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DANICA PATRICK INTERVIEW
MAKERS: WOMEN WHO MAKE AMERICA
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Danica Patrick
American Race Car Driver
Interviewed by Nancy Steiner
Total Running Time: 1 hour, 18 minutes and 24 seconds

START TC: 00:00:00:00

Danica Patrick
American Race Car Driver

INTERVIEWER:

So, I want to start out just talking a little bit about your family and your childhood. Can you tell me about your upbringing, where you grew up, and what your family was like?

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DANICA PATRICK:

Okay, that's a lot of questions. We'll start with I am a Midwestern girl. So, I grew up in Northern Illinois, right on the border of Wisconsin in a little town called Roscoe. Roscoe, Illinois. We were a family of four. I have one sister. She's two years younger than me. My parents were great parents. I mean they were home a lot with us. My dad worked and my mom stayed home and took care of us, which I think was a really great thing. I'm sure it makes a difference to be able to spend that much time with your parents and with your mom when you're growing up, especially at a young age. So, my mom

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looked after us and took on a job as a babysitting, a babysitter. So, I remember being young and having 18 little kids in the house. I don't know how she dealt with that, but my dad worked a lot.

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DANICA PATRICK:

He was a glazier, so he did windows and installed commercial glazing. So, he worked a lot, like I said, and then he started his own business. I remember hearing old stories about my dad getting \$5 for lunch, and instead of eating lunch, he would just save it. Those are tough stories, but my dad is a really dedicated kind of guy. So, we started racing go-karts when I was 10 and my sister was 8. So, there was definitely a racing background with my dad. When he was young, he raced snowmobiles, midgets, motor cross, all kinds of different things. I remember before we started racing go-karts, going to the racetrack and watching, it was midget racing then, so it was a dirt clay oval.

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DANICA PATRICK:

My sister and I would make balls of clay with all the mud that flies off their tires as they go around the corner. So we had a great— We were very close. When we started racing, we became a very close family. That was part of the reason why we did it was because my dad worked all the time and my mom was taking care of us, but we didn't really know my dad. So, we actually were going to buy a pontoon boat and spend the weekends out on the lake or the river. I don't know if it just didn't—They just didn't call back. So, I guess they had money burning a hole in their pocket, so instead we bought go-karts and that's how it started.

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INTERVIEWER:

Did you identify with one parent as opposed to the other more with your dad or your mom?

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DANICA PATRICK:

I suppose I identify with my dad maybe a little bit more just because our personality traits, I think, are really similar, especially the big personality traits, the louder parts like having a temper and being really passionate and driven and those kinds of things, which are very much about what I do and important for my job and what I do. So, I guess I identify with him, but I like a lot of my mom's traits, because my mom was kind of the referee as she called it. She said she should have been wearing a black and white striped shirt every day, because she was just a referee. But she's a good, patient mom, patient person, and very caring, very nurturing.

INTERVIEWER:

So, there were two young girls in the house. Did they have any particular perspective on roles for girls versus roles for boys? Did you have any sense of that, the gender role ideas in your household? What did they expect for you?

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DANICA PATRICK:

Yeah, that was definitely something that we didn't have, was we didn't have the gender roles. My parents never let me or my sister think that we couldn't do something or like anything was off limits or other things were more encouraged. I mean we had Barbie dolls, sure, but then we also had four-wheelers. I remember racing our rider lawn mower around in fifth gear

all the way around the house over and over again, creating ruts. I mean, you know, so we had a lot of everything. There was—We definitely weren't encouraged as kids to be more feminine. Although my mom always said, "Be a lady," but I just think that's what she said when I would be really kind of not a lady and I'd say things that were... I'd swear or, you know, just be... I would put things in a man way I guess. I don't know. Always be a lady. Cross your legs, look like a lady, speak like a lady, be sweet. Sometimes I'm not always sweet.

INTERVIEWER:

Okay, so let's move forward then and you talked a little bit about the go-karts. Let's talk about your first experiences and what that was like for you, how it landed for you.

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DANICA PATRICK:

Oh yeah. I had a big first experience on my first time in a go-kart. My dad had finished putting them together and we were at his shop where he owns the window business or the glass business. So, he'd finally finished them and we were going to take them out for a spin, my sister and I. Not literally a spin, but we just needed some space to drive around. So, it was a big parking lot in the back and we put WD-40 cans and any kind of spray can you could find, any kind of can. We made a big circle with it. Then we just took them out and started driving around in circles. I'm not sure what I was thinking... Well, I was 10 years old, that's what I was doing. I wasn't thinking. I was 10. My brake pedal, there's a pin that holds the brake rod to the pedal so that it works.

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DANICA PATRICK:

The pin came out that connects them. So, I no longer had brakes. Instead of just turning and slowing down or spinning out, I freaked out and went straight, because I was 10 and I'd never done this before. I was heading straight for a trailer, which would've leveled me. I don't think I would be here. So, I swerved over and I went head on into a concrete building. I have bruises all over my legs, because the gas tank is right in between your legs underneath the steering column. The go-kart got twisted and it was kind of a traumatic first experience in a go-kart, but it didn't... I don't know. It didn't slow me down. Dad bought another go-kart and put it together and my mom then started racing. I think that might have been, actually, why she did start, because there was the third go-kart. So, my sister and I started and then my mom got going. We all raced at one point, so yeah, that was a lot.

INTERVIEWER:

So, you started then racing a lot and you started doing very well. You had early success in those races. Did you understand at 10 or 11 why you were better than those kids, why you were beating those kids?

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DANICA PATRICK:

I think that when you're young, you're doing things that are very instinctual and natural. I don't think that we know why they're happening or why we're good at throwing a football, or why we're good at driving a go-kart, or why we're really smart at math. I don't know. I just don't think that we really know that. It's just in us.

ON SCREEN TEXT:

Danica Patrick at Formula Ford Festival, 2000

DANICA PATRICK:

So, I guess it wasn't until I'm older and I'm a professional race car driver and my parents do interviews that I finally ended up hearing that my dad did see something in me when I was young. I guess, you can understand that they would. I mean, it went well and everything, but to hear them say those words that when I was young he saw something really special in me was something I didn't think about, something I didn't really know about. I mean I know I won a lot, but to have your dad say that he saw something really special in you. I don't know what that was. I don't know. I did well. I guess that's about as special as I thought of it. I thought it was just because we practiced a lot. My dad was smart with go-karts and with engines. I mean he'd been racing all of his life and the other kids weren't as good.

INTERVIEWER:

Was there a reaction from those other kids and their families that you were the one who was winning and their little boys were not winning?

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DANICA PATRICK:

You know, I do remember we went on vacation. It was our first big vacation and we went to Disney World. We were there for a week and we came back from the trip. As soon as we landed, we picked up the truck and trailer, which was parked special at the airport so we could hurry up and get to the go-kart

track for the races. We had just gotten there in time for qualifying. So, I went out and qualified and everybody else had old tires, because they didn't think I was going to be there. So, you know, we roll out and we have new tires. I broke every track record that day and my mom did too. I won everything that whole weekend. I think I was probably running three classes or something like that. I remember at the end of the weekend, one of my fellow competitors came over to me.

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DANICA PATRICK:

I'm not going to remember verbatim because it was forever ago. But it was just something like, "You're so good. I can't believe it. You're just such a good driver." I just remember that and I just remember thinking it was so weird for a competitor that you're racing against to come up to you and sort of have that much sunshine to tell you. So, you know, just something that I was good at and I guess that's why I'm here today.

INTERVIEWER:

Well, that was positive. Did you ever feel that boys were intimidated by your success or was that a theme?

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DANICA PATRICK:

I feel like to some degree, everyone gets a little bit intimidated by someone that wins a lot and is very successful. I'm sure across the board girl-guy or girl-girl, guy-guy, it's intimidating. But then to switch positions that much and be a girl winning in a male sport, I'm sure it was more of that. I couldn't ever say whether or not they felt weird, different, more intimidated by it. Well, I

don't have those answers. They didn't tell me those things. You'd have to ask them, but I'm sure to some degree. I mean, I'm sure to some degree they didn't want to get beat by a girl. I don't want to get beat by a girl. I don't want to get beat by a guy.

INTERVIEWER:

So you talked a little bit about that it brought your family closer together. Was that the big impact? I mean, what did it mean for you to have this passion and to have your family giving their time, their financial support? How did that feel for you as a younger girl?

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DANICA PATRICK:

We definitely dedicated everything, our time, my parents' money, their time to racing, but it was what we all loved to do. We all enjoyed it and it was just a part of our life. It wasn't— I didn't ever feel like—Financially, I'm sure there was a stretch, but I didn't ever feel like it was a stretch or uncomfortable or there was resistance from anyone. My dad loved it. Obviously, I loved it. I mean I was the one racing most of the time. My mom did it for a while, but she was supportive and my sister loved being there and she was so helpful. She's the glass half-full girl. So, it was just what we did and it was who we were. I'm sure that financially it was a lot, I know that. So, it helped that I started winning and we started getting things for free.

INTERVIEWER:

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Did you know what their expectation was? I mean, you said you heard him say in retrospect he saw something in you, but at the time, did you know what he had his eye on for you?

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DANICA PATRICK:

I truly don't think that we had any intentions outside of enjoying ourselves, racing hard and working hard and doing well and winning as much as possible. I really don't think that there was a— there was no—I mean sure, you have the big pipe dream idea of like be a race car driver, but it wasn't like that was the intention. That wasn't why we did it. That wasn't what drove us every single weekend. What drove us was the ability to win. That's all we wanted to do was just keep winning, everywhere we went. The one thing that my dad did do, that I learned later on as well, –

ON SCREEN TEXT:

Danica Patrick and Her Father
Charlotte Grand National, 1994

DANICA PATRICK:

–is that every time I started winning a lot where I was at, he would take me to the next level. So, we'd race locally, and then it was regionally, and then it was nationally and then we went to the other coast. So, he kept challenging me and trying to see how I stacked up at the next level. That was something I learned later on, but just because that's how you get better.

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DANICA PATRICK:

So, I mean, I remember when I was a kid, I wanted to go to college for engineering so that I could work on my race car, but that's really as far ahead as we thought, but I think that's part of why it works. I think you have a big pipe dream idea. You have a dream, and then beyond that, you just let things run their course. You enjoy it and you work hard and you just try and be successful and see where it takes you. But— but I think too many plans get in the way of the real plans that are going to happen.

ON SCREEN TEXT:

Danica Patrick and Her Father
Building A Go Kart, 1995

INTERVIEWER:

So there was a major decision that you made in high school. What was that?

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DANICA PATRICK:

So, we were at the Indianapolis 500. I was 14 years old and I was there with Lyn St. James. And we were just kind of— You know, I was just trying to learn and trying to meet people and expand. So, she took me to meet all kinds of different people. There was one family that she took me to meet, the Mecom family, a Texan family from oil money. And he was very— He loved racing, loved IndyCar. He took me up to meet them and there was this British guy up there sitting at the bar as I ordered my kiddie cocktail. I was interested in his accent and I asked a lot of questions. Obviously, I'm a go-kart driver and he knew a lot about racing and we're at the Indianapolis Motor Speedway. So, racing talks begin. I guess I just asked all the right questions, because two

years later when I was 16, they called me back and said, "Hey, we've been watching your career for the last couple of years. We would really like to get involved and see what we can do to help you and take your career to the next level."

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DANICA PATRICK:

And so, I didn't want to be... Actually, for that meeting, they called for it and it was... we were in the Chicago area where we grew up and they were in Indianapolis. So, it was literally two years later. It was raining out and it was an afternoon meeting. My dad and I were like, "Ah, should we go? Should we not go? It's raining. Let's not go." Then finally, which is sort of my nature and I'm sure I get this from my dad then, is that we always end up doing the right thing in the end. You just end up doing the right thing. There's a right way to do it and your gut tells you it. So, we went, "Let's just go, let's hurry up, let's get it done. It's a four-hour drive there and four-hour drive home, but let's do the right thing." So we went down for the meeting and that's when they offered me the opportunity to move to England and to race cars. I thought, "Well, I don't want to be a professional go-kart driver. So, let's get this ball rolling."

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DANICA PATRICK:

So a couple months later, I went over to England and drove some cars for the first time over there and I moved there when I was... I moved there— Well, I left halfway through my junior year, so right after Christmas. You had to be 16 to leave school. So, I left school and I got my GED. I lived in England for three years and it made all the difference.

INTERVIEWER:

Where did you get the confidence at that age to just leave home?

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DANICA PATRICK:

Well, I think that when you're 16 years old and there's an opportunity to leave high school and not have to go anymore, I think that's pretty enticing for a lot of people, probably. What was amazing was that my parents let me go and that was, because going over there and showing that commitment was what ended up making the difference when I came back to the States and what made a difference to getting a job with Bobby Rahal, who put me in my first IndyCar. My parents said, "Well, it's tough," and I know that they, especially my mom, cried a lot, but they said, "We couldn't imagine you not having the opportunity." So, that was their reasoning and I appreciated it and it was a lot of fun. Then when the novelty wore off, it was pretty darn lonely over there and it was... I just still don't like England. I mean it's been a long time and I still can't get over those scars, but it builds character.

INTERVIEWER:

Well, let's talk about some of that. How was it when you got there? How were you treated by other people and some of the other people in the program?

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DANICA PATRICK:

Well, when I lived in England, it was great at first. I mean I met a lot of people. Being young and not seasoned, you know, very open and very conversational. I'm an open book because there's no reason not to be. But when I—In the

end, when I came back, I was much more cold and much more reserved. I learned that you can't just open up to anyone and everyone right away, that you have to learn who to trust and who you can't trust. The best way to do that is time and to see how they play out. So, I changed a lot while I was over there, but I think it served me well. I learned a lot about life over there. I learned very little about racing, very little about cars, especially about cars. I didn't learn about sway bars or springs or shocks or any of those things.

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DANICA PATRICK:

It wasn't until I came back to the States that I did, but that goes to explain another thing that was really bad about it, I drove on a...on the race teams that I drove for they didn't change the car, they just told me I needed to drive different. Especially in the end, I was on a big team of five cars. Unless you were the fastest driver, they weren't going to change the car for you. So, if they don't ever change the car for you, how can you be the fastest driver? So it was crap, but I learned a lot about life and that was probably more important and something more valuable that takes more time and more experience than learning about a sway bar.

INTERVIEWER:

You have a story in your book about testing faster than the best driver and how the team owner responded. Can you tell me that story and what the team owner said?

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DANICA PATRICK:

It was my last year that I was there, just before my last year that I was in England, so it must have been the winter of 2000, I guess. We were testing at... I think it was Donington race track. We were out there and I was running really well. I was really fast and I remember getting out of the car. I was sitting off to the side and hearing that one of the drivers asked the owner, "Who is the quickest?" He said, "The girl is the quickest. What are you doing? Get out there and get going. What are you doing?" Like I wasn't allowed or able or should be the quickest. Gosh, now, I haven't thought of that story for a while. It's one thing to experience the story and it just was what it was. The story is just there and I'm repeating the story, but it's another thing to sit here and think about that story.

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DANICA PATRICK:

That was—That's really bad, you know. It's no wonder why I didn't enjoy myself over there because nobody wanted me to succeed. If people don't want you to succeed, how do you have any hope? I mean it's hard enough when everybody around you is working really hard and you're all there for the same reason, but when people don't want you to be successful... I can understand why it makes me bitter.

INTERVIEWER:

Well, you described some of this in your book, there was a lot of sexism and chauvinism because you're a girl. There's no other reason why they wouldn't want you to have succeeded. Did it ever make you feel badly about being a girl and feel that you had to suppress the most essential part of yourself?

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DANICA PATRICK:

I would say that when other people would sort of judge, make fun of me, whatever, because I was a girl, I felt bad for them more than anything. It didn't make me feel like less of a girl. I thought, "Why are these people so terrible?" I can't change being a girl. So, I didn't even think of that. It didn't ever make me feel bad. It just made me feel like I was around the wrong people.

INTERVIEWER:

Were there any other specific examples other than just your general feeling that they didn't want you to succeed or yelling at the other drivers because the girl is going fast or were there any other that come to mind?

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DANICA PATRICK:

I just remember going to the racetracks and you know when you hear people whispering, giggling, looking at you a little bit and you just know they're talking about you and you know they're making fun of you and making jokes. That happened all the time. The longer I was there, the more that happened. I mean, the only excuse I'll give them is that we were at a weird age. I mean, we're at an age where we were 16 to 20 years old, where guys are developing and they're trying to figure it all out and they're experiencing all of what a boy is. And, you know, I was a girl. I just didn't fit into that. They were probably experiencing their male testosterone coming on, or as I said a lot, carrying their ego in their briefcase and not being able to digest being competitive with a girl and getting beat by a girl at times.

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DANICA PATRICK:

So, you know, not only did I not fit in there, but then away from the track too, I didn't fit into their fun either, because like I said, they were experiencing all that boy was at 18 years old and I didn't have any other friends. There's nobody else that I met so I got left out of that as well, and it became... It's just lonely and sad.

INTERVIEWER:

You had a turning point in 2000. Can you describe that experience at the Formula Ford Festival?

ON SCREEN TEXT:

Danica Patrick at Formula Ford Festival, 2000

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DANICA PATRICK:

So, the Formula Ford festival in 2000, I finished second. So, it was finally a good day for me in England. It was actually where I learned that when I'm happiest is when I perform the best, and my mom was over visiting with me. It was, you know, a weeklong—There was a European Championship Race and there was the Formula Ford Festival. So, there was lots of racing going on and I just remember having a lot of fun. We would just get up and go to breakfast together and go to the track. We'd go to lunch together and then we'd go out to dinner with friends. For some odd reason, people were being nice to me and, you know, I was just happy and laughing a lot. That was where I learned that when I'm having fun and enjoying myself is when I perform my best. That was a great weekend. Everything from the European

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Championship Race to the Formula Ford Festival, I was not out of the top five all weekend. So, it was a very valuable lesson. So, not only was it a good learning experience for me to draw conclusions from, you know, context of the weekend, but it was successful as well.

INTERVIEWER:

So what do you think were the positives? The things that you learned from being in England. Not necessarily what you expected to learn there.

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DANICA PATRICK:

When I went to England, I thought I would become a better race car driver, which I guess I might have, but what I really learned was I learned about life. I learned about opening up or not opening up, who to trust, who not to. I learned about what it took for me to perform in the race car, and that meant being happy, which is what allowed me to be comfortable with coming back to the states and racing because I enjoyed being home. I tattooed an American flag on me when I came home because I liked being home that much and it made me happy, which is where I belong. I said when I was in England, "If I don't make it to Formula One, I feel like I'll fail." I will have felt like I failed, but that wasn't the case because I was happiest at home.

INTERVIEWER:

So now can you talk about... you had a lot of support in Bob Rahal? Can you talk about how that partnership started?

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DANICA PATRICK:

I came back from England in 2001, but during the time that I was in England, I met Bobby Rahal, who was a very accomplished IndyCar driver from the States, and he was over there running a Formula One team. So, anyway, we would go out to American lunches at TGI Fridays together and we became friends a little bit. So, when I came back to the States, he came back not long after me, to be honest. Yeah, not very far after. So, he was running his IndyCar team then. I was trying to find a job as a young driver. So, I was going to these IndyCar races, because I was trying to get a job in Formula Atlantic or Indy Lights or something like that to make my way to the top level of motor sports and open wheel racing in America. So, Bobby had a hospitality tent and I spent some time in there because there really wasn't a ton to do at the racetrack other than hang around and be seen. So, that was where the friendship and relationship developed.

INTERVIEWER:

Then what happened in 2004 that turned the tide of your career?

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DANICA PATRICK:

Well Bobby...Actually, there's probably even more. The most significant thing that happened to me was, I suppose it was 2002, I think. IndyCar was racing at Milwaukee and I didn't have a job on any level, but I had been told by someone that if Bobby would sign a letter of intent that said that there was going to be a Formula Atlantic team and I would be the driver, that there would be a full-time sponsor for me, which is all you're waiting for. You're just waiting for someone to pay that bill so you can go racing. How would I say this to Bobby? I didn't know. The guy on the phone was like, "Well, why don't

you just test the water? Why don't you just see where he really stands?" I'm like, "Fine, that's what I'm going to do." So, it was Milwaukee and I didn't want to go to the track. I had been going for so long and I was just getting frustrated. People were giving me outrageous numbers, what it was going to cost for me to drive their race car, insulting numbers.

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DANICA PATRICK:

So, in the end, like I explained earlier, we did the right thing and we went to the track. Dad was like, "Well, we'll just go for one hour." So we went for one hour. And we only were there for I would say 45 minutes, because we went into the Rahal hospitality tent because where else am I going to go at the racetrack? Bobby walks in. So, I pull up my pants and I walk over there and I say, "Bobby, I'm told that we can have a full time sponsor if you'll sign a letter of intent that says that I'm going to drive Formula Atlantic for you." So he stood there and I remember he just looked off and he went, "Okay." Like that easy. Okay. Two weeks later, flew out to Laguna Seca, signed a letter of intent, had a little press conference. I never heard from that guy again that told me we'd have a sponsor. And I still don't even know... Like that sponsor wasn't real, I'm sure of it. This guy said... I've seen him since and I give him credit for putting me on the spot to do it.

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DANICA PATRICK:

He was the one that gave me that little oomph of, "Yeah, you're right. I'm sick of walking around. Let's see where he stands." So, then I started racing Formula Atlantic that next year and then the year after, so 2003, 2004. In 2004 at Indianapolis...it was Thursday, which I think is media day at Indy.

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There was a press conference up in the media center and it was with the IndyCar drivers. Bobby just said that, "And Danica will be racing next year at the Indy 500." I was like, "Whoa, where did this come out of left field? You hadn't even told me that." So there you go. So, I put Bobby on the spot. Then he said he was going to run me in the Indy 500 without talking to me, which I would've said, "Well, of course, that's great." Those were two big moments.

INTERVIEWER:

So what was that like the first time you raced in the Indy 500? What were your thoughts and feelings leading up to the race, and what did it mean to you to finally participate in that race?

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DANICA PATRICK:

Well, I've been watching the Indy 500 for a really long time. And, you know, I think that when I was—The couple of years before I raced in it, I almost got angry being there and not being in the race. I wanted to be there and I wanted be the one kicking butt and I wanted to be the one out front. So, then I got my chance and 2005... It's why I'm where I am today. It's why I am who I am. It is what put me on the map. It was just one of those times. Interviews, left, right, and center.

ON SCREEN TEXT:

Danica Patrick and Bobby Rahal
Indianapolis 500, 2005

DANICA PATRICK:

It was overwhelming to be honest. It was so much. We started off the month and I was really fast, fastest in rookie orientation. Ran well all month, was fastest on the day leading up to the race. I almost qualified on the pole. I actually think that was probably good. When I say I almost qualified on the pole, I was definitely the fastest car. I was the fastest car in the warmup in the morning. The car felt perfect and it was a really cold day though.

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DANICA PATRICK:

So, I went out there and I said, "No matter what, I am not lifting off the throttle, not for a second," because I don't want to miss the pole and think, "Well, I guess I just should have been a little bit more brave." So I went to turn one on the first lap and I got sideways. I had to get out of it or else I'd hit the wall. So, I saved it, kept going, and never lifted then. Even though I was a few miles an hour slower the first lap, because I was sideways and turned one at 25 or 30 miles an hour, I still qualified fourth. But I think that saving it made more of a difference in perception of me than just going out and putting my foot down and putting it on pole, because people respected what I did, instead of just thinking, "Well, she had a fast car. She just went out there and put her foot down, and that was it." So I actually think that not qualifying on pole was really good. Then, you know, the race was the race, which was another level of exciting.

INTERVIEWER:

I mean, I think I read you had a family tradition growing up. What was that?

00:31:27:00

DANICA PATRICK:

Yeah. So, when I was growing up, you know, my dad loved racing and we were into racing. So, the Indy 500 is Memorial Day weekend every year. I can just remember every year, we would be on the couch and there would be a table full of chips and dip. It'd be like Tostitos and salsa and some cheese dip and we'd sit down on the couch. I remember watching the start of the race and then I remember waking up for the end of the race. I would get to take a nice long nap in the middle and it was perfect timing because I saw the beginning and the end, right? But that was what we did every year. I just remember it and I remember watching that race all the time. I think that—People ask me a lot of times why I want to do Indy Car and not NASCAR or not something else. I said, "I think that when you're young, you want to do the things that you grew up seeing and that your family enjoyed and that your parents liked." I grew up in an IndyCar family. That's just what we watch. Open wheel racing was our family tradition.

INTERVIEWER:

So now going to your win, the Indy Japan 200, what was your mindset at the start of that race? What was your mindset at the start of the race and then I want to know what were you thinking when you were racing through the checkered flag?

00:32:49:00

DANICA PATRICK:

I was actually told by a driver named Brian Herda that when you finally win, this was before I had won, you're going to be just doing what you normally do every single weekend. It's just going to happen. And I thought, Wow, that's kind of a good thought because that means I'm doing the right thing. Then on

the other hand, I wish it would really happen soon. So, I think it must have been the next year then. We were racing in Japan, which is a place that I love going. I love the culture. I love everything about it. So, again, going back to the good mood performance thing, I'm always in a good mood in Japan. The people are just so polite and it's just great. I just love it there. I've always done well there. So, you know, the race started and it was actually delayed by a day, because there was some water leaking on the track. So, we went and ran it the next morning when it was finally dried out. It was kind of a cold, cloudy day.

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DANICA PATRICK:

We started the race around 11:00 AM and it was just another ordinary day, and ran the race. I was running strong. I wasn't leading the race the whole time, but I was running fine. Like I said, I always do well in Japan and then there was a yellow flag. A few of us decided to stop. Well, let's face it, I didn't decide to stop. My race strategist told me to stop, because there was about 50 laps left in the race and you can make it on fuel. So, we took a gamble and we pitted for fuel, along with a couple other drivers. So, there was a few of us on that strategy. As the race played out, I didn't get a very good restart with 50 laps to go. So, it actually put me into the fuel saving mode immediately, which I think made a big difference. Because if you get a good start, what if there's another yellow that comes out? Then everyone can make it on fuel.

00:34:46:00

DANICA PATRICK:

So, you know, it put me in a fuel saving mode right away. I ended up winning the race by over five seconds. So, I did a good job with the strategy. The car

was good and I didn't quite know what was going on in the race. I knew that it could go really well, but I didn't know that it was like a win really well or if it was top three really well. I'd been told that Hélio was on the same strategy as I was, Hélio Castroneves. So, when I saw him towards the very end of the race, I put my foot down and I sort of forgot about fuel saving for a minute, because I thought if the yellow comes out and I'm just wussing out behind him, saving my fuel and we finished under yellow and I didn't win the race, that would really suck. So, I got going and I got by him a little quicker. And... I came across for the white flag and they said, "All right. Checker flag is yours, just bring it around." I was like, "Don't screw up. Don't screw up." I mean there's no pressure, nobody was around me, but you're just hoping that nothing goes wrong on that last lap. It was just such a relief. I really wish that— I wish that in my seven years of racing IndyCar full time, I'd won more races for sure. I think that I could have and I wish I would've, but I did win.

INTERVIEWER:

What was it like stepping up on that podium?

00:36:13:00

DANICA PATRICK:

Podium was fun because my trophy was massive. My trophy was like my height and the second place trophy, for Hélio, was this tiny little thing. So, the podium was actually very funny and I was really relieved. I've stood on the podiums before, not as the winner, but it's always a good feeling. It's always a rewarding feeling to know that you've done really well that day. But more than anything, I think I just had fun up there. I laughed a bit and it was just such a relief. That's all I can say.

KUNHARDT **FILM** FOUNDATION

INTERVIEWER:

What do you think was the deeper meaning of that for women in the sport?

00:36:52:00

DANICA PATRICK:

I think that the public sees a win and a win is very understandable for people to know. You know, I've had better days in the race car for sure than I did that day in Japan when I won. But I won that day. I think that just really sinks in with people and it lets them recognize that I am a really good driver even... despite being a girl, as I think someone said.

ON SCREEN TEXT:

Danica Patrick

Indy Japan 500, 2008

INTERVIEWER:

There's a fearlessness that it takes to win and excel in your sport. Where do you think that that comes from? Do you ever have any fear?

00:37:28:00

DANICA PATRICK:

I think that there's a fear that you just understand is there. It's possible that you can get hurt, but once you get in the car, it better not be what you're thinking about, because you need to do what it takes to get to the front and win the race. So, fear can't be something that you're really thinking about, but I think it's important to understand that it's a risk. You know, you need to understand that.

INTERVIEWER:

What do you think are the critical skills you have specifically as a race driver?
What is it about your particular skill set that you think really makes you stand out or really is advantageous for you as a driver?

