

Indianapolis Motor Speedway Media Conference

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Simon Pagenaud

Will Power

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: I asked Conor, where do you begin with a day like this? But where do you begin? It was a crazy day for everyone. Simon, we'll begin with you coming in second today. Crazy day.

SIMON PAGENAUD: You tell me. Oh my God, that was nuts. The weather, we should have a button just to spray some water on the track I think because the racing was phenomenal.

Strategy was also the name of the game today. Choosing the right time at the right time. Waiting for the rain. Not sure it was coming. It was coming. Then just amazing. Amazing succession of events.

Just really proud of my team. Unfortunately, we haven't been able to show results, but the potential has been there the whole time, so I'm really proud that today we were able to show all the hard work that has been done in the background by Mike Shank and everybody at Meyer Shank Racing.

I'm just very proud of my guys, my whole team. The pit stops were great. We keep pushing. We're going to keep pushing. Yeah, just super awesome.

I just wish I could repeat the story. I was hoping I could catch back up to Will with that win, but I just couldn't see. I don't know about you, Will, but I couldn't see anything. I couldn't drive. I was just surviving at the end.

I'm very thankful that INDYCAR let us race. That is something to me in these conditions it shows a different set of skills, and it's treacherous, but that's our job to go out there and give the best we can. And I'm thankful that they let us race in these conditions. Yeah, to me it was awesome racing today.

THE MODERATOR: You're referencing the win you had over Scott Dixon a couple of years ago in the wet, which was a dramatic win here at IMS on the road course.

Take me back to the last restart, which I think was on lap 71. Colton was out there. Did you have anything at that point for 26?

SIMON PAGENAUD: I couldn't see. I didn't even know where he was, quite frankly. I picked a few points on the fence to know where I had to brake, but it was very difficult to see without the wiper.

I mean, if we had a wiper, it would probably help, but that was the first real race with the Aeroscreen, so you got to give credit to INDYCAR. The safety is amazing, but in these conditions you would need a wiper like they do in the sports cars.

It's very similar to a wind screen you have on a sports car. There's a (inaudible) wiper. It's possible, and it would probably help in these conditions.

THE MODERATOR: For Will. Yeah, go ahead.

WILL POWER: At the end there, man, you could not see a thing. There was a spray in front of me. I don't know how it was behind the one car, but just the two car, I couldn't imagine being back in tenth, man.

You don't know if someone is braking early or you are kind of looking to the fence to get a reference, you kind of lift early. You don't want to lift too early because no one can see from behind.

Yeah, pretty crazy day. One to stay on your toes and know when to pick the right tire and definitely not overdo it. Yeah, real happy with third with a day like that. Just survival.

THE MODERATOR: Good points today. It's not about points, but it kind of is at the end of the day.

WILL POWER: Yeah, it is, and those sort of days you're thinking points when you see Palou out and you see Newgarden out and a couple of the main contenders that you are going to be fighting. You start thinking a little bit that way, yeah.

SIMON PAGENAUD: What happened to you? What did you do this winter? Who is this guy? I don't recognize you.



WILL POWER: I'm not having issues with the spark plugs and brakes, and what else went wrong? The car is not starting. They were pretty good results right there. (Laughing).

THE MODERATOR: We'll see what happens when you leave the team.

SIMON PAGENAUD: Could be. Maybe my presence was bad for you, I guess. (Laughing).

WILL POWER: Just changed my whole mentality.

SIMON PAGENAUD: I'm sorry. I wasted all these years for you.

WILL POWER: It's good because I'm kind of the lone guy. I'm the older guy, and you have the two young blokes, good mates. I'm just getting the work done. Actually, it's been a good thing from me. I put my head down and do the work.

SIMON PAGENAUD: Great job, man.

WILL POWER: Not screwing around with Josef in the office. It's working out good.

THE MODERATOR: I'm glad you guys are friends. (Laughing).

Q. Elaborate a little bit on the Aeroscreen. Conor said the thing that surprised him was the water seemed to kind of pool right in the middle of the vision, and he said he thought that at speed it would have blown away, but it didn't. What were some of the surprises you saw in the first rain test of the Aeroscreen?

WILL POWER: Actually, I didn't have much problem with the rain. The worst part for me was when it was half wet. We're on dries, and you have kind of that gritty just dirt on top of water. That was when I struggled to see a little bit, but in the full wet, I mean, the biggest problem for me was the spray from the cars.

There's really nothing can you do about that with open-wheel cars. It's just going to be a lot of spray. Honestly, it was on the edge of whether we should have been running right at the end there. It was starting to get a bit of aquaplane.

SIMON PAGENAUD: Oh, come on. He is getting old.

WILL POWER: Did you have any moments going around?

SIMON PAGENAUD: Yeah, I had moments.

WILL POWER: 12, man, going around that one. It was wide open. Just like suddenly --

SIMON PAGENAUD: That's why you lift. That's why you have a foot.

WILL POWER: I was lifting, and it still was doing a bit of that. I was like, oof, probably should go red here.

SIMON PAGENAUD: I had visibility issues for sure. Wiper would have helped. Obviously I'm not an engineer. I don't know what we should do.

It's certainly, like you said, the first real test for the Aeroscreen. It's only been positive. I'm not being negative at all. I'm being quite positive about it and what we could do forward to make it even better.

As we saw in Texas, it saved I think it was Callum. Was it Callum that had the issue with the wishbone? The wind screen saved him. That's good, and we want to go forward from here. So we'll find solutions and improve it and make sure that when we have rain races, hopefully we have more, then we don't have these issues.

Q. Simon, could you touch on what this does for the Meyer Shank Racing Team? You touched on it a minute ago, but y'all haven't really come out of the gate strong until now, but what does it do for the team headed into the big race?

SIMON PAGENAUD: It's all about process, and I believe in that. I'm not someone that jumps in and manage to get you to the front in the first race. It's not who I am, and I think Mike Shank and Jim Meyer knew that. It's a process we have through.

I had frustration up until now because we had so much performance, and it never really showed. Finally we are getting some results, which is very nice. A nice reward with all the hard work we've been putting in. It's been a lot of work to today.

Obviously, we have the big one coming up soon, and as you know, Helio and myself are really excited about that one. Obviously, it's a big goal for Helio. A big goal for myself as well. We just have to keep pushing. Certainly a nice reward to take.

It's funny. Sometimes second feels like a win. I would have loved to have won today, but I'm taking this home. Everybody was so excited. It's nice to feel such support from your race team and feel like, yeah, tonight we're probably going to celebrate like it was a win.

Q. For both of you guys real quick, did you get less wet in the cockpit because of the Aeroscreen, or do you feel as wet as you have ever been in a rain race?

WILL POWER: You have less for sure. At the end when it was really raining, you started to get some dribbles in, but not terrible. I really got nothing on my visor. A lot less wet, yeah.

Q. For both. We're coming off the Barber race where I think it was the record or one near record podium age. Now we have two veterans on the podium here. Was the rain part of that, or is it just the track, your prowess here? What was the key to you guys on the podium?

WILL POWER: I would say experience definitely counts in these races to not get caught out or put yourself in a bad situation, so yeah, it's no surprise to me to see Simon up there. It's cool to have both of us on the podium together again at this track.

Q. Simon.

SIMON PAGENAUD: Definitely experience pays off, but you see Colton out there still getting the job done. It's funny to be fighting with Will for most of the race. Always enjoyable. We've been together on this podium quite a bit, so it's quite fun.

I think it's just personally a track that smiles to me for some reason. I find myself always in a good spot in the race. Today was tricky. It was more like a sports car race, and I used everything I learned in sports car races.

Q. For Will. You mentioned points, and you thought it was a good points racing day. Have you always thought points behind the wheel, or is that something you shifted over the years more long-term than short-term?

WILL POWER: Yeah, honestly it's not that good to think about points, but sometimes you have to be smart about it if you're -- you know Palou is going to be the guy and, obviously, Newgarden as well. It's just one of those days where if you can finish in the top six, you're going to get a good chunk of points on those guys.

If I had the car to win and the chance to win without big risk, I would definitely have gone for it. If it had been a constant condition, it would have been a different story, but it was just too easy to get caught out by a patch of water. It's just a day to be smart and finish.

Q. A couple of things. I'm looking at a screen right

now. There's a dozen safety vehicles down in turn one trying to clear standing water so they can run the Lights race. Was it starting to puddle up out there, or was it okay for most of the race?

WILL POWER: It actually wasn't that bad. It wasn't terrible at the end. Only going around when you go around out of 10 to 12. That was the only place where you were actually starting to get aquaplane.

Q. Then I guess my other question: How difficult was it, especially when you saw guys out there on slicks and you knew that you weren't sure they were going to go. McLaughlin, O'Ward, these guys are out there on slicks. You're trying to go green again. They kept spinning under yellow. Were you shocked that they were even trying it?

WILL POWER: Palou, no. He can hold to a car.

SIMON PAGENAUD: That was impressive.

WILL POWER: Very impressive. At the end of the day, it blew my mind that Palou kept hanging out. I thought maybe they red-flagged this, and he gets that second position. That was smart. He was going to hang on as long as he could because if it goes green again and he survives turn one, two, and there's a crash, he is in the same position. Yeah, he is someone that can hang on to a car like no one else.

Q. That one restart where we did have the slicks on, that was impressive that he didn't just --

SIMON PAGENAUD: I can't believe he made the corner. That was impressive.

