

# Rolex 24 At DAYTONA

Sunday, January 30, 2022

Daytona, Florida, USA

**Helio Castroneves**

**Simon Pagenaud**

**Tom Blomqvist**

**Oliver Jarvis**

**Michael Shank**

**Jim Meyer**

Media Conference



But first and foremost was the strategy. We were able to save fuel and go longer than anyone. And the team, the strategy and Mike and Ryan, they set themselves up to make sure at the end we would put less fuel in the car, would take us less time to leapfrog everybody, basically, in the pits. And that's exactly what happened.

HELIO CASTRONEVES: And also find out what's our rhythm, saving fuel, what can we do with that, and it paid off.

SIMON PAGENAUD: Absolutely. And wanted to say kudos to the entire team, because we can't do it without them. And today was a team win.

**Q. Helio, a year ago, wins the Rolex 24 for the first time, with the team in the car that he ended up having to beat today to do it again. So, two in a row in between a little race called the Indy 500 for the fourth time. Last year's win--**

HELIO CASTRONEVES: Mike, let's go to Le Mans. Let's go!

SIMON PAGENAUD: I speak French.

**Q. Could you put into context what this last year and a little bit, starting back with the WeatherTech Championship you won in 2020 and right where we are now?**

HELIO CASTRONEVES: It's taken momentum. When Ricky and I won the championship in 2020, me winning the Rolex last year, and then jumping with Mike and Jim for the Indy 500, we knew -- it's all about, it sounds cliché, but it's all about belief: I believe in them; they believe in me. This is exactly what's happened with this group here.

With Simon and Tom and Oliver, we all believe, and the team, obviously, that we could do it. We know the hard work. We know that everybody in this entire series, we know that everybody worked really hard. It's a very competitive series. Very difficult.

THE MODERATOR: We're joined by the DPi winners.

Simon, your first Rolex 24 at Daytona victory. Goes nice with an Indianapolis 500 victory, an INDYCAR Series championship. Just what does this mean to you to be a Rolex 24 winner with this group in really your first time out with Meyer Shank team?

SIMON PAGENAUD: I know it sounds pretty good, that's for sure. I'm very proud and excited to be part of this racing. Sports car racing brought me to the forefront of the racing scene. I always loved to come back and have a chance to be on the top team like Meyer Shank Racing.

Personally, it's amazing to think about what has gone on since we decided to work together. Joining Helio obviously on the INDYCAR side and also on the sports car side with Oliver and Tom. Fit right away. Felt like the relationship started really quickly to grow. And also felt like the vibe was right.

And this weekend it felt like, okay, we had some setbacks, but we fought and everybody kept a good spirit. Obviously my mate, Helio, he's really good at doing that in the team. It was a great atmosphere and obviously good people get good results and get what they deserve.

Just very happy, very proud of the entire team, quite frankly. It's my first race with Meyer Shank Racing. But if you look closely at what happened today, the strategy was just fantastic, fantastic. Every stop, I believe, we were the fastest on pit lane. I haven't seen the numbers but I can guarantee you we were. And the guys did a great job in the pits, no mistakes. Execution was amazing.



And Jim always reminds us of that, right, Jim? He always says, I didn't know it was going to be that hard and so difficult. It should. However, when we accomplish what we just did today, oh, it's priceless.

So in my case, I'm still very much passionate about it, learning every day, having new teammates like Tom and Oliver -- I know Simon from a long time -- improving my driving skills and looking to everyone here. So that makes a better driver. That's why I enjoy it. That's why I have fun and that's why probably when you go out there you push as hard as you can to win the Rolex.

SIMON PAGENAUD: And he's only getting better.

HELIO CASTRONEVES: That's right. I said it's amazing. Right, Mike?

MICHAEL SHANK: You did.

HELIO CASTRONEVES: Keep it going.

JIM MEYER: Last year, when Helio and Wayne Taylor and the team won, I told him how much we wanted to win this race. And being Helio, he immediately sends me a picture of the Rolex watch, literally as I'm getting off the airplane last year. Maybe this one works now. Send me a picture now I'm happy.

HELIO CASTRONEVES: No problem, Jim.

**Q. First overall win, you had a GT class win in 2013. Obviously first time out here with this team after a long time with the Mazda program. How gratified are you to have gotten the call to be a part of this? And certainly what does it mean to get this right off the bat?**

OLIVER JARVIS: Like you say, come close a couple times with Mazda. I won a class win but I wanted to win the overall win. It's such a special event. Special race. To win it overall is an amazing feeling.

And to do it with Mike and the team, I think Simon and Helio really touched on it, it's a real team effort. I was so impressed, sat up on the pit wall, throughout that race. It was so calm and methodical, the way they went about approaching the race. It was like they had won the race ten times already.

I wasn't on the pit wall for the last hour, but up until that point, absolutely faultless, calm heads. That's what wins you races. Full credit to the team. It's been an amazing experience so far. We've still got a full season to go. A lot of hard work to go.

I've still got a lot to learn. New to the car. And I just hope we can keep on getting better. This is the first of many.

**Q. Tom, first Rolex 24, first start, ironically the car you were supposed to drive a few years ago went on to win the race -- we don't have to go into too much detail unless you want to. But how big a deal is it for you to go get this win finally?**

TOM BLOMQUIST: I was speechless after the race. I mean, I dreamed of it. Did I believe? Yes. But you never know. I mean, it's 24 hours of relentless racing. And every time I jumped in the car, moments I felt really comfortable. At moments I was, like, man, I can't get this car to work.

It was just a roller coaster of a race. And every stint here is just flat out. You're managing so many things. You feel like you're racing nose to tail from literally the green light.

So it's very different to what I'm used to. And honestly I've thoroughly enjoyed it. I've enjoyed teaming up with these two monkeys. They're supposed to be the mature ones, but they're definitely not.

But the atmosphere within the team has been splendid. And I've really enjoyed my short time here at MSR. And to cap that off with a win on debut is fantastic.

And I would just like to thank everyone, thank Mike, thank Jim for putting their faith in me and giving me this opportunity. And hopefully today I was able to repay a little bit of faith that they put in me. And, yeah, it's been great so far. So hopefully this is just the beginning.

**Q. Jim, as we kind of mentioned already, Indy 500 win last summer. Now you've got a Rolex 24 win. What does that mean to you as part of this program?**

JIM MEYER: Tell you a funny story. When I met Mike, and he and I were talking through how would we put our team together and what would we do, I said to him, God, the two races we've got to win, I want to win the Indianapolis 500 and the Rolex 24. As we were standing on the bank, I said I'm out now.

[LAUGHTER]

It just really means everything. We tried to have a team that we're very loyal to people. We try to have a team where we encourage really, really hard work, but we also try to encourage a family atmosphere, one that people get along and people can trust each other.

I think our execution by these four was flawless, and our team. Those are the best stops -- it was really flawless.

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We just kept getting better and better as the race went on.

And our guys, in terms of strategy, this is a hard sport. I didn't realize how hard it was until I got into it. It's really hard. And a day like today makes you forget all the other ones, put it that way.

**Q. Mike, this is your second Rolex 24 win. The last one came 10 years on the 50th. Appropriately enough today is number 60, with the number 60 car. You've got fond memories of that first win here. Put this one next to that one a little bit if you can?**

MICHAEL SHANK: The first thing I've got to say is that that day was really special with John Pew and Ozz Negri and AJ Allmendinger and Justin Wilson. We lost Justin in Pocono in 2015. And so I kind of think about that first, which is, I don't know, I just think about that and what went on there.

But to do what we did that year, which was just really catapulted the team and the business to another level really kind of started our trajectory that we're at today. And I'm really grateful for that and met so many great people. My wife and I put everything on the line for the place.

