

Indianapolis Motor Speedway Media Conference

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Juan Pablo Montoya

Tony Kanaan

Romain Grosjean

Jimmie Johnson

Press Conference



Explain what your program was, if you got through it at all, or if you're just happy with the laps you turned, put it in the garage?

JUAN PABLO MONTOYA: It was really good. We tried front springs, rear springs, cambers, casters. We tried the spare nose to check the aero balance. We did a long run. A small change to what the other car is running, 7 car is running. I liked it. I was like, Whoa, nice change, I'll take it.

Did some pit stops. About busted my ass coming in. It's the truth. I braked. Oh, no, stop. I just got to the speed limit. I told the guy, I think we speed there. They said nothing. Don't look at it.

THE MODERATOR: Obviously joined also by the driver of the No. 1 American Legion Chip Ganassi Racing Honda in Tony Kanaan. Just finding this out, he's driving the No. 1 car on Sunday.

TONY KANAAN: Doesn't care. What number are you?

JUAN PABLO MONTOYA: 6.

TONY KANAAN: We just know colors.

JUAN PABLO MONTOYA: I don't even know colors. I'm driving. I'm looking, Who is that? Every 30 seconds... Narrating a horse race in a stadium.

Up front I'm looking. Is that Sato or Rahal? It's kind of wide. Did Sato have purple? I think it did. That's what I think when I'm driving.

TONY KANAAN: At 240 miles an hour.

JUAN PABLO MONTOYA: Mine is 220 something (laughter).

THE MODERATOR: Tell us about your day, Tony.

TONY KANAAN: Uneventful. We went through some pit stops. We just really ran all day in traffic. It wasn't much to do. We've been happy with the car all week. That is no secret that the cars are good.

Obviously we're one off. We tried to get the guys in the pit

THE MODERATOR: Wrapping up the 90-minute Carb Day practice, we will be joined momentarily by Jimmie Johnson, Romain Grosjean and Tony Kanaan. For now we are more than pleased to be joined by the two-time Indy 500 champion, we welcome Juan Pablo Montoya.

How were your 90 minutes out there?

JUAN PABLO MONTOYA: They were good.

TONY KANAAN: I have a question. How does your car feel?

JUAN PABLO MONTOYA: My car feels really good. We've been happy all month. We'll be there at the end.

TONY KANAAN: Thank you.

THE MODERATOR: Do you believe him when he says he's happy?

TONY KANAAN: Yes, I do believe he's happy. I'm kind of glad he's going to be up there, but he's a little bit further away from me in the beginning of the race.

My car is not good. You told me my engine was really slow, so...

JUAN PABLO MONTOYA: It's okay. I can lend you a Chevy. Chevys are a little better.

THE MODERATOR: This is how this is going to go this afternoon.

JUAN PABLO MONTOYA: You brought it.

THE MODERATOR: This is on me, absolutely it's on me.

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stops. We did a few pit stops there, run a couple things. But honestly we didn't change anything.

THE MODERATOR: Also joined by Romain Grosjean. We were asking guys about the afternoon. They dovetail into other conversation. Whatever you got for us would be great.

ROMAIN GROSJEAN: I'm not happy with Tony, but I'm happy with Juan Pablo. Tony passed me and then he pitted.

TONY KANAAN: I was going to let you go, then he let me go, then I let him go on the backstretch.

JUAN PABLO MONTOYA: You did the same thing to me the other day.

TONY KANAAN: Why did you do that?

JUAN PABLO MONTOYA: Because you are an (expletive).

TONY KANAAN: I can't say what I want to say.

JUAN PABLO MONTOYA: With a letter what?

ROMAIN GROSJEAN: I was following Juan Pablo for a bit. He show me a very nice way of defend into turn three, which I liked. Couldn't pass him, so wasn't happy with that, but I liked the defend.

Morning was pretty good. We had a decent car. The track position was...

JUAN PABLO MONTOYA: You really call that a good car? I'm impressed.

TONY KANAAN: What's wrong with you?

JUAN PABLO MONTOYA: I followed him. I radioed, I think I need to pit, this guy is going to crash by himself. He was so freaking loose. I'm serious. You seen how loose he was?

TONY KANAAN: Looks good to me. We ran together.

ROMAIN GROSJEAN: That's the best I have, so I take it.

No, I think we going in a good place. I think the conditions were tricky this morning. We all thought the cold temperature was going to be awesome. It was actually quite slippery. Let's see what we get Sunday.

THE MODERATOR: Questions.

Q. Tony, you've got the Legion up front on Carb Day. Seems like you and Scott Dixon do that nearly almost every year. What is it about that? How important is it to be that fast on Carb Day, the last time you'll be on track before the green flag drops?

TONY KANAAN: It's not important at all. We had a good car all month. We didn't go out and let's be fastest on Carb Day. It doesn't count, doesn't mean anything. It's a consequence of a good car that we had all month. You look at teammates, they're all there.

Glad it's been working out for us. After this interview, it doesn't matter anymore. We're all going for the race on Sunday.

Q. You were fast last year in the 48 car. Has this year been as good as that or better?

TONY KANAAN: It's the same. We're starting in the same spot. I think we're just stronger as a team. But my car was good last year. We got caught in the yellow flag before the first stop and went two laps down. Took us all day to recover to finish 10th.

Anything can happen. Doesn't matter how good of a car you have if you're not in the right place at the right time.

Q. Early day across the street with doing Bob and Tom. How did that go?

TONY KANAAN: We went to the Legion post right across the street from here. We're racing for a great cause this month. 'Be the One' is the cause that we're trying to make people aware of it. 17 veterans take their lives every day with mental health issues. If we can try to save a life, at least one life a day, it's a great cause.

It's been a great experience for me. Obviously racing the 500 at this point in age is pretty cool, but having another really cool motive is really nice.

Q. Juan, what's your feeling now? You've done practice, the month, now we're going into the race on Sunday. How excited are you to be on track for the race given you have Pato and Felix in the field with you?

JUAN PABLO MONTOYA: Honestly having Pato and Felix on Sunday doesn't really change anything for me. It's like having him and him. It's the truth. It really is.

TONY KANAAN: We're better looking.

JUAN PABLO MONTOYA: It really doesn't. We're there to do our job. I think we got a good race car. We'll see. We really got to see how the Chevy-Honda plays out when they turn on the engines because they haven't done that yet, so we'll see. They like sandbagging a lot.

TONY KANAAN: Like you guys don't.

Q. Romain, how are you excited for your first Indy 500?

ROMAIN GROSJEAN: I'm actually trying to stay calm and quiet, take it day by day. Obviously the crowd is great down there. It's hard to move around the paddock.

TONY KANAAN: You haven't seen anything.

JUAN PABLO MONTOYA: This is like nobody showed up today.

ROMAIN GROSJEAN: A few friends already, though.

Q. Is it bigger than anything you've experienced?

ROMAIN GROSJEAN: When you go to Japan, Suzuka, it's quite something. A lot of fans from Thursday onwards. There's no racetrack I've been as big as Indianapolis, so there's going to be more people here on Sunday. I don't think we've gone quite to the level of Japan on race day yet, but Sunday.

Q. You were talking about it, but I was curious, what is it like to get used to who's driving what color car, what number, who's in the field? I imagine at some point you have to anticipate, I know he may do this, may not want to be by this guy. How do you get accustomed to that and learn?

TONY KANAAN: I don't think you do. I just tell my spotters to tell me who it is pretty much. It's true.

JUAN PABLO MONTOYA: I really know the cars I don't want to be around.

Q. Which ones?

ROMAIN GROSJEAN: Apparently me this morning.

JUAN PABLO MONTOYA: This morning it was him. Not because he does anything. 20 minutes later Herta came out backward. We're with the same team. Just saying it's loose, loose as a goose.

TONY KANAAN: Don't you miss him?

JUAN PABLO MONTOYA: She was actually disappointed in me.

TONY KANAAN: Because you're not speaking your mind anymore?

JUAN PABLO MONTOYA: I'm not. I'm being too polite.

TONY KANAAN: That's a sign of age.

JUAN PABLO MONTOYA: I'm getting mature, yeah.

TONY KANAAN: No.

JUAN PABLO MONTOYA: As much as you. I'm not mean, you see, I'm nice.

TONY KANAAN: You're not nice, shut up. It's a debate here, Jimmie.

JUAN PABLO MONTOYA: I'm nice. Ask him.

THE MODERATOR: Jimmie, welcome to the roundtable discussion after practice today.

JIMMIE JOHNSON: This is entertaining.

JUAN PABLO MONTOYA: Beer and popcorn.

THE MODERATOR: Jimmie, what do you care to share with us today?

JIMMIE JOHNSON: Can I leave (laughter)?

JUAN PABLO MONTOYA: He's saying we're too old.

TONY KANAAN: I didn't say you. I'm the old one.

JUAN PABLO MONTOYA: How old are you?

TONY KANAAN: I'll be 48 in December, yeah.

JUAN PABLO MONTOYA: Oh, my God, you're old.

THE MODERATOR: Feel the love.

Q. Romain, when you're going 225 miles per hour, you're loose as a goose, is it frightening at all to be loose at that speed? Are you able to handle it more after the week of practice you've had?

ROMAIN GROSJEAN: It's not ideal. That's why I feel fast. When everything goes well, it's very straightforward. But, yeah, when the car gets a little bit on the nose, you realize it's fast.

