

NTT INDYCAR SERIES

News Conference

Saturday, June 20, 2026

Alex Palou

David Malukas

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: Front row for tomorrow's race joins us here.

Alex Palou, his first pole here at Road America, second straight front-row start here at Road America, fifth straight NTT P1 award. Tied for fourth most with Mario Andretti 1984, Danny Sullivan in 1988. His 18th career NTT P1 award.

David Malukas with his second front-row start. Fifth of 2026. Obviously his best starting position here at Road America.

Alex, are you surprised by this pole position?

ALEX PALOU: Yeah, it was so tough. Q1 I felt great. Q2 I struggled a ton. Yesterday I felt great, but this morning I struggled, as well.

Yeah, I knew it was going to be very tough to piece it together. My lap, it felt good. There's always room to improve. You never know if there's going to be someone that just pieces together even better than you.

Yeah, it's always surprising. It's always so fun and so tough to get it right. I think everything is so tight that, yeah, still surprises.

THE MODERATOR: David, obviously hard-fought, close in the end. Hard to beat the guy next to you, isn't it?

DAVID MALUKAS: Yeah, no, for sure. Best of the best right now.

It feels good. P2, right there. Going from practice yesterday to today, we flipped this car upside down overnight. It was not in the window yesterday. Coming into today, so much better. We got it right where we needed it to be.

Qualifying, P1, P2, put some laps together. This track is so

long, it is so hard to put a lap together. That is the main things. You'll see the splits of other drivers in between sessions, it's so drastic. You have these long straightaways. Come out of turn three, long straightaway, you're thinking, thinking, by the time you get to the next corner.

Q3, missed out a little bit, but...

THE MODERATOR: Questions, please.

Q. Can a case be made you're having a better year this year than last?

ALEX PALOU: In terms of speed, maybe. In terms of execution, no. I think last year we were able to execute almost perfectly.

Q. It seems that you're achieving some things this year that you were unable to achieve last year, but all those poles.

ALEX PALOU: Yeah.

Q. Do you feel you're becoming a more complete driver this year?

ALEX PALOU: I guess with every day, everybody feels the same way I guess. Yeah, I'm improving in places I was not as good last year. On the other side, I feel like sometimes I do mistakes I would not have done last year.

It's the good thing and bad thing about sports: you cannot relax every single second; you need to keep on working on everything, otherwise everybody is going to catch up.

Yeah, feels good.

Q. David, how much do you think during the days off I just got to raise my level to beat this guy?

DAVID MALUKAS: Well, for my sake, I always put a lot of pressure on myself, no matter the situation, to keep getting better and looking at what you can do differently, right? You learn more from your losses than you do your wins.



Every day, man, I feel like I'm changing so much. If I even look at myself now to one month ago, I feel like I'm a completely different driver. If I compare to last year, it's not even relatable.

Keep learning, learning. 24 years old, we still got time.

Q. Is it frustrating to look up and see that No. 10 back at the top?

DAVID MALUKAS: Not really. For me, I know the mistakes I made in Q3. For me, I'm actually over the moon because here I am P2 on another road course, right? It feels really good.

I feel like this before season, it was ovals only. I worked so hard the off-season, even in between the races, the amount of simulator, looking at video, data. I look at video till I just get sick of it, learning, gain what I can.

Now I can say road courses, street courses, ovals, it feel good that I'm always there on all three.

Q. When you have these consistently well qualifying performances you've had this year, does it make this 20 hours up until the race more stressful for you trying to get the first win?

DAVID MALUKAS: No. I try to keep that contained. If the situation's there, then great, we can go and get that win. At the end of the day it's trying to get points, trying to have a good race. You don't want to make stupid mistakes or a stupid move to be like I need to get this win so bad.

I know the time will come. If this race is going to be the one, we'll go for it. If the situation doesn't arise, you have to keep the mind calm and collected, get what we can.

Q. The series has been racing here since 1985. You, Mario Andretti, Michael Andretti, Emerson Fittipaldi, three apiece. When people talk about names like that, does it matter to you? Is that something you're going to think about in 20 years when you're done?

ALEX PALOU: Yes and no. I mean, it's super special. It's very cool to hear that, especially those names. I think all the names you said there are huge legends in the sport.

But at the end of the day it doesn't really change much. Like, I feel it's super cool obviously. I would love, I would love to have that in our let's say CV when I retire.