And it started with Jim France putting his arm around me and not ever letting go. And then I met Jim about four years ago and my life got much worse.

[LAUGHTER]

Sorry, completely wrong.

Anyways, super happy day. The 50th and 60th is super special. Winning the Indy 500 is great. But I'm so competitive. I was going so crazy today. We came out of the gate and we went from -- where did we start? The fourth -- the last.

TOM BLOMQVIST: We sucked.

MICHAEL SHANK: What the (expletive) is going on here? And we got much better and I stopped talking on the intercom, got better.

I'm appreciative of everybody here, including our the sponsors, SiriusXM and Otter Nation and Arctic Wolf and obviously the big one is Acura and Honda and HPD -- these folks believed in me six, seven years ago. And I could just not do this without Jon Ikeda and David Salters and Kelvin [phonetic], and the guys at the top end that made sure we got the deal.

**Q. Mike, what does it mean to get the first DPi win**

**after all the trials and tribulations and coming so close?**

MICHAEL SHANK: We needed it bad, real bad. We had a tough year last year, and I made it very public. And I didn't want to run from the truth, which was we had a bad year.

We set out to fix it. I told the guys here's the same thing: Here's where we were; here we're going; and I'm not stopping until we get some kind of closure and some competitive level that we're used to dealing with in the sports car world.

Today proved we're the right track. We've got a long way to go, but I liked our execution today and I'm just relieved today, just completely relieved.

**Q. To do it with an entirely almost new lineup. [Inaudible]?**

MICHAEL SHANK: These guys are very specifically part of this program. You can see Helio and Simon easily being here, but these two guys, I looked at them, I saw every document I could see on their speed and what they're doing, the capabilities, the experience. And I just picked who I thought could be virtually the same speed and have the same kind of sensibility.

I still don't know if I got it right. But we'll see what happens at the end of the year. But I don't know, looking at some data and making a gut choice, you know.

**Q. Mike, did you know -- to win the Indy 500 and now the Rolex 24 with Helio -- I know you knew you were getting a championship-level driver, but has he surpassed your expectations?**

MICHAEL SHANK: Yeah. He's sitting in the room so it's hard to talk about him. But he's got everything covered in every spectrum of driving, from the business side to the driving side, to the saving fuel, to the performance.

And a lot of people talk about his age. But I kind of see through that. And we made a decision, Jim and I, that we wanted to go with someone with experience when we came up with the budget last year to do six races with him. And there was young guys out there deserved something.

We felt for our business at this time we needed to make an impression at the Indianapolis Motor Speedway. That's what we set about doing.

**Q. Tom, the decision to hand off to Helio, I heard your TV interview. I know that wasn't easy, necessarily. But could you talk us through what that was like.**

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TOM BLOMQUIST: Obviously it would have been fantastic to finish the race, but I've been in the car quite a while. And I was pretty cooked at that point. And I was busting for a way for the last two hours. That didn't make my life very easy.

But Helio had been super strong all race. So it wasn't like we were going to give anything away there. And when you're pretty cooked, it's never -- you can only mess it up, let's say.

So, but, no, Helio did a fantastic job. And I think ultimately it just came down to -- it was still an hour or a bit to go in the race. And it's better to be safe than sorry, right? So, I think ultimately we made the right call there.

**Q. Helio, I heard you say, tell Marty Snyder, bucket list, you're ticking them off. Is Le Mans the next big one?**

HELIO CASTRONEVES: I'd love to. I've never been there. I would love to try obviously. Gotta go to those big events. Since I moved here, yes, Daytona was my goal to win. And being at Le Mans, we almost did it, almost got it, but unfortunately with the clash of schedules wasn't able to do it.

So I don't think we were just talking about age is a problem. I think I'm not running out of time. I'm just getting more experience. And experiencing in this type of race is the key to be successful.

