

NTT IndyCar Series News Conference

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Indianapolis, Indiana, USA



Scott Dixon

Chip Ganassi Racing

Will Power

Team Penske

Alex Palou

Dale Coyne Racing with Team Goh

Press Conference

THE MODERATOR: Welcome, everybody, to our REV Group Grand Prix presented by AMR post-race press conference. We're joined by the third-place finisher from today's race, Alex Palou of Dale Coyne Racing with Team Goh. Alex finishes third in the race, his first career podium in the NTT INDYCAR Series.

Alex, tell everyone about your race. Pretty eventful coming from 14th to finish third on the podium and challenging for second at the end.

ALEX PALOU: Yeah, that was an awesome race for us. It was a tough day today. My first time here in Road America. Having free practice, qualifying and race same day was tough.

It was tough starting 14th, but we were lucky today. We had a really strong car. I could overtake some of the guys on the first two laps. Then we just had a really good pace, enough to be overtaking when we had clean air.

During the pit stops we lost, like, two or three places the first two pit stops, but then on the third pit stop, the crew was amazing. We catch a lot of guys. We were P4 after the last pit stop.

Yeah, then I saw we had really good car. After the restart, I could just follow a lot Ryan and Will. I tried to overtake Ryan, and we overtook him two times. So, yeah, was really nice race for us.

THE MODERATOR: Alex, how have you found the first three races here in the NTT INDYCAR Series? I know Texas didn't go as planned, then last week at Indy you didn't finish quite as strong as you hoped. Do you think

today shows more the potential that the team has?

ALEX PALOU: Yeah, it's not the potential of the team, is the potential I have. The team, we already knew from the beginning the team was on it. All the tests we did, we were top five always. The problem is that then INDYCAR throws me into a race just having 75 minutes of practice when I've never been in that track. So it's just really tough to learn the tracks.

Indy, if you look at the result, we were worse than what the potential and the performance of our car was. Just we had really bad luck with strategy and the yellow. But, yeah, it's been really tough. It's been really tough.

Also this morning was really tough. We did P5 in the free practice because I had a good lap. On qualifying, I had a mistake on pit lane, I had to come again for a penalty. That's why we started so far in the back.

I think finishing P3 now, it's going to be good for me, for my confidence. I know the crew has a lot of confidence in me, and the team. I know the car is capable of doing it. I felt really strong, especially at the end of the race I could fight with Will. But I used a lot of 'push to pass' at the beginning of the race.

Yeah, it's going to be an interesting day tomorrow. It's going to be tough in Iowa, for sure. But as soon as we get to Mid-Ohio, we'll be back where we have to be.

THE MODERATOR: I see Will Power has joined us. Will, welcome to the call. Second place. Obviously had the lead, had a bad pit stop or an issue on the pit stop, Dixon got by you. Your best finish of the season. Has to feel good for you.

WILL POWER: Yeah, definitely a very strong result. Obviously was looking like it was going to be better. Unfortunately yellow fell, a mishap in the pits. Had a bit of an issue. Had a wrong gear in the car, too, making it difficult to get a good restart to challenge Dixon.

I would say all in all it was a good day for us. I mean, we had a very good strategy as far as doing that undercut there because the tires degraded a lot. The team did a great job in that respect obviously. We need to go one better.

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THE MODERATOR: We have questions from the media so we will open it up.

Q. Alex, you came over here with a pretty high pedigree, impressive résumé, your career accomplishments coming up in Europe. How quickly did you expect to be able to have a race like this with a team with such limited practice this season?

ALEX PALOU: To be honest, after the pre-season testing at COTA, I felt really, really comfortable with the car. I knew the car was really good. Especially comparing to last year, I think we picked up speed everywhere.

I thought, to be honest, if we had enough practices, we would be really good from the first already in Indy. The problem, we had no practices. I think this is my fifth or sixth day in the car. We cannot ask for miracles when we have only 75 minutes of practice and I have to learn a track, I have to get the balance of the car to where I want.

Yeah, I think we are still not there. Even if we had really good result today, I think everything went really good for us, strategy, the overtakes. But we are getting there. We are getting quicker and hopefully we will be there soon.

Q. Two fast young guys at Dale Coyne Racing with Santino Ferrucci and yourself. You call yourself the warrior. Can you be the conquerer tomorrow?