When I was with Juan, it was a little bit loose, quite a bit loose, a lot loose. But we changed something for the end of the session and got better.

I mean, yes, you have to trust yourself, you have to trust the car and you have to respect the place. That's what I feel. When it was loose, I wasn't flat. We made changes.

We learned quite a bit this morning. We keep going.

Q. Romain, you mentioned the crowd here earlier. What have you been told by veteran drivers and team members about what you'll be experiencing?

ROMAIN GROSJEAN: Well, I think, as Juan Pablo say, this is nothing compared to what it's going to be. That's why everyone says when you see the grandstands completely full, it's a different place. Comes from gray to colorful, very noisy. A great atmosphere.

Finally out of, not 100%, but out of COVID, we can get event like this. A lot of people. It's going to be great to see them get the energy from them.

Q. Jimmie, you went to Daytona two decades worth. Next 24 to 48 hours, what are you expecting? Looking forward to it?

JIMMIE JOHNSON: Absolutely looking forward to it. Being here last year to watch as a fan, take it all in, the energy I experienced was not anything like I've seen before. It was only half full. I can't wait until race day to feel it at full energy.

Q. I watched for seven years you would get asked to answer questions in Spanish, and seven years you argued, walked off the stage and refused. So you have gone soft.

TONY KANAAN: You got called out.

Q. It's proof now.

JUAN PABLO MONTOYA: Yeah, I'm mature.

ROMAIN GROSJEAN: Just like the wine, gets better.

Q. So Jimmie, 24 hours, 36 hours out, how are you feeling?

JIMMIE JOHNSON: I feel great. I mean, I'm happy to get on track today, get some more reps, try some more adjustments with the car.

All in all I think we've had a lot of practice. I've got a good sense of the car and excited to go racing.

JUAN PABLO MONTOYA: Why are you asking such soft questions? You used to be a lot better.

Q. Touche. You travel deep, bring a big entourage? What do you do? Kids excited for the parade?

JIMMIE JOHNSON: Chani is off at a horse show with Evie. She'll come in Saturday night. Lydia and I are here on our own eating too much ice cream and pizza, having a good time.

We'll enjoy what tomorrow has to offer. Then obviously race day the pressure and everything will kick up then. Tomorrow is really about taking in the experience and enjoying it with Lydia.

Q. Romain, are your kids looking forward to the pomp and circumstance?

ROMAIN GROSJEAN: Saturday afternoon they're coming. They have school today. There is no flight option tomorrow to get them on time for parade. That's okay. I think they going to be here Saturday evening, Sunday. Wanting them to be here for my first 500. Actually Monday, they may skip school on Tuesday. At least we get to spend a little bit of time together before we go to Detroit. That's cool.

Q. Jimmie, how excited is Lydia to be in the parade?

TONY KANAAN: What do you mean? She was on Fallon. What do you mean she's excited to be in the parade? C'mon.

JIMMIE JOHNSON: That's a point. I think she's more excited to hang out with Sofia Franchitti more than anything else. I can't separate those two. Dario and I know we're going to have our hands full here in about 10 years.

Q. You didn't have any race where you had to be part of a parade in NASCAR. That's a sense of tradition and history here. What do you think of having gone through the Indy experience, all the things leading into the race?

JIMMIE JOHNSON: No, honestly it's been great. There's so much excitement around it, so much interaction with the fans. Their energy is at a different level for this race in all the interactions I've had. We've been joking. This isn't Indy Light this year, it's Indy Heavy.

I want to experience it all. It's been great.

Q. Jimmie, always a whirlwind for you, you went on Jimmy Fallon this week. Has it seemed any more hectic for you than your busiest race weekend in NASCAR even?

JIMMIE JOHNSON: Each day we get closer to the 500, it gets busy. The pressure is ramping up. I think the weekend was quite busy with qualifying. I didn't anticipate that, the stress demands each driver would take.

Some of it's predictable with media and trying to promote this big race, be a part of it. It is odd to have tomorrow off and not be in the car at all, then just get in on Sunday.

Again, just kind of roll with it and take in everything I can.

Q. How was Fallon?

JIMMIE JOHNSON: It's awesome. He's a great guy, a lot of fun. Really enjoyed it.

Q. Yesterday I hear the four of you said this day you don't need that much run. I was there on the track and I see a lot of following and moving lines. There are still things you want to try these days?

JIMMIE JOHNSON: Always. That track is open. We'll take every minute we can get out there and make adjustments to the car, definitely.

TONY KANAAN: Same. I agree with him. If we have time, we're going to run. Obviously days like this, you can't make the wrong decision, if you try to change something, which we all said here we did not, so yeah.

THE MODERATOR: Awesome. Thanks for coming up, guys. We'll see you on Sunday.