00:38:04:00

DANICA PATRICK:

I think, for myself as a driver, the things that are good about me that make me perform well is a little bit of mind over matter at times. So, putting yourself in the mood and feeling positive, feeling optimistic, feeling confident so I can get in the mood. I can flip a switch pretty easy between meet and greets and going and getting down to business to get in the car. So, that's a positive thing. I definitely don't get affected by what people say about me. I really don't care. I think everybody wants to be liked, of course, but it just doesn't bother me. Drama just doesn't bother me and what people say don't bother me. It almost makes me want to prove them wrong more. I'm sure myself and many people think like that, but I want to prove them wrong if they don't think I can do it. I also think that as a driver, I'm patient and smart.

00:39:06:00

DANICA PATRICK:

I'm smart behind the wheel. My passes are calculated. The way that I try and manipulate the other drivers around me, trying to make them overdrive their car or trying to make them make mistakes, things like that. I take the car to its limit but not over it. I finish races and I get the most out of my equipment without being destructive. So, you know, that keeps your team going and positive on you, because they're not working their butt off. I'm also open to

opinions and tips and what I can do better. I think it's almost easier, a lot of times, to blame myself and change myself than it is to go, "I'm doing everything I can, but my car's just not fast enough." I'd almost rather work on me because I know I can do that. I think all those things really help me learn and become a better driver.

INTERVIEWER:

What about just being a woman? Do you think there are any advantages to being a woman in a mostly male sport?

00:40:13:00

DANICA PATRICK:

I know it's been helpful being a female in a male dominated world. It has hurt me as well at times for sure, but the help has been more, I think, especially on the sponsor side of things and on those opportunities, because in my line of business, if you don't have a sponsor that's going to support you, you can't go show people what you can do. So, that's been a real positive and has really made all the difference. It took a while to get there for sure, but having backing is very important.

ON SCREEN TEXT:

Danica Patrick
Indianapolis 500, 2007

INTERVIEWER:

I want to just take off of what you just said. So, how do you deal with that sort of white hot media focus on you now? Sometimes to the exclusion of other drivers, is there a tension with that and how do you deal with that?

00:41:06:00

DANICA PATRICK:

I always try and be respectful about, you know, what I do or how much media I do, what I say and who I talk about or don't talk about. But at the end of the day, I can't control what a newspaper wants to print and who they want to write about, or what the TV network wants to show, or who they want their interviews with. That's propelled by the fans and by the public and what they want to see. It's one of those snowball things. Once they start showing you a lot, that's what people want to see because they're interested in the storyline. I explain it, like for myself, I feel lucky, maybe I'm at the point where people tune in just to see how I'm doing. I know I'm speaking from experience. So, if you're watching to see Tiger Woods or Kobe or any player in sports, Tom Brady, whoever, you want to just see how they did. I don't even care.

00:42:10:00

DANICA PATRICK:

Personally, I don't care how they're doing. I'm just curious because these are big athletes and I don't know. Maybe I'm one of those people then that people just tune in just to see how it's going and that's what puts me on TV a lot. But I'm very fortunate, because like I said, it's one of those snowball things. So, in turn then the sponsors are... You know, you're more valuable to a sponsor and you're more valuable to endorsements and opportunities, to cross marketing, and lots of exposure across the board.

KUNHARDT **FILM** FOUNDATION

ON SCREEN TEXT:

Danica Patrick

Indianapolis 500, 2008

INTERVIEWER:

Dan Wheldon's tragedy reverberated across the sport of racing. Can you talk about what you think the impact of that has been or will be on racing in the broad sense and what impact it's had on you personally in terms of your path forward?

00:42:58:00

DANICA PATRICK:

Well, as we talked about earlier, you know that the risk is out there where you can get really hurt or die. The thing is, though, is that you need to know that, like I said earlier. You need to just know that. You need to admit that and understand that, because it doesn't help the feeling when something really bad happens and when Dan died. It doesn't make you feel any better. You can remind yourself then that I know this was a risk. I know that. It could have been me. So, what I hope is that it... Since it's terrible and nobody wants it to happen, but hopefully everyone can make the most of it by making the sport safer. You know, loving your family a little bit more, taking the time, respecting each other. Those are the things that I hope come from it, because otherwise, it just happened. But if it happens, at least we can turn it into a positive and be safer and better for it, or else he just died.

INTERVIEWER:

Why aren't there more women race car drivers? Is it easier for women to be race car drivers now?

00:44:18:00

DANICA PATRICK:

I think it would be really interesting to...if there was some kind of medical study or something done on, "What is the difference between a girl and a guy, trait wise, hormone wise, whatever, that makes someone be a better or worse race car driver?" I'd be really curious. What do I have? I don't know. I mean I feel feminine. Surely, I'm not flowing with testosterone like crazy or I'd be really tall and big and super muscular, but I'm not. So, what is it? I'm curious. I don't know. Perhaps then it just comes down to mindset. Perhaps it just comes down to my parents not letting me feel like I was any different or I should give myself different standards because I'm a girl. They definitely never let me settle on any level with just being the fastest girl. That was not happening. I had to be the fastest driver by a second, and even at a second, we still kept working. So, yeah, I don't know.

INTERVIEWER:

Are you cognizant of the fact that your success, your exposure, you know, all of your fans, that that reverberates down across younger generations perhaps of girls going, "I can be Danica."

00:45:35:00

DANICA PATRICK:

Well, part of the reason why there might not be more women in racing is because we grow up, like I said, doing what our parents did and thinking like that. So, if you're not put in the position to switch gears and do something out

of the ordinary, then you just don't do it. So, like I always say, if you get 100 guys that come through and one of them's good, which is a good number anyway, but it takes a really long time to have 100 girl drivers come through to find a good one. So, that's why they're just so much more few and far between, because less of them do it. It just averages. So, maybe by being who I am and having done what I've done so far, that it'll change the mindset within families. And parents will point that out to their kids and let them know that they can do whatever they want and see here's proof of it.

00:46:32:00

DANICA PATRICK:

And it will make them more open minded and maybe let their kids try more things. There's one thing for sure. When I was a kid, I did everything. I was volleyball, basketball, cheerleading, band, choir, track, tee-ball. You name it, I did it. So, you have to let your kids try a bunch of things, I think, let them experiment, because you never know what you're going to be good at. If I would've never tried go-kart racing, I would have no idea that I was a good race car driver. So, it's such a weird thing to try anyway. It's not like baseball. You play that in school. You don't go go-kart racing in school. You don't try that. So, you know, let them try what they want to try and, you know... let them be who they're destined to be and what they're good at.

INTERVIEWER:

What about the people that came before you? You're obviously a trailblazer because you had a lot of firsts in your career, but what about the women before you that were racers? Are there any of them that inspired you and what was it like for them when they were trying to race in the '70s?

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DANICA PATRICK:

Well, I know f— I don't— I mean I was born in '82, so I don't really... The first women that came along, I mean I know some of the stories, of course, but I do know this, that they were not welcomed. Women weren't really welcomed in racing very early on. Gosh, I think that when I raced at Indian in '05, I remember hearing that it was only like 30 years earlier that women were allowed in the pits or something like that. So, times changed because when I got there in 2005, they were cheering for me. And every time I came in from the track, they were yelling and cheering. There was 20 photographers in front of me. It was a welcoming feeling. So, you know, it was easier for me and it was more welcomed and more opportunities were probably there. It doesn't mean that you, you know, it's going to work out. You still have to do the job and you still have to perform, but I was definitely more welcomed.

INTERVIEWER:

What advice would you give to a young girl with talent and passion to be a driver who wanted to follow in your footsteps?