ALEX PALOU: Yeah, of course. We'll try. We'll try. I think this result is going to give a lot of energy, especially to me. I got 55 laps in the car. I'll be able to tonight have a look at the data, know where we have to improve, and tomorrow try to start in the front and try to go for the win.

It's going to be tough. These guys are amazing. They do no mistakes. But I felt really strong, especially at the end of the race. Hopefully we get there.

Q. Will, for as long as you and Scott have been going at this, we don't always get to see you two battling for one and two at the end. What were the last couple laps like?

WILL POWER: Yeah, obviously it was a really good battle out of the pits before the yellows. I didn't even realize we were racing for the win at that point. Then obviously at the end there it was kind of difficult for me because I thought if I was in front of him, I would keep him behind. I think he was a little quicker.

We had a little mistake with the gearbox. Had a wrong gear in our second gear. I was very lug-y off the second

gear corners which made it kind of hard to get around.

I enjoy fighting with Dixon. We've been racing for years. We're both older guys, if you want to say older. Getting towards your 40s is older, but we're still kicking ass. It's good to see.

Q. With Scott, with a team behind him like he does, he won three races in a row, what can you do to try to pick up that momentum? What do you feel the guys in your own team need to try to do to try to catch him?

WILL POWER: It's tough. He's won three in a row. That is a start to the season, let me tell you. I haven't seen that since I don't know when the last one was. Maybe it was me way back in the day.

Yeah, that's what was a little frustrating for me today because I'm pretty far back in points. Scott is the guy I need to get close to. He finished ahead of us again.

We'll come back tomorrow, obviously keep chipping away, chipping away. Can't get desperate, just keep chipping away at it, see if we can have a very good second half of the year. After Iowa, that's almost halfway, if you can believe it.

Q. Alex, have you ever done rolling starts before or is this the first season of that for you?

ALEX PALOU: I did last year, but it was in GT.

Q. You picked it up pretty quickly. Anybody that's given you hints or helped you out with that?

ALEX PALOU: Yeah, all the team. We went through everything. Lots of stuff are new for me, like restarts. Even if I did with a GT, but it's not the same running with let's say more gentleman class than running with Will Power and Scott Dixon.

I had really good car on last corner, so that's why I could go really close. I think I was also able to put temperature into the front tires. Yeah, all restarts were really, really good.

Q. Obviously long day. Long day tomorrow. How do you feel physically? How was the temperature in the cockpit this time?

ALEX PALOU: For me, temperature was better than what we had at Indy. It's still hot. But the thing we did with the water system was better having it in the front. Like now you can drink water and it doesn't feel like you're drinking hot tea.

Physically tomorrow is going to be tough. I'm going to eat something big, some big pizza tonight and recover.

WILL POWER: Yeah, I wasn't dying last week either. I think once you get a bit of race fitness, you're fine. Yeah, felt totally fine. Could push hard all the way to the end. Obviously have to get up tomorrow and do it again.

Yeah, I love it. I love it to go in with a bit of pain anyway. I enjoy when it's hard. If I'm suffering, people are suffering at least as much, maybe more (smiling).

Q. Will, can you talk a little bit about the gearbox issue. Was it an incorrect gear ratio or have you made a tactical error in terms of not getting that right?

WILL POWER: It was simply a mistake. My engineer was just typing it in. This guy never makes mistakes. He just happened to type the wrong number in. It was just a simple mistake. He has no clue how it happened because he gave my gears to Newgarden.

Yeah, it was a wrong gear ratio, second gear, which made it very tough for us. A very, very tall gear. A rare mistake honestly by my engineer because he never, ever makes mistakes.

Q. Alex, speaking about the rest of the season, I'm sure you'll say you want to be on the podium every weekend. How far off are you from consistently fighting for top 10s now? Where do you feel the actual performance of you and the team is at for a more consistent basis?

ALEX PALOU: It depends on how much time we have before the qualifying. I think tomorrow we can be fighting for top 10, for sure. Even today the car was more than enough for a top 10, I just did a mistake.

Then going to ovals, that's going to be tougher. I just want to finish the races, get experience, and start getting comfortable doing oval races.

As soon as we get to Mid-Ohio, it's the first track that I know because I did a test last year. It went really good. I think we going to be for sure fighting.

The thing is that now we are too far off that we cannot even fight. In INDYCAR, it's so close, as soon as you lose 1/10th, you are 15th, 16th or 17th. Hopefully we will be able to fight always for top 10. That's the target at the moment.