**Q. Another big race coming up here in three weeks?**

HELIO CASTRONEVES: I would love to. I spoke with -- when I did SRX, I spoke with Everenham and Tony Stewart, said, hey, find me a car and I'll jump in. I'm sure a lot of people would like to see me. Who knows what's going to happen? And they talk about it, but nothing, didn't get traction.

But I love to race. This is me. It's been my entire life. And I admire respect. I know it's not easy. I understand everyone has your specialty. And that's why, when I moved to IMSA I believed I started getting better because you start exploring more of your race craft. And today the big win was because of that. I knew my competitors. I knew what I needed to do and I did.

**Q. I heard you make the Tom Brady comparison like you did at Indy with him and Phil Mickelson?**

HELIO CASTRONEVES: It was a rumor he was going to retire. No, he can't retire, no, he's my mojo. Obviously this

is, all jokes aside, when you cross over sports, Tom Brady, we talk about golf with Phil Mickelson and myself at this point, when you have passion, when you study, you have a team behind you to support and teammates, racing is very competitive sport. You've just got to keep doing your homework. I've been disciplined and the result will show up. No question.

**Q. Simon, your first watch, I know this means a lot to you. And you're one of five INDYCAR drivers to get a watch today, which is pretty significant. Could you talk about all that?**

SIMON PAGENAUD: Absolutely. For me, it's about ticking off the big races. Having won Indianapolis and now Daytona 24 it feels special. I was lucky to run in Le Mans in the past and finish 13 seconds behind the leader in second place. Hopefully someday maybe I'll come back over there and try to get that, too.

But, yeah, let's go. I can show you places. I have a house not too far.

HELIO CASTRONEVES: Nice. Perfect.

SIMON PAGENAUD: We'll set up.

TOM BLOMQUIST: Jim, Mike, taking notes? Taking notes right now?

SIMON PAGENAUD: It's obviously, I'm super proud. I'll tell you the truth I'm thinking my son. I was thinking that he's going to be proud of me later on that I won those races. Personally, that's what I'm thinking about.

**Q. Mike, 10 years ago you were here. Couldn't get an INDYCAR engine. Fledgling team. You've been in the Rolex then. You build this. You keep building and building. You win an Indy 500. I'm wondering, what clicked? What changed?**

MICHAEL SHANK: I mean, I think it did actually. In 2017, I got the Acura NSX deal to run in GTD which was a big thing for our company. And I was really proud to do really well for that program for four years.

But when the Prototype came open, we jumped at it. Truly when he came in '18, just opened another network of people, of people we could talk to about partnerships. And it's just blossomed.

And we have a new shop on east side of Columbus, Ohio, that's beautiful, and we're set up for the future. And commercially I think we can grow a little bit more.



But what we want is wins and championships and not quantity. We want to run two of something, or maybe three. But not 10 -- we want to keep real focused and deliver with our partners and OEMs and let it fall where it will.

But it's just crazy what's going on right now. It really is. It's hard for me to believe sometime.

**Q. What made you know that Helio could be the guy for you?**

MICHAEL SHANK: Again, numbers, looking at numbers. When Roger moved him to SportsCar we looked at his last season of INDYCAR, and it looked still pretty sporty to me. It really did, when we're looking at top fives and top tens and polls and wins. I was, like, I don't know.

As we all know, IMS is the place. And I can argue about this, but I think I probably have two of the better guys, and probably Colton back there at the IMS. That's what this is all about is what can we do at the Speedway? How much effort can we put into it and get the result at the Speedway?

I believe I have this year when I roll in there with these two guys, I've got two or three of the top guys.

**Q. Helio, you spent a long time trying to win your fourth Indy 500. In the last one and a half or so years, you won your first career championship, two Rolexes and your fourth Indy 500 and you're 46 years old. What's your secret?**

HELIO CASTRONEVES: Passion. Passion. When you love what you do and you enjoy it and you have fun and you are surrounded by great people, it makes it happen. That's the secret.