It's hard. It's hard to get. Hopefully we can get it. I'm sure if we get it, someone else in 10 years or five or six will get

us, as well. It's cool.

Q. The track rubbering in over the weekend, the rain might have affected it. Did it rubber in as much as you expected it to?

ALEX PALOU: I felt it was pretty good. Like, it didn't really change in a good or a bad way. It was very similar for me yesterday to this morning. I don't think it changed much.

DAVID MALUKAS: Yeah, retweet (smiling).

Q. Alex, you were P6 this morning. Talk about the move of going back to whatever you had setup-wise Friday.

ALEX PALOU: We came with one car. Obviously we worked a little bit yesterday during practice. We thought we were going one direction, and that it was going to be hopefully better or easier to drive this morning. It was the opposite. We just went back. Luckily it was good. I think the track not evolving too much, it kind of made our qualifying easier on going back on setup.

Yeah, it's very tough. It's a very tough course. As David said, being so long, it's very tough to piece everything together. If you don't have a car that's it's super comfortable, you could be losing 6/10s, 7/10ths. You could be way off. Once you have a car that's good, you can see the swing the 12 car did from yesterday to today. So yeah...

Q. Alex, David spoke about he's gotten himself to a place where he can expect to come anywhere and be sitting at least next to you. You went through your early career trying to find a home. He found that with Team Penske. Talk about seeing the state that he's reached so far.

ALEX PALOU: Yeah, very good. Hopefully he doesn't get much faster or much better (smiling). I mean, it would be cool for me if you just stay like this. Will be great. We can be very good friends. Otherwise maybe not (smiling).

No, I mean, it's very tough. People think you jump in a car and that's it. I think you jump in a fast car and it makes your life a lot easier. There's two other teammates for him, two other teammates for me, as well, that have the same car.

It's very tough. You need to build your team. You need to feel confident with yourself. It's always hard work to execute every single weekend.

Yeah, happy for him. Again, if he stays here, will be good,



yeah.

Q. You talk about this being a long lap. Talk about sections of the track that are more fun to drive than others, where you think the best opportunities for passing are going to be.

DAVID MALUKAS: Passing opportunities, I mean, pick your straightaway, right? You got so many. Obviously into one and five are going to be big ones. Decent passes into turn eight if you get a good run through turn seven.

My favorite part of the track is the Carrousel. I love the Carrousel. The amount of speed we're carrying, especially since they did the repave here a few years ago, it's unbelievable. I mean, my neck pad, it's almost equal to the Indy 500, it's so cool. We are on the limit there.

Q. Alex, any comments on the track?

ALEX PALOU: It's very tough. It depends on which car balance do I have. This morning I hated the car because I could not make it turn. Then when I added front wing, I kind of turned too much. It's very tough.

I would say once you get it right, the Carrousel, it's very fun. We're not flat out. We're not lifting too much. You're just controlling with the throttle.

As the driver, when you have a great balance, you can control it, it's an incredible feeling.

Q. Alex, you mentioned that lap wasn't perfect. Do you think there was a part in that lap where you gained a lot of time? 3/10ths to David is a sizable gap.

ALEX PALOU: Yeah, I don't know where I made it. I'll go back and look. I don't know. Yeah, honestly I cannot compare because we normally -- yeah, he was not very fast this morning and I was not very fast either.

DAVID MALUKAS: Yesterday I was slow.

ALEX PALOU: So I don't really know. If you look at my lap in Q1, then Q2, I lost like 6/10ths. Then Q3, I kind of regained those. It was just by being able to give 100% and not make any big mistakes.

No, I don't know. It will be interesting if it's high speed, low speed or braking. I don't know.

Q. Pato was saying the soft tires could be unpredictable, really slippery. Is that an issue that either of you had? How do you feel the tires were working today?

DAVID MALUKAS: No, I mean, I thought for us, I mean, massive gain going from primaries to alternates. I mean, I don't know, we'll see.

ALEX PALOU: No, honestly I think yesterday pretty much I would say 90% or maybe even more people thought that the alternates were not a big jump, like there were so many people that barely improve. There were some others that made huge gains.

Today I think almost everyone, even Pato, he went on practice two just to try and keep another set of primaries. He was P1. You could see that that was a better tire or a faster tire.

DAVID MALUKAS: Probably the first time he was upset to be P1.

ALEX PALOU: I don't know, maybe he was.

I think yesterday yes, but today it was pretty clear that the alternates were better.

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