WILL POWER: I didn't see how he went through, but was he pretty good speed?

SIMON PAGENAUD: What impressed me the most is in the restart he was in the lead in 13, 14 there. He went through like nothing.

WILL POWER: Coming on the straightaway.

SIMON PAGENAUD: Crazy, man. I was happy to be on rain tires. (Laughing).

WILL POWER: Yeah, yeah, big time.

SIMON PAGENAUD: I didn't want to be him.

Q. Was this stressful or fun? How would you rate it?



SIMON PAGENAUD: Both. I think it goes together. I think it's even more rewarding when it's stressful and when you make yourself come out of a tricky situation. So definitely one of my most -- like right now I feel like that is one of my most rewarding finishes just because of how tricky it was to make all these decisions and discuss with the team the entire race.

Definitely the driver had to be a big part of the strategy today and the calls, and then you have to have your team behind you to support that. That was really cool for all these reasons.

Q. The pit stop on I think it was around lap 56 everyone in the commentary booth and up here we were all wondering, are you going to switch to reds or wets? Everyone went for slicks. How close was it in terms of your -- presumably it's the driver's call at that stage rather than the team's, right?

SIMON PAGENAUD: It wasn't raining, right?

WILL POWER: No.

SIMON PAGENAUD: It was only a few dribbles, and just before that the track looked wet, but we still had a lot of grip on the reds.

WILL POWER: Yeah.

SIMON PAGENAUD: The beginning of the race looked dry, but it was so slow on the rain tires, so then you are measuring that. Had it been raining more, we would have gone rain, but it wasn't raining at the time. It was exactly the same scenario as 2019. Certainly had we gone rain, that would have changed the game, but at the time I think there was nothing that could tell you to go rain.

WILL POWER: The rain tire they almost need an intermediate. It's too soft for -- a bit more than damp conditions just destroys the tire. They finally felt good at the end there.

SIMON PAGENAUD: Great in the rain.

WILL POWER: When it was really, really wet. We need something in between.

Q. Did you have very bad pit stop for the first time this year, Will, at one point when and you Rossi went in and you emerged behind way down the group? You got in in fifth and came out in kind of, like, tenth out of the group.

WILL POWER: No, I don't think so. No. I don't think we

had -- oh, yeah, we did have -- something happened on one of the stops. I do remember, yeah. Maybe we did have something. Yeah, I have to review. I don't know.

SIMON PAGENAUD: That's more like the Will I know. That was just the Will I know there.

WILL POWER: What do you mean? Oh, yeah.

SIMON PAGENAUD: Oh, yeah.

WILL POWER: We did actually have one. Yeah. (Laughing).

Q. Simon, I don't think enough focus is put on the fact that you got up to second from 20th. How did you do it? What were the key points to get you all the way up from that deep of starting position?

SIMON PAGENAUD: We had a good start. We jumped all the way to 13th right away. Then pit stop sequence, 11th. Then after that 9th. Then 7th. Then it started raining. Then 5th. Then McLaughlin and Palou had problems, so third. So on and so forth. We made a lot of passes on track for sure and had some very good exchange in the pit stops. That made a difference.

Q. The first couple of years of this course had kind of had a reputation of being tough to pass, but I think today and also your rain victory a couple of years ago, you don't have a problem passing here. What is it about this course that you are able to find passing areas?

SIMON PAGENAUD: I'm not the only one, but certainly having that long straightaway -- obviously, the previous corner is tricky. It's not easy flats, full throttle, so some people slide. Then you get a run. It's about out-braking the opponents over there.

Also, that curve that they put in turn five makes it harder, and if you are on cold tires, the person behind you can have a run, and that also created an opportunity for passing into turn seven.

And then tire wear. I think Firestone is bringing a tire that wears a little more than usual. Not what we're used to. It's putting a bit of a mix in the racing right now. You see some cars degrading more than others. Drivers being more aggressive than others too. Sometimes when you are patient, it pays off.

Q. My apologies if this was asked earlier. Back at the open test everyone was talking about the sealer this or sealer that. Was there any issue with the sealer on the

track with rain at all, or was everything okay?

WILL POWER: It was fine. No differences in grip in the wet.

SIMON PAGENAUD: I'm okay. I thought it was different. Yeah.

WILL POWER: It felt fine to me.

SIMON PAGENAUD: Okay.

WILL POWER: You mean on the front straight there? It seemed like it was --

SIMON PAGENAUD: I thought it was mostly slippery. It's a different car, so who knows?

WILL POWER: Yeah.

Q. I've got a question for Simon in French, if you don't mind. (Speaking French).

SIMON PAGENAUD: (Speaking French).

Q. (Speaking French).

WILL POWER: (Speaking French).