX PALOU: Yeah, you cannot do anything about it. Like, a draw is a draw. It's the same for everyone. We are a bit unlucky. We were close to being lucky if we would have qualified yesterday, but still, it's the same for everyone.

I'm just glad that we still had a good car that allowed us to make it into the Fast 12, which was the biggest target today, just to try and get on those first rows for the start. But we did not expect to be here on pole today.

I wanted to. And heading into the Fast 6, I was, like, okay, it's going to be a close fight between the 60 and us and the 12. But, yeah, the emotion was probably a lot higher because we did not expect it at all.

Q. I'm sure you've thought about this for a while now, but now that you've won the pole, we're a week away from the race, how does the excitement in your head go when you are thinking about, okay, I really have a shot to do this again?

ALEX PALOU: Yeah, I think pole is huge. The emotion, the momentum and everything that comes with it, it's incredible, but it's totally different to the race. Like, that doesn't guarantee us to having an easier race. It guarantees us to have the best view heading into the first corner, but that's about it.

We need to do -- we need to work hard to try and keep ourselves up there and be at the front when it matters. But, yeah, I think the race is going to be a totally different scenario to what we saw today.

Q. Alex, I'm not sure, when was the last time someone who won the Indy 500, the previous year won the pole in consecutive years, but how awesome does it feel to get that first -- or that second pole for you today?

ALEX PALOU: It's tough to explain, because it's not a race. It's only a pole, but it just feels like a race. Like,

we've been working on the qualifying lap -- on the qualifying car. I mean, I spent all Thursday working on it until I got the checkered, and I think that paid off.

But, yeah, the intensity and everybody's attention is on qualifying only, so we treat it and celebrate it as a race win. Again, that doesn't guarantee us to be up front throughout the race next week, but still, it's the best starting spot.

Q. You transcend yourself to the best of the best when it comes to these moments time and time again. What helps you focus and make you one of the best in INDYCAR, especially in this era?

ALEX PALOU: The team and the people I have around me, honestly. They allow me just to focus on myself without worrying about the car.

I told Julian, Barry, my engineers what I needed. I said, hey, this is what I feel and just do your thing. I don't want to get involved on the decisions to what we do in the car, and they just did some stuff that made it a lot faster.

Q. Was the matter that you found more speed in that last round or that Felix maybe his car may have gone slightly off?

ALEX PALOU: We found more speed, yeah. We changed a lot of stuff in the car to find more speed. Like, we knew -- we basically trim a lot. I know that by far we are the most trimmed car out there in the Fast 6. So we were going for it.

Last year we did the same. In Fast 6 we trimmed, and we just went slower, slow, slow, slow every lap, and we just qualified six, but today it paid off.

On top of that, I think he went a bit slower. I don't know what happened, but obviously everyone saw that he was the only car being able to be that fast with the conditions we had in qualifying and Fast 12, and I don't know what happened on Fast 6.

Q. But with him yet to go, were you feeling confident or nervous?

ALEX PALOU: Nervous. Very nervous. I knew we did a great average. I don't know what the average was, but I think it was still better the one he did in Fast 12, right? Yeah, I was expecting him to also pick up some speed as we did and go faster.

Q. Alex, you've now obviously had a week back here in practice qualifying as a 500 winner, so how different has this week felt come back as a winner, whether

that's kind of a weight lifted or the appreciation you have for the race or appreciation you're getting from the fans? How different has it felt this week?

ALEX PALOU: I think especially it's the fans. It gets a lot busier, and I have to plan my -- when I move from the garage to pit lane a little bit more, but it's super fun.

It's incredible. It's incredible to see so many young people, so many fans that have been here for more than 50 years straight. I don't know, but it seemed like it was the biggest attendance I saw here in qualifying.

So it's incredible to see. It's incredible to feel as a champion. Other than that, it doesn't change, like just winning last year doesn't mean anything this year.

Q. You obviously say you didn't expect to get this pole, maybe struggling a little bit more going into this weekend. Can you pinpoint maybe where some of those challenges were coming into the weekend and ultimately kind of some of the changes you made to be in this position now?

ALEX PALOU: It's basically just speed and balance. Normally when you go out and you have speed and you are slow, you try and trim and you try make it faster, but then the balance goes away.

So you need those two lines to merge in order to have a really good car capable of fighting for pole. So we were not able to merge those lines throughout Thursday and Friday. Not even in Fast 12.

I was happy, but not -- I was not, like, overly happy. Yeah, in Fast 6, that car was a rocket ship.

Q. After the 33 qualifying, you said we had a lot to find. You left it all out there. You were going to go right back and talk to your team and figure it out. Then I followed you, and you signed autographs for the fans for three and a half minutes before heading back to your pit. Talk about walking down that line and what those fans mean to you.

ALEX PALOU: Yeah, I mean, it's -- I was a fan not long ago. I'm still a fan. Like, I was one of them. Especially the kids. When there's kids waiting for a signature, I cannot say no. Yeah, that's my job.

THE MODERATOR: Congratulations on another pole here for the Indy 500. Thanks, everyone.

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