THE MODERATOR: We welcome in the winner of today's

REV Group Grand Prix presented by AMR, Scott Dixon from PNC Bank Chip Ganassi Racing. 49th win of his career, his third win of his season. He's the only driver to have won a race this season. First driver to win three in a row since 2016 when Simon Pagenaud won at Long Beach, Barber and the Grand Prix of Indianapolis. He is the first driver to win the first three races of the season since 2006 when Sebastien Bourdais won the first four races of the Champ Car season.

Will, you won the last race of 2013 and the first two of 2014, so you didn't actually do the first three of the season.

Scott, congratulations. Talk about the win today.

SCOTT DIXON: Yeah, it was very unexpected I think. I was chatting to Will after the race, just how big the undercut was. When I came out, we were racing, the teams we were racing for the lead, I thought they got the timing and scoring wrong.

It was definitely a heated battle. It was fun to race Will there out of the pits, turn five and turn six. I thought turn six both of us actually weren't going to make the corner. It was good, close racing. Then we had that really tidy last pit where the crew just nailed it, honestly jumped to the lead there.

Pretty mixed emotion today. Very unexpected, but just shows the depth of the team and what they were able to do throughout the day. Try to mix up that strategy and go for another win.

THE MODERATOR: We'll continue with questions.

Q. Scott, the opportunity to do it in front of fans, how extra special did it make this victory?

SCOTT DIXON: Yeah, definitely so good to see. I think throughout the weekend, obviously it's still very separated, right? The paddock, motorhome, everything is kind of blocked off. But just to see everybody around the track...

Road America, they always say it does such a fantastic job of fans hiding in little places, scattered around the track. Especially going down into turn five, after the race you can see everybody trying to signal you to do burnouts and things like that. It was cool.

I think for all of us on the podium, it's been pretty quiet at a lot of these races. To see fans there cheering and hearing fans cheering again was definitely a lot of fun.

Q. Scott, on the camera we caught you doing some donuts at the end of the race. Was that in solidarity



with Alex Zanardi or just something you felt like an emotional release and the two weren't connected?

SCOTT DIXON: No, the two weren't really connected. Obviously this team has a huge affinity with Alex. I keep in close contact. I never really knew Alex. I knew Jimmy a lot more. I've been keeping in the loop with Tony Kanaan, who obviously is very close with his family.

Obviously our thoughts and prayers are with the Zanardi family. Obviously Alex, if anybody is going to pull through this, it's going to be him.

I was coming down to turn five. I could see a bunch of people in the crowd signaling to do a doughnut, so I went down there and did a donut and that was it.

Q. Kind of a running joke in this press conference that you get asked about Mario Andretti's win record. Three wins to start the season, there's a title to win at the end of the year, but generally is there a number of races or an achievement that's still sticking out to you that is keeping you going or a case of there's titles to be won and you'll keep on going until you feel like your time is coming to an end?

SCOTT DIXON: I think it's pretty simple, man. I think all of us are very lucky to do what we do. I love racing. I'm glad racing worked out for me. I wasn't particularly good at anything else. It was nice this did work out.

I think you see the passion in anybody. You still see it with Mario and A.J. Foyt. Lucky to have those people at these races. You still see the passion that they have for the sport. That's really what drives it.

I think this team, Chip is probably the most competitive person I know. To have that person leading from the top, showing that, I think it really filters through the whole team, the crew and everybody. I think it really lifts up everybody.

Q. Alex, you mentioned you only had about 75 minutes worth of on-track practice. Road America, obviously not an easy track to learn. How were you able to get up to speed so fast at Road America?

ALEX PALOU: Yeah, we only had 75 minutes, and it was my first time here. But he we did a lot of work in the simulator.

To be honest it felt easier to drive than Indy. I don't know if it's now I'm more comfortable with the car and I know how to brake, I know how to turn. But Indy was weird. Indy I was not able to get up to speed. I'm feeling comfortable for tomorrow.

Q. Alex, how much confidence does your third-place finish give you going into the race tomorrow?

ALEX PALOU: A lot. A lot of confidence. A lot of good energy. Well, I mean, it's the first podium in INDYCAR. It's so special. Having it in the third race of the year, it's awesome. Gives me a lot of confidence.

But the thing that gives you more confidence is that we got all 55 laps, and tomorrow I just know how the track is going to feel, how the car is going to feel. Hopefully we can do a better job on qualifying, start top six, top seven. That will be our target. That will be awesome for us. Then just do a normal race from there.

