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News Conference

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Scott Dixon

Alexander Rossi

Pato O'Ward

Ed Jones

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: We'll start with questions.

Q. How far on the edge were y'all in the corners today? Totally trimmed out or 95%?

SCOTT DIXON: I think it depends on the run, depends on the conditions, depends what car is pulling out in front of you.

I think you're trying to find that limit, right? I think we only had one full lap, which was my first one. All the rest we had to trash just because people coming out of the pits or whatever.

I don't know. We didn't have too many big moments today. A couple of the teammates did, which gives you an idea that you're getting pretty close to that situation.

Yeah, you're always pushing.

ALEXANDER ROSSI: Yeah, I mean, the same. I only had one, maybe two -- I think just one four-lap run because people kept jumping out or whatever. It's always interesting on days like this when you have an unfriendly wind in turn two. For whatever reason, turn two is hard. I don't know if the air is different over there. Something going on with the suites or something. Turn two is pretty tricky when the conditions deteriorate a little bit. Yeah, I mean, sometimes you're kind of thinking about things through there. Otherwise I think the 27 car was just under control.

I heard Scott mention it, but Honda brought some juice this month, which is pretty cool. To be able to continue that development after the year that we collectively had last year, to be able to come back in '21 with another step is pretty awesome.

THE MODERATOR: Pato O'Ward joins us. Third in no tow speed. What did you find out there?

PATO O'WARD: Yeah, man, the differences of temp from, like, I don't know 105 track temp to 120. I just saw big differences car balance-wise. Everything heightens when the track is a little bit cooler.

I will sleep at peace tonight. I ended happy with my car,

THE MODERATOR: Scott Dixon has joined us. When it comes to no tow this afternoon, fourth all told. You take a look at not only yourself, but T.K., Marcus, Alex, four of the top five when it comes to the Quick Six today. Still, a pretty nice effort here on Fast Friday.

SCOTT DIXON: Yeah, the team was really fast. I think any time one of the Ganassi cars went out, they improved and improved in a big way.

Obviously it was really tough out there today. Just really tough to get a clear track. You had some guys doing some pretty silly stuff out there. Teams I think, too, should have been held responsible for some of those runs as well.

I know it's difficult. I know everybody wants to try to get a run. Some of those closing speeds when you have people doing cool-down laps at 150 miles an hour, you're coming in at 240, gets pretty hairy.

Interesting day. Happy with the speed of the car. Looks like there's a lot of strong cars out there. Looks like Honda is doing a superb job again. Definitely proud to be powered by Honda.

THE MODERATOR: Alexander Rossi joins us, as well. Number one on the no tow speed of over 231. Scott was just talking about how difficult it was to try to get some clean track out there today.

ALEXANDER ROSSI: Yeah, it was kind of annoying. People aren't doing anyone any favors either. Whatever, it's fine.

Yeah, it was a good day. We'll see what tomorrow brings.



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ready for qualifying tomorrow. In the midday not so much, but yeah.

Q. Scott, is it a gamesmanship thing or just the process of slowing down that causes the traffic?

SCOTT DIXON: Yeah, one of the situations I had was just I think the driver should have pulled off into the lane. When you're coming in at 240 miles an hour, you had a car in the short chute at 150, that's a pretty big problem.

Q. Is it them not telling the other driver or...

SCOTT DIXON: Some of it you got to rely on the spotters. We found ourselves in some positions today. I think as long as you can pull off the track, I don't know. It's not easy. It's hard to talk about. I find the stand in the pit lane or even the spotters, make sure they keep after it.

I think it's part of the process now. Once you do a run, everybody is trying to cool the cars off. Some people used to not care about that, but now everybody is doing it. It becomes a lot of cars on track at different speeds.

Q. Is it something they can fix with procedure?

SCOTT DIXON: I feel like if you're off the pace, you just got to use the bottom lanes. How they address it, I don't know, man. It's tough what speed you say that is, what scenario.

I think it was just more difficult this year because I think you've got a very full field that are very close. You have a couple people that are going to be hanging on pretty tough. Everybody's trying to get a run.

Q. I remember last year Marco called a shot saying it's going to come down to the fourth lap for the pole. Do you feel this year is going to be the same, the key is going to be a good first lap, the fourth lap being the difference maker?

SCOTT DIXON: Yeah, I think the consistency is definitely key. I think even today we saw some pretty big falloff. It should make qualifying pretty exciting. You're going to see some big first laps, see how everybody holds onto it.

It's interesting when you look at the data. A gust of wind alters your speed. A bad downshift or upshift, it ruins one of those laps.

Consistency is definitely going to be key, make sure you execute on the first run so you have a bit of breathing room. Sometimes it's out of your control, man.

ALEXANDER ROSSