

IMSA Media Conference

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Mikael Grenier

Laurin Heinrich

Nick Boulle

Sebastian Bourdais

Press Conference



So every point counts, and yeah, that was also the mindset that we went into for the qualifying. And in the end it was not, for us, mainly about the starting position. It was more about the points, to be honest. That's great. It was also my very first IMSA WeatherTech qualifying. So that was a bit new to me. A lot of cars on this small track, but obviously have some experience. I raced last year here, the IGTC rounds, which I was also on pole.

So good memories on this track, which is quite cool. But yeah, six hours of racing tomorrow. Seems like maybe we get some weather. I think it's not too bad for us in the Porsche, but will definitely spice things a bit up.

Q. You mentioned the pole in the Indy 8 Hour last year. Did that help you at all in terms of knowing the track and what could prepare you for this run?

LAURIN HEINRICH: For sure, track knowledge always helps and adds some sort of confidence going into that weekend. Until now, all of the IMSA tracks have been new to me. I haven't been there before. Obviously we were testing on some.

But yeah, I mean, especially we are now testing here. So that helps a lot when you don't have to learn the track in FP1 like I had to Motul or Virginia, which are probably the toughest tracks on the calendar, not easy, but it also worked.

Yeah, it's cool, also, heading into, thinking a bit further into Road Atlanta, which is a track I know already, Porsche Track of North America. As a driver, it gives you some sort of confidence, which is cool.

THE MODERATOR: Joined now by Nick Boulle. Almost the same, very similar scenario for you as for Laurin in that we're getting right down to the end of the championship, every point counts. Can you put into context not only getting those pole points, but what it means for you to get your first pole here at Indianapolis?

NICK BOULLE: Wow, getting pole at Indianapolis, it's such an iconic place for my first pole position at IMSA, is obviously super special. And certainly we are thinking about the championship, but we are trying to maximize every session. From our perspective, if we keep clean and

THE MODERATOR: We will get started here again with our Motul Pole Award winners for Sunday's Tiresack.com Battle on the Bricks here at Indianapolis Motor Speedway.

To your extreme left is the pole winner in the GTD class, Mikael Grenier.

Congratulations. Obviously, it seems like there's a lot of momentum right now with your team given what I just mentioned there. Do you feel that, and how do you keep it going tomorrow?

MIKAEL GRENIER: Yeah, I mean, tomorrow is a long race. It's six hours. So a bit different from VIR. The weather could also be playing a part in that race. So we have to, yeah, be alert. But yeah, we did a good job because in practice we were quite lost. We had some issue with the car, so I didn't know what to expect in qualifying.

Still not feeling that great, but at least we improved a lot. I think we know which direction to go for tomorrow. So it's a good starting spot. My teammates are also on the pace, so it should be, yeah, stay out of trouble, try to go through the rain, if there's some rain, and be there in the last hour.

MODERATOR: We have the GTD Pro pole winner, Laurin Heinrich. I would imagine that getting the pole for this race at this time, and especially with what's at stake, is pretty important; is that correct?

LAURIN HEINRICH: Yeah, exactly. Not only the pole is important, the whole weekend, it's the second-to-last weekend. Coming into this weekend, the gap was only 17 points, which for European driver, sound like a lot, but IMSA, it's nothing. But getting 35 points for pole position is obviously great. It's a very, very important phase of the championship.



push hard, we'll be in a really good spot.

MODERATOR: If you could just talk about how that session went from your perspective? Obviously very good with the pole, but how did it transpire?

NICK BOULLE: You know, I think to be perfectly honest, I think we've struggled in qualifying through the year, just in terms of finding that magic lap and finding the right window for getting the tires in the right window, and we found it. It was certainly a special lap and one I'll remember for a long time.

Q. I know the team was on pole last year with a different driver lineup. How much do you know of their setup from last year was continued versus carried over or changed for this year?

NICK BOULLE: I think we have gone a very different direction. I have enjoyed working with PR1 and Inter Europol so much because everyone is operating at such a high level, and I have to say that we are doing things with a race car that I've never experienced before, which is exciting. That's made it super fun.

It's pushed me to drive differently at times, and certainly added an extra challenge at points. But it's a super fun car to drive.

Q. The Speedway road courses, it's kind of unique among the tracks that IMSA races on, lack of elevation change and things like that. Is that something you've clicked with really well? Are you enjoying this particular track?

NICK BOULLE: Certainly. This is -- every lap in the car, I feel like I learn something. I think this place in particular rewards being aggressive, but it's very detail orientated in terms of how you just touch the curbs using every bit of track at certain points, and I think that lent itself well to me.

I think where you get to push here, it's a really fun place to drive, and I've enjoyed it.

Q. Not only did you qualify first, you would have qualified second and third, as well, with your other laps. What does that speak to your level of comfort? As you said, you're doing different things with a race car than you have before. What does that say about that?

NICK BOULLE: I think it shows we're consistent. You know, leading up to the lap, just finding that perfect window, I think it just shows the strength of the car that they have given me for qualifying, and now that we have as

a team for the race.

That's obviously always our focus, but really being able to drag the most out of it when it counts is really special.

THE MODERATOR: Congratulations. We'll let you go to the celebrations, and we'll be joined shortly by our GTP pole winner.

Our GTP pole winner has arrived. We are pleased now to be joined by our Motul Pole Award winner overall, Sebastian Bourdais.

Congratulations, your first pole ever at Indy. How important is that to you, and tell us about your qualifying experience this afternoon.

SEBASTIAN BOURDAIS: Yeah, not a great record, huh? Geez, 22 attempts.

Yeah, I mean, it's obviously always great to be on pole. You know, very nice feeling to kind of do it at home base for Chip Ganassi Racing. Helps us to stay alive in the championship fight, which obviously is a long shot after the issues that we had at Road America. But we'll live to fight another day, and that's very much the spirit we are in till the end of the season. Seems like it's going to be a bit of a tough day tomorrow maybe with the weather coming.

So starting up front might not be the worst idea that we've had this weekend. Although it's quite insignificant for a six-hour race, it's always very appealing for personal matters and also for the team because everybody has been working really hard to give us the best car, and that Cadillac was definitely quite good today.

So yeah, very happy with the performance but also very focused for what's coming ahead in seemingly a very grueling six-hour race.

Q. You pitted with about a couple minutes, more than two minutes left in the session. Was that the only amount of fuel that you had, or were you that confident that your lap was that good and that you didn't have to push again?

SEBASTIAN BOURDAIS: That's all I had, and I was out of gas. That was it. You never know if it was going to be good enough because you can't bank on people not improving. But for sure the fact that everybody had been running pretty hard for a while now in those hot conditions, unless somebody really missed the peak of the tire, made a big mistake or something, it was probably a fairly long shot at improving.



Regardless, you kind of focus on your own, that's all you can do in qualifying, and see if you come out on top and if it's good enough. And it proved to be today. So we'll take that.

Q. Has the track rubbered in as you expected it to with Lamborghini running, Porsche running, Pilot Challenge and everything else running?

SEBASTIAN BOURDAIS: Honestly, we always see a bit of track evolution just in our own sessions, which is why we always try and time it a certain way. But you know, you can also get burnt with a red flag or anything that happens.

But there's plenty of rubber. It's the Confidential Michelin tire on those GTPs, and they feed off each other, not really so much off the other rubbers. So yeah, you do mostly use what's out there.

The big plus for us is when we are on our own in qualifying like that with GTPs only, we don't get all the dirt and the grass and everything else from the GTPs that just cut every corner and just drag a bunch of stuff on the track.

So the track is definitely faster and cleaner and easier to use.

Q. You have a chance to go 2 for 22 tomorrow. You kind of started to answer this, but I wanted to ask you how the hot conditions affected your qualifying, and did it play to the strengths of the Cadillac, for example?

SEBASTIAN BOURDAIS: Honestly, it's almost impossible to say because maybe it's the only time that you've been able to string two or three laps together with the density of cars on the track, a 56-car count on a fairly short track like this is just insane. That was the big unknown going into qualifying, what do you need, where is the car at, purely balance-wise.