**Q. How much racing do you have in you?**

HELIO CASTRONEVES: A lot. The fire's still burning. One of the quotes that Rick Mears told me a long time ago: If you don't have the fire, if you stop thinking about it, then it's time for you to stop. I can't live without it right now. Yes, it will happen one day, don't get me wrong.

But I still want to be involved. I love this environment. It's my confidence zone, my therapy, everything. Every time you're (indiscernible) the race, it's where I feel most comfortable.

Right now, whatever is next, I'm going to keep it going. And the INDYCAR season is obviously our goal. And Simon and I have a lot of work, but we know we can

achieve great things.

**Q. How many of you climbed the fence?**

SIMON PAGENAUD: All of us.

MICHAEL SHANK: Did you climb the fence, Jim?

JIM MEYER: I did not climb the fence.

**Q. Skipped it twice?**

JIM MEYER: Yes twice now. And I feel OK about it.

[LAUGHTER]

**Q. The rest of you all did?**

JIM MEYER: One comment, by the way. Besides when we were able to come together with Helio, we had kind of a really, the same process when we thought we had a chance perhaps to get Simon.

Mike and I went and studied every race for I think seven years. And it really, really convinced us. With Oli, we used his name in vain a lot last year when he was with the Mazda team. So we knew when we could get him he was a fit.

And I can tell you, Tom doesn't know this, but the first time he tested for us, Mike called me and said, we've got our guy. We've got our guy.

So, we love what we have. And I want to remind everybody we still expect to win an IMSA Championship and an INDYCAR Championship. We're just not content being the little team that can't. That's what this is about for us.

**Q. Simon, you said Helio's Indy 500 win sort of legitimized in your eyes this team and made it a viable option for you. I'm wondering for all three of you not named Helio, just what you think of this team, and how you knew to believe in Jim and Mike and what they were building, and if you ever thought you'd be climbing fences?**

OLIVER JARVIS: So from my side, I think just listening to Mike convinced me that he spoke about last year. And he spoke about -- he was very honest that he felt they hadn't achieved what he wanted to.

But I saw it from a different point of view. That's that Penske came into the championship. Yost came into the championship. And none of them blew anyone away in



their first year. It's a tough championship, and you look at the progression of the teammate throughout that year. And it wasn't just, you know, they stepped up to DPi. It's a really competitive championship.

And to see that progression, I knew it's a team on the up. I knew they had huge amounts of capabilities. You saw the way they ran the Indy program and this. It was an easy decision for myself. And when you go to the shop and see the facilities they have, it just reinforces that.

So, yeah, definitely an easy decision. But it was based on the way Mike's open and honest, and the way his passion comes through. And I think as a driver you can really resonate with that. And as long as the guys have got the passion and the belief, then when you come together you can win stuff.

TOM BLOMQUIST: I think ultimately it came down to the passion and the commitment of the team to build this organization into a team that wants to win races. And I think having that -- words are one thing, but putting people and things in place to make those goals and dreams a reality, that's what you like to see as a driver.

You want to see -- we go out there and bust our backsides off every time we get in a car. Obviously we want an organization that's doing the same. Mike is super passionate about his racing, and the whole MSR team, we're here to -- it's still a long way to go. The team is growing, like, their first year, last year in SportsCar, and obviously it wasn't like they would have liked. But we started the season with a bang of a win and that's how we're going to continue. And we're only going to get better.

SIMON PAGENAUD: Personally, it was more -- it was definitely exactly what Oli said. The first phone call with Mike was truth and honest. And I loved the vision he had about his team.

One of the first things he said to me, he said maybe it's bad for me but I tell my team everything. Everybody on the floor knows everything that's going on. It's a very different environment.

And everything he described, honestly in 15 minutes I was sold. Jim didn't believe that -- actually Jim believed I was bluffing, but I wasn't.