00:48:45:00

DANICA PATRICK:

I would tell them to not want to be like me. To want to be better than me and want what's in your heart. I never wanted to be like anyone else. I didn't want to be the next so and so, girl or guy. I guess maybe I just thought I was a little bit different and I just wanted to be the best me. I didn't want to be the next anyone else. So, what are you? What are you made of? What do you want to do? Don't try and be like someone else because you never can be. You know?

You have your own path and that's what makes you unique and that's what makes you interesting.

INTERVIEWER:

What prompted the decision to move to NASCAR?

00:49:27:00

DANICA PATRICK:

Well, I think as a race car driver, you know, you're interested in racing and NASCAR is just another form of racing. I just wanted to try something else. I wanted to see if I would be good at racing stock cars, if I would even enjoy driving the car, because I didn't know. I had never really driven one before. So, when I signed my last contract to do a part-time nationwide schedule, I signed the contract without having ever really driven the car. I drove a nationwide car, which was called Bush back then, a Bush car, 10 years earlier at a little short track a very long time ago. But that's all I've ever done in a stock car. So, I very blindly signed on to race stock cars. So, you know, I think that's why I took such a small step at first instead of making a total shift was because I didn't know and I was doing well in IndyCar, and I finished fifth in the championship and things were going well. So, I didn't want to do something silly that I would regret.

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DANICA PATRICK:

So, I started slow and it didn't take long for me to really love stock cars. It reminds me of being a go-kart driver again. It reminds me of... Like it's the same language, the same terminology. It's the same people. It's the same atmosphere and it's the same kind of racing. And back in go-karts, I got to use

my bumpers, and in stock cars, I get to use my bumpers. In IndyCars, you can't. The people are kind of Midwestern, Southern people and everybody's American, where IndyCar is very European feeling, lots of English and foreign engineers and people like that. So, it has a very European formula and feel to it and I guess I didn't realize that until I was really in stock cars. So, it just kind of feels like home to me. I tell this story a lot and I hope Dario doesn't mind, but Dario Franchitti drove stock cars for a little while. When he first got in the car and pulled out of the pits, he thought to himself and he tells me the story, "What was I doing?" He said, "What am I doing, doing this?"

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DANICA PATRICK:

The funny thing is when I got in the stock car and pulled out of the pits, I thought, "This is awesome." I just had so much fun. It makes me smile. I think about driving the car, I think about racing it, and I think about going wheel to wheel and bumping my way through. It just makes me smile. It makes me happy. It makes me feel like I'm a kid again and it makes me feel like I'm home. So, I just truly enjoy racing those cars and I love the people and it makes me happy. When I'm happiest is when I perform my best.

INTERVIEWER:

So that's what it does for you obviously a lot and it's been written about very positively, but what do you think you uniquely can bring to NASCAR that will be good for NASCAR?

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DANICA PATRICK:

KUNHARDT **FILM** FOUNDATION

I don't really think to myself, "What can I bring to NASCAR or what can I bring to someone that's going to help them?" because that, I think, puts pressure on the situation and puts me in a position where I have to live up to those things that I think I can do. So, I don't have them. I'm just going to go and race and perform the best I can and always make sure that my schedule and what I'm doing allows me the time and ability to do what I need to do to be successful. That's it, because I'm just being me. I don't have a plan. I don't have a mission. I just want to be a great driver and I want to get to Victory Lane. That's what guides me and just do the best I can. I don't know how long it'll take, but I'm going to get there.

INTERVIEWER:

Did you always think you would get married?

00:53:11:00

DANICA PATRICK:

I did. I've always wanted to get married. I don't know why. I don't really like kids so much. That's not a super popular answer, but I've never really thought, "I want to be a mom." But I did always know that I wanted to get married. And I did, and I'd got married pretty young.

INTERVIEWER:

You did. How did you meet him? What was it that clicked?

00:53:33:00

DANICA PATRICK:

My husband Paul, I met him in Arizona, which is where we live now. He's a physical therapist. So, story actually goes back to, I think it was 2002. It was

the end of 2002, I think. I had... I don't know. I think I was up early doing a yoga TV show at 5:00 AM. Of course, I was better than them on the TV. Of course, I was. So, I think I pulled something in my hip or whatever and I went to the gym later on that day, and I got on the treadmill and I couldn't run. I couldn't walk. I took two steps and it was like agonizing pain. So, this is petrifying to me to think that I couldn't work out. So, I was limping around for a while. And then finally after limping around and it was getting worse and worse and worse, my boss Bobby Rahal said, "All right." And we had just started working together because we were rolling into our first full season. So, we were going out to Arizona to go testing to prepare for it.

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DANICA PATRICK:

So, he said, "All right. I got a guy you need to go see so you could stop limping around. His name is Paul. Duggie is his nickname." He told me to call him Magic Hands, which is really weird. But anyway, so he set me up with him-

ON SCREEN TEXT:

Danica Patrick and Paul Hospenthal
Indianapolis 500, 2007

DANICA PATRICK:

- and I go to Paul's office. I'm in the treatment room and he was very nice and saw me. After work was done that day, he stayed longer for me and he says that he was told that my name was Danny. So, he came into the treatment room and I'm sitting there. He was just about to ask me where my boyfriend was, which is a really good thing he didn't because he would've had a total

smart ass remark, come back, from that one and he didn't. So, anyway, he started treatment anyway. So, I felt better immediately after I left and he said, "Well, it'd be good if you came back again in a couple of days if you're still here for a second treatment."

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DANICA PATRICK:

So it's like 8:00 at night and I don't like to eat late. I was going to have to eat by myself if I did. My hotel was an hour away. So, I was like, "If you haven't had dinner or anything, I don't know if you have to go home or not, but if you haven't, I'll go get something to eat with you. I got a long drive anyway and I'd be by myself." So, we went for sushi and we still go to that restaurant. It's a great restaurant. So, we just got to know each other and he just had this... he was very confident. We had this fun sort of joking banter with each other, thought absolutely nothing of it. I mean this guy is in Arizona and he's older and he has a business. I'm just a young little girl driver and I truly just did not want to go to dinner by myself and have to drive an hour to go get to it. So, of course, when I went back for a second treatment and we had planned to go get something to eat afterwards, which is kind of weird, I brought my PR guy and I thought nothing of it because I think nothing of him. I just thought we're up here. There's lots of nice restaurants up here in Scottsdale.

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DANICA PATRICK:

So, we went out to dinner and he still thinks that's funny that I brought back up. He wasn't back up. He was just around and I thought nothing of the relationship. There wasn't a relationship. He's just treating my injury. And then about a year and a half later, I was back out in Arizona testing because

it's the only place that's warm enough in the winter. And I kind of didn't feel like hanging out with my crew or my team and they were a bit older. Well, anyway, so I called him up, "Hey, I'm back in Arizona." I talked to him a few times in that span of time. It would be the person that we've all done it. You're sitting at the airport, your flight's delayed, and you're like flipping through your phone. Who can I call? Because I'm really bored and then I'd call him. That was pretty much how it went. So, I talked to him maybe four or five times in between that year and a half. So, I know this is a long story because it was a long beginning. We had a long beginning, which I think was great, because we became friends first, instead of putting any weird expectations on it.