THE MODERATOR: Alex, Will, thanks for the time. Appreciate you joining us. Good luck tomorrow.

ALEX PALOU: Thank you.

WILL POWER: Thank you.

THE MODERATOR: Scott, we'll continue with questions for you.

Q. Scott, a question for you about Michael Cannon, the relationship you've been able to build with him. I understand in the winter when Chip Ganassi Racing signed Michael, you were quite excited about that. Has he made a big impact on this season so far from yourself?

SCOTT DIXON: Yeah, you know, as I've kind of alluded to earlier, with earlier races, we've had a lot of changes in the off-season, not just Cannon. This is a very successful team. As I also alluded to, we kind of kept doing a lot of things for same. It was nice to have some fresh eyes, different approach. He's very easy to work with. Obviously Chris for the most part is still on the 9 car. Just added a lot more depth to the team.

Yeah, we've had not ups and downs or anything like that, but even this weekend we were pretty horrible in practice one. I think we were 15th. Had to kind of rebound. There's definitely a lot of things we're trying to find our way.

But he's very easy to work with. He fits in extremely well with the team. That's never easy to do. I think that's what's really helped all of us kind of find our way and work well together.

Q. With the addition of Mike, moving Chris around a little bit, you mentioned this depth. Are there any concrete things you feel like the reorganization of the

folks on your car, the CGR team as a whole, has impacted you and aided in your three consecutive wins to start the year?

SCOTT DIXON: Yeah, it's never one thing. Again, John Hennek has moved onto the 9 car. So has Ken Brooks. Both those guys came from the 66 Ford GT program. We had RVK, Ryan Van Klompenburg, who is not here this weekend because he's moved on. We are still kind of moving a lot of people around with the addition of some different programs going on within the team.

I think between Julian Robertson and Chris Simmons and them kind of taking more of a role of leadership in the engineering I think has kind of helped direct things and freed up people's time because there's a lot more people to help. Even with management, too, with the addition of managers with Al and Mike and a few other people.

It's not one thing. Mike has been a good addition. Just as I said, totally different, comes from a very different team, a few other teams that had a different process. I think it's helped us all.

Unfortunately I think with Felix and Marcus, they've had really good speed. Marcus I think should have been top three at the Indy road course, but had a problem in the pits. Felix, we were racing him hard for the win at Texas. The team as a whole I think has been very strong this year. Unfortunately the other two cars haven't had the results they probably deserve.

Q. We've seen in the first three races of the year other title contenders. Will talked today about a gearbox issue they had, a simple mistake. Starting today in 15th after practice, you haven't had any of those impactful mistakes. Whether it is how you go about your processes in preparing for a race, what has helped keep small mistakes from happening?

SCOTT DIXON: You try to avoid those issues. We've had them many times as a team. The streak now, we're not necessarily lucky, but everybody has paid attention to detail.

You're right, this weekend we didn't start very well. Marcus was quite happy with the car, but wasn't something I really like to drive. Between the sim and some of the Indy road course races we've had, tried to come up with setups to improve from last year. The degradation was pretty good for us. We didn't have the issues there.

But, yeah, it can strike at any point in time. The problem right now is just there's no time. After an hour and 15 practice, where typically we would have a couple hours in

practice, those sessions would be split, you get some downtime, a bit of time to look at data. There were 200 or 300 channels of information. There's no time to process any of that stuff right now.

You're definitely flying by the seat of your pants a little bit. A lot of these races, you're trying to test something to see if it's going to work because you don't have any test sections. At least Indy road course you had a warmup to try to get through it. These doubleheaders for the crew and the team are just brutal.

Q. It seemed like Josef Newgarden was in control of this race for the first half, then he stalls in the pits. How much did that change the whole tenor of this race when that happened?

SCOTT DIXON: Yeah, I didn't know that happened. I didn't know what had happened to Josef. I knew he was leading the race early on. Seemed like he had pretty good pace.

A lot of these tracks now, with INDYCAR using all six gears on track, fifth gear is a very tall gear. It's very easy to put yourself in situations like that. I had it even before we started the race at Indy road course, trying to leave the grid.

It's unfortunate. When you're in the race, you don't really know how specific people are doing. I was kind of shocked when the team came on and said, Hey, it's you and Will fighting for the lead.

I thought they must have the timing and scoring wrong. How did we drop five cars in that one pit stop exchange?