So there is a big guessing game, so just decided to trust the read that we had from the test when we came here a month ago or a month and a half ago and then just see what we had because there was no way to know anything else from the practice we had.

So yeah, we just stuck to our guns, and it just kind of -- it was okay. I mean, it was definitely challenging because the tires got hot real quick and the window to get the lap in was not very wide.

Q. You said the championship is a long shot, but you got pole here today. The 7 car qualified seventh. A lot of uncertainties with the race with traffic and everything. Does it give you any more confidence?

SEBASTIAN BOURDAIS: I don't know, they always seem to come back from the dead. I mean, every time you think they are, you know, pretty much done, they come back and finish on the podium or win the race. That's the beauty of IMSA; it's never over. But at the same time, they haven't had a single bad race so far this year and we already had one DNF and one that looked like a DNF.

Yeah, we need help for sure. So if the stars align and we get a little lucky, then everything's possible, but on pure results, if they finish placed tomorrow, then it's pretty much over.

So that's why we are just focusing on our own stuff. And if we can win the race that, that would be awesome, but we'll do the best we can.

Q. You won here in sports cars 10 or 12 years ago, but what does it mean to be on pole here, and what does this place mean to you given what it's been in your career?

SEBASTIAN BOURDAIS: It's not been exactly the nicest place to me. I've taken a few hits around here. One pretty memorable one. Obviously it's good to come back on some good terms and have a good feeling and a good experience.

But yeah, I mean, it's a very special place for multiple reasons. Everybody knows that. Winning the inaugural here 12 years ago was awesome. We had such a dominant day. I think we went through the field in the wet and in the dry twice.

It was quite the day. I was with Peter Baron back then, and Alex, and we just had one of those days where everything seems to come your way, and hopefully it's the same tomorrow.

Q. So when almost everybody else went quicker this morning, y'all were roughly the same. So, one, was this pole a bit of a surprise; and, two, have you all spent the weekend trying different things to find some speed?

SEBASTIAN BOURDAIS: I mean, you try and do the best you can on setup and then set yourself for what the conditions may be in the race. The problem is, you really don't know. I mean, if you looked at the weather five days ago, it was like full sunshine and hot. And then as we got closer to the event, then it was kind of a washout. And then now it's like, well, maybe, maybe not, but not as hot.

I think for us, we always tend to struggle a little bit on the

hot tires. So if it was hotter rather than wet and cold, that would probably be better. But you don't get to decide that. So we'll just focus.

For sure the pole was a bit of a surprise because we didn't really get any kind of significant run to prepare qualifying. We just got heavy traffic. I set my fastest lap with half a tank or something like that and second run on tires. This quali-simulation ended up with no run at all. Just got in a lot of traffic and didn't get any kind of read.

So, yeah, we had no idea what we had, really. We just came testing here with zero cars. It was just us. So we kind of relied on that and mostly just tweaked on it with dry (indiscernible) conditions and whatnot, and it worked out.

We'll see what tomorrow holds. But yeah, a lot of questions for sure. First, the weather, and then, yeah, the traffic really makes it super challenging. Like you barely put three corners together once everybody is out there.

So at the start, we may be getting two, maybe three laps, and then we'll catch the tail and try and go through the GTs; and I think the whole race is going to be about trying not to hit anything and not get hit.

Q. From what I could see, your best starting position here in an IndyCar was third. Even though you ran with multiple configurations here, what are some of the differences on how you can push this Cadillac versus how you were pushing the IndyCar to get the best lap time you could around this track?

SEBASTIAN BOURDAIS: The cars are very, very wide compared to IndyCars in general, and it's really difficult to get out of the way. So dirty air is super tricky to get out of and find some air to lean on.

You know, when the line gets kind of narrow, because again, the GTs bring a lot of stuff around, and there's dust and grass and marbles and you name it, it's a tricky place. It's easy to make a mistake. You wish there would be a bit more flexibility and maneuverability to kind of get the car around in different places and cut and gets runs and stuff, but the outside is quite tempting sometimes but it's also very daunting and very risky.

THE MODERATOR: Seb, congratulations, we'll let you get to the drivers' meeting, and best of luck tomorrow.

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