And it's just relationship, quite frankly. Just like they just said, it was the vision. And for me at this time of my career, that vision just fit perfect.

**Q. Mike or Jim, you talked about the aim now being big races and championships. Where commercially for**

**your company, where in terms of the passion you show these programs, where is Le Mans in that list?**

JIM MEYER: Our sponsors are fantastic for us, by the way. AutoNation is deeply committed to auto racing. And they love this relationship here, by the way, through IMSA racing. And I can't tell you how many texts I've already gotten from them already.

Of course, SiriusXM is near and dear to my heart. I was CEO of the company for many years and love it. And then our newest sponsor, Arctic Wolf.

So they all have a passion for motor sports. And they use motor sports as part of how they promote. And that fuels I think our guys.

I could tell you on the AutoNation side, Simon and Helio, they do a lot for them. That's great for us.

MICHAEL SHANK: Le Mans for us is a little bit, for sure we want to go. And it's also up to Honda and Acura and HPD. So they're our corporate partner. When they're ready to go, we're going.

We did 2016 in the P2 car and did fairly okay. It was a good first experience. And we'll get there.

**Q. I don't think anybody's asked about the last lap and the chicane and how close you were to that. That should have been the first question, but curious what you saw, didn't see and looking back at it?**

HELIO CASTRONEVES: Right. I saw nothing, which was absolutely dirt. And then I felt a lot of things, like changing my underwear was one of them.

[LAUGHTER]

Code Brown was another one. I was like all over the place. And thank God that car was just, kept skidding from straight and did not stop right away.

So I did anticipate, because my sport, I did mention about it was a fight for a win. So I think they were going to go for it. I did not expect a big crash like that right in front of it.

So thank God -- it was a little bit of an anticipation/luck at the same time. And thank God I had a little bit of a gap between me and Ricky so that I could plan that.

But it was very scary. I don't think any moment of the race that kind of scary scenario until that time.

**Q. You're going to be inducted into the Motorsports**

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**Hall of Fame here in Daytona coming up. This certainly doesn't hurt. Could you just talk about that real quick?**

HELIO CASTRONEVES: Honor. I've been in the sport for so many years. And as I mentioned, you guys heard about what I love about the sport. And for me to be among such amazing people -- because it's not only drivers, it's people that are exactly like me. They love the sport.

So for me it's an honor. I can't wait to come back and especially now, Daytona becoming a great place. But yes, it's an honor being inducted in the hall of fame for sure.

**Q. Tom, I wanted to ask. You said you were cooked at the end of your last stint. But it really did set up everything that happened afterward. Can you walk me through that? You had some really good battles with Ricky there, but it was intense.**

TOM BLOMQVIST: It was super intense. And to be honest, throughout the race the race started pretty poorly for me. We didn't -- we got a few things wrong at the start. But I was chipping away at it. And I haven't got that much experience in this car. I've had a lot of experience in the P2. It's actually quite different.

And I just felt like the more laps I did, I was trying to figure out how to drive around the little problems we were encountering. And I just got more and more comfortable behind the wheel. And thankfully the speed was there in those crucial stints.

And, yeah, the car was working for me and I was able to manipulate it in the right way. And that just kind of made the difference. I managed to get a good run on Ricky. We seemed to be a little bit stronger than him at that point in the race. And I think ultimately it teed up the -- Helio just, he only had one job and it was to not to mess it up.

So, I mean, he did a great job. He's 60 years old and he's super fast.

HELIO CASTRONEVES: You're only 28. You'll get there.

TOM BLOMQVIST: When I'm 60, I just want to be like you, mate.

No, but it was relentless race from the word go. And the team did a fantastic job, I have to say. And there's a lot of little tools on the car to get it working for you. And having that dialogue back and forth with the engineers, with the HPD guys and stuff, to maximize our performance.

I think just working away at it throughout the race is what

put us in that position that I was able to extract some good performance from the car. So, huge thanks to everyone, really.

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