The undercut was big today. Interesting to see if a bunch of people jump on that. Yes, the fuel mileage becomes a little bit tough to get.

Short answer, I didn't really know what happened to Josef. It just shows you how easy it is to make a mistake.

Q. I still stay with my prediction that at this rate you're going to catch Mario at Iowa. It could realistically happen. Have you ever thought of that, you could get to 52 by next Saturday?

SCOTT DIXON: I don't know. It could be more likely - I don't know - that an asteroid comes out of the sky and hits the track. I don't know.

It's tough, man. You saw what happened today for the cycle to happen. We didn't particularly have great speed this morning or even in qualifying. We made a mistake and



pitted a lap early where we should have continued on.

So, yeah, we'll keep our head down. That's all we can do. I think we've shown as a team in situations of trying to not make mistakes when others do, we've been able to gain from that. Last week was strategy, just because we lost so many times on going long, we were like, Hey, let's focus on doing short stints here, make sure we pit before a caution. It finally paid way.

We're focusing on trying to win today, now tomorrow. We'll think about Iowa when we're heading that direction.

Q. Speaking about tomorrow, you have the opportunity to do something tomorrow that you did in 2013 which is three victories in an eight-day period, Pocono and a Toronto sweep. That possibility exists tomorrow with Indy and a Road America sweep. How much do those two compare? How different are they?

SCOTT DIXON: They're very different. Some of these rolls you can get on, like this was the biggest one for us to start a season. I remember that Pocono, then the doubleheader at Toronto, that really sent us into a cycle to try to go for the championship I think it was in 2013.

We try to win every race we go in, man. That just shows you how difficult it is to try to do things like this. Sometimes you get a little bit of luck and you have to take it. You have to take it and strike. Everybody else does. We've had a good start. Keep our head down and try to win some races.

Q. How do you feel as far as the pit strategy going with tires? Debate about the primaries and alternates. How did that come into play especially with the full course caution?

SCOTT DIXON: Yeah, kind of crazy. I think the car honestly with the added weight from the Aeroscreen has made it very difficult to drive. I think some of that, too, has been just physically it's quite tough with the heat. I think with the late race today, the heat wasn't too much of a concern. I think everybody physically was fine.

The strategy was kind of shocking today. I think we won the -- the last time we won here, we won by going long. This again I think is a lot of people trying to understand what this car needs right now with so many changes to it in the off-season, the additional weight, the CG. The tire deg is kind of high.

Firestone have done a good job. Last year the outlets were quite different. The tire was much better for outlets. The red tire is actually really good on deg this weekend.

You just don't have that many of them. You have to really cherish the ones that you have.

Yeah, I don't know. I didn't expect the undercut to be as big as it was. We went from like sixth to second or something. Obviously Josef had a bit of a hiccup there. I kind of kept to myself because in the first stop, actually the team called me in. I was thinking the 2, which was Harvey, Hunter-Reay, were in front of us. I thought they were going to pit. Just looked like they were going to come in. Let's just do one more lap.

Ultimately we shouldn't have done that. I think we would have jumped in much earlier, maybe exchanged on that situation with Will a little bit easier later in the race because the undercut would have worked both times. Definitely my mistake. The team definitely knew what they were doing. I second-guessed it.

Q. How confident are you going into the race tomorrow off the back of the win today? With the race being on earlier, do you think the weather might upset the performance of the car at all?

SCOTT DIXON: Yeah, I think it will maybe be a little bit quicker. It will go the other way, right? The deg may get worse, the conditions may get worse versus today. They just slowly got better.

The temperature is not super high here this weekend. I don't see it being too much of a problem. We'll probably miss that high peak of 3 or 4 p.m. The race should be over tomorrow by then.

It will be interesting to see. We definitely have a lot of work to do with the 9 car tonight, trying to figure out some of the areas. It was kind of interesting performance-wise when you're following a lot of these cars in the races just to see where they were good and where we weren't, who kind of fell off a little bit more. Seemed like our deg was pretty good. The Andretti cars are quite strong, especially lap five through 10 on a stint. We need to focus in on why that is, what parts of the circuit.

I'd say our car is not particularly nice to drive. Hopefully we can come up with some changes tonight. I think there will be a lot more people that are aggressive tomorrow with that strategy and that undercut because everybody can see how it works for them.

THE MODERATOR: That will conclude the news conference. Thanks, everybody, for attending.

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