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DANICA PATRICK:

The expectation was quite the opposite. So, I was out in Arizona. After I'd called him to go out to dinner, I got a call that I was going to have to come back on Monday for a photoshoot for my sponsor. My test ended I think on a Friday. So, I was going to have to fly back Saturday, stay at home Saturday night, which I was living in Columbus, Ohio at the time. It was snowing and terrible out because it was like winter time. And then I'd have to fly back on Sunday and you can't get anywhere from Columbus, Ohio. You have to connect everywhere you go, which is just a pain in the butt. So, he offered for me to stay in his guest house, which is true. I seriously stayed in his guest house. I did. I know people think that I probably didn't but I did. I literally laid by the pool. He was working spring training, so it was probably March time then. So, he was doing spring training for baseball out in Arizona and I laid by the pool, and then we just never stopped talking after that.

INTERVIEWER:

So how has it been being married and balancing a very demanding career with a marriage? Has that been a challenge or has it been easier? Has it made it easier for you?

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DANICA PATRICK:

I think being married and having the sort of busy schedules and demands and challenges and questions and decisions all along the way has been hard, but it's also been really— I've been very fortunate that I've had someone to lean on. Especially because he's so smart and has so much experience and he owned his own business, I really am lucky that I can ask someone those questions and what to do and how to do deal with employees, or how to structure my business, or what things I should be thinking about and just pure maturity and experience. He's just got a lot of it. Well, I can be a little bit loosey goosey with those things. So, I tend to not always think things through and I just do. So, Paul's very much a thinker and a planner and he likes to do things right the first time, where I just figure them out as I go. So, it's been good to not make as many mistakes as I probably would've in the big world if I was on my own. So, I would say after all that rambling, it's much better to be married. He's very tolerant, very patient, and he goes everywhere with me. He was at a point in his life where he was ready to maybe work less and I was ready to work a lot more. So, our lives came together at the perfect time.

INTERVIEWER:

So what's it like for him being married to someone who's so much in the public eye?

01:00:20:00

DANICA PATRICK:

Paul's so great. He's not the jealous type on any level and I totally am, so good thing, because if it was the other way around, I think it would be very hard. He's just great. I mean, he takes it all in stride and I think that he's worked in professional sports for his whole life. So, he worked on the PGA tour. He's worked in baseball and done all kinds of stuff. So, he's got experience with athletes, and I think that really helps. He takes it all in stride. He barely ever gets nervous when I drive the car, all the media stuff. The only thing he asked me in the very beginning, in like 2005 when things were starting to explode, was I was getting offers to be in magazines and stuff like that. He was challenging why I was doing them, and I didn't have a great answer, but it made me think about it. Part of my answer was vanity because I just wanted to be in magazines.

01:01:19:00

DANICA PATRICK:

The other part of it was, "Well, what are you going to do with it? What's the point?" If you go out there and get overexposed and your life is a living H-E double hockey sticks, I don't know if I can swear on this program. If your life is miserable and you don't have anything to show for it, you don't have any more money or anymore... anymore... You know, you lose your privacy, what's the point? So, he made me think about why I was doing interviews and why I was exposing myself and becoming more familiar to the public. So, it

was a good exercise, but that was the only thing he ever did that was telling me to take a step back. So, he's just great, very patient.

INTERVIEWER:

Do you think you've had the freedom to have a career and get married whenever you wanted to? Your grandmother and your mother, you know, grew up at a time when it was expected that women, by the time they were 30, would be married with children. Do you think women in your generation face that same pressure or do you think-?

01:02:23:00

DANICA PATRICK:

It's funny. I was just talking with someone the other day about... We were talking about how our mothers and their mother being pregnant with them when they were really young and that was just the way it was. So, we got on this conversation about society, and culture, and the way that it's shifted. I really feel now that the first thing that we, especially as women, address is where we're going, and what we're doing, and our job, and what makes us happy there. It's like that comes first now it seems like more than ever and then we figure out where to have kids that fit into that. It's almost like—So, it depends on what job you're taking on. Sometimes it fits in very well and very easy and sometimes that's your priority. But I think more than ever, women are taking on their jobs and thinking, "I'll fit in the baby when it works." I don't know, that's just the way it seems to me. It'll find its place and it's just not as much of the priority because it's not assumed that's just what's going to happen. You're not just going to have kids. I don't think that's normal anymore.

KUNHARDT **FILM** FOUNDATION

INTERVIEWER:

Going back to what you were talking about the photo shoots, what have been the upsides for you of being a sought after model and spokeswoman in terms of your career success?

01:03:46:00

DANICA PATRICK:

I actually think it's quite ironic that people think of me as a model. I'm like any other girl. I have insecurities and not thinking you're pretty enough or thin enough or any of those things.

ON SCREEN TEXT:

Danica Patrick

Behind the Scenes Sports Illustrated Shoot, 2008

DANICA PATRICK:

I'm like every typical woman there. So, I think it's very funny that I was ever in Sports Illustrated swimsuit issue in a swimming suit. Me in a swimming suit and people seeing that is just a weird thought to me, especially going back to when I was a teenager. But I feel really lucky because I like that side of me. I have lots of sides and I don't have a plan with what media I do and what photo shoots I do. I just do things that I feel like are a part of my personality and let that out. I like being feminine. I like being pretty and I like, you know, exercising the artistic side of me a little bit there. So, maybe it's the artistic side that I like. It's the lighting, it's the pose, it's the angle, it's the emotion that you put into your face, it's kind of artsy.

INTERVIEWER:

The first time you started doing it, did it liberate you in terms of, as you mentioned growing up, where you may have felt you had to suppress that part of yourself? When you started letting that part of yourself come forward, did you feel that sort of "Oh"?

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DANICA PATRICK:

I did. When I was younger, I felt like I was not allowed to wear the color pink or purple. I didn't want to be an obvious girl. It was quite obvious I was a girl, so I really didn't need to drive that home. I didn't want people to see me and see these girly colors or nail polish or high heels or overdone hair or makeup. So, you know, I go to the track in jeans. I comb my hair. I don't wear makeup and I just didn't want to stick out like that. And then when I finally came around to having the opportunity to do photoshoots and be feminine, I realized that— and it really came when I did FHM a long time ago, a long, long time ago. I did it and it came out. It did make me stand out and it was unique. It drew a lot of attention and a lot of opinions, but it didn't make me less of a race car driver. It's odd that it took that long for me to realize that it didn't change what I was going to do in the car. But I think when you're young, you're worried about what people think of you.

INTERVIEWER:

Well just one example, using just one of many examples, David Beckham's Armani underwear ads have never been considered controversial and yet you've taken some flak for some of the things that you've done. A lot of

people have loved it and thought it was beautiful, but some people have raised an eyebrow or had a judgment about it. Should female athletes have to worry about some downside of doing the same types of endorsements that male athletes do?

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DANICA PATRICK:

It is interesting. It's something in our society that's still not completely figured out and I don't completely understand myself. Maybe this is why I'm okay with doing photo shoots and showing a feminine side to me or a sexier side to me is that yeah, guys do photo shoots and guys are exposing their body and nobody seems to think much of it. A girl does it and hands go up and people are questioning it, "What are your motives or intentions or what are you all about?" and judging the situation. It's just not fair. So, it's part of culture that I don't get completely, but that's probably good. That's probably why I don't care and why I just do what I feel comfortable doing. If I go by the guidelines that are in my heart and soul and my mind and what I think is respectful, tasteful, and okay to do, then I'll always be consistent.

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DANICA PATRICK:

I'm not going to come out of left field and show you something you've never seen before or do something you've never seen before or start a knitting program. I'm not going to do those things and I'm not going to do Playboy. So, as long as I am true to myself, I will be predictable and consistent. I think that's allowed me to— I think that's what makes me who I am and why maybe I resonate with people is because what you see is what you get. It's funny, people laugh, because I'll have a conversation with them and that

conversation is the exact conversation I have on camera in an interview. That's just because I'm just being honest and I'm just telling the stories like I see it and presenting myself the way that I feel.

INTERVIEWER:

Is there a disconnect between the women's movement that really made traction during the '70s, pushing for women to do exactly what you've done, be more successful, be in a man's world, but then some turning around and casting a judgment on the way in which you've done it?

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DANICA PATRICK:

That's exactly my confusion with culture is that as women, they want you to be liberated, but yet then it's not okay to be liberated. I'm purely confused. That's why I just do what feels normal and natural and comfortable to me. Instead of being typecast as a woman, I'm Danica. I'm unique in myself.

INTERVIEWER:

Do you think that women can or should feel free to use their sexuality for empowerment? Do you feel like it's empowered you?

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DANICA PATRICK:

I feel that it's completely acceptable for a woman to do what she feels comfortable doing. If you feel uncomfortable and you don't, you know, want to show your body or say certain things or be put in a certain situation or do a certain job, then don't do it. But if you feel comfortable, then that's what makes people cool and unique and interesting is that not everyone's the same

and thank God they're not. So, you have to feel—the world is full of all these people that are willing to do certain things and not willing to do other things and that's what makes it interesting. So, yeah, I mean what are your motives? Check in with yourself. What is your motive for doing something? Is it pure? Is it good? Is it justified or not? If you can ask yourself all those questions and come up with good answers, real answers, and answers that are in your heart that you know are true, then you're fine.

INTERVIEWER:

If you could describe the feeling of being in your gear in the car, in the race, going fast, what happens to you? What does that do for you?

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DANICA PATRICK:

Well, when I get in the car and when I'm all suited up and strapped in and going 200 miles an hour, I'm actually not thinking about anything. Because as a driver, you're constantly... you're reacting to the things going on around you. You're digesting it all and reacting. So, it's not that I... You don't really plan a lot out there. You kind of take what the car gives you and you take what the traffic situations give you and what the race strategy gives you. So, you're just reacting and responding. You're not really thinking a lot. So, I'm pretty blank in the car. For me, that's, I guess, my best guess as to what the zone is. I think it's probably different for everybody and everybody has probably different thought of what the zone is, in the zone. But for me, it's when I'm the most blank. And when I am... It's almost like out of body, where you're just doing and you're there and you have an intense focus.

INTERVIEWER:

Okay. Going back to just... Do you ever feel frustrated that being a strong assertive woman with a voice is still perceived somewhat negatively in our society? That those attributes are perfectly fine for men and not questioned, but for a woman, are less acceptable, particularly a woman who's on "a man's turf". Have you had any specific moments of confrontation where you were having your personality in full form and you've had to really bump up against a confrontation?

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DANICA PATRICK:

I sign up for confrontation. I'm pretty good at it. I have to temper my confrontation, to be honest. There's no position or situation you can put me in where I feel uncomfortable and I can't say anything. I try and live by the rule that I only say things about people that I would be willing to say to their face. The problem is I would say a lot to their face. So, I don't feel like I've ever been in a situation where I feel like me speaking my mind or having a loud voice is something that I had to back down from. The only thing I've really experienced is that that sometimes, being loud or opinionated, overshadows the good things that you're doing. So, that's been the shift in my career a little bit is that I've gone from creating or not really thinking about creating drama and saying whatever comes to mind to tempering that, which has allowed the good stuff that I'm doing to show, because I think we all latch onto the drama and all the stuff that we read the gossip magazines for. But it overshadows the great things that you're doing and I try to have a better balance there.

INTERVIEWER:

Polls show that many women consider ambition a dirty word and won't admit to being ambitious. I know you don't have that problem, but why do you think women avoid power? Why do you think they should really try to embrace ambition and power more positively?

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DANICA PATRICK:

For women to think that ambition is somewhat of a dirty word or something they shouldn't have is...kind of doesn't even make sense to me. I think ambition is probably one of the most positive words. It shows that you're willing to do what it takes. It shows that you have a passion for something, which is the most important thing in life is that you have a passion for it. I think sometimes those are the best success stories when people just do what they love to do. Those are probably the most successful people in the world, because they're willing to go the extra mile. That's what I feel like the difference is with me is that I found something that I truly love to do. So, when times got tough I worked harder instead of giving up. So, I think ambition and passion are very similar words to me and I think that they're really great words. I can't understand anyone that doesn't think that way.

INTERVIEWER:

What's one piece of advice you would give on relationships to a young woman?

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DANICA PATRICK:

The most important thing in a relationship is that you are committed. That's it. All relationships are challenging at times and they take work. If you don't

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love someone enough or you're not committed enough, which is the same thing to me, then you're not going to do what it takes to get through the times that are confusing or tough. You have to be willing to work.

INTERVIEWER:

One piece of advice on the work-life balance, balancing having a partner in life and/or a family and having a really intense career.

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DANICA PATRICK:

The most important thing for myself and for my husband, with the amount of work that we do and the amount of travel that's done, is that you're together for it. I'm really lucky. I don't think everyone gets to do that and I think it's got to be really hard. So, you have to be willing to sacrifice for each other so that you can spend time together, because I feel that if you don't spend a lot of time together that you keep growing but you don't grow together. So, I think you have to be together to do that.

INTERVIEWER:

I think you may have covered it, but I'm going to just ask you again if you want to say what comes to mind. One piece of advice on pursuing your dreams?

ON SCREEN TEXT:

Danica Patrick

Signing For Girls at Indy 500, 2005

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DANICA PATRICK:

I ask this question to kids, to adults, anyone. And that's that if you could do anything in the world, what would you do? If you could be anything you wanted to be, what would you be? It's amazing how many people don't have an answer, especially adults. So, that's your answer. That is your passion, that is your dream, and that's what you need to do. You need to do what you truly enjoy. And then as I said, you'll be willing to go the extra mile to be successful at it. It's funny how those things just seem to work out then.

INTERVIEWER:

Great. Okay. We know what you wound up doing, but what did you want to be when you grew up?

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DANICA PATRICK:

When I was a little kid, the first thing that I wanted to be when I grew up was a veterinarian, because I love animals. I still love animals. But then I realized that you had to use needles and stuff like that, and I can't even look at a needle. Oh, my gosh. I pass out when I have to give blood. And then I wanted to be a secretary, because I would play secretary while my parents were working on the glass shop and cutting metal and glass. My sister and I would answer the phone and write things down. So, I wanted to be a secretary, and then I wanted to be a singer. It's clear why that didn't work out. I didn't like my teacher either because he had to touch your stomach and I was like, "Oh, he is touching me and I just can't be here." Let's face it, I can sing a little bit, a very little bit, but I'm not a singer. And then I started racing so I really didn't

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have that many dreams before I became a race car driver because I started when I was 10.

INTERVIEWER:

Great. Accomplishment you're most proud of?

DANICA PATRICK:

I worked at my mom and dad's oil exchange, but that was my parents' place. I kind of just showed up when I wanted to show up. I was a waitress for a little while and I'm not very nice. I'm not nice enough to be a waitress. I'm not patient enough. I tell it like it is. It got me in trouble. And then I worked at the Limited Too. Again, another helping situation like a waitress. I wasn't very good at that, but I was paid at 19 for racing. I was paid by BMW. I became a BMW driver and then I didn't race, which allowed me to become an open wheel driver. So, it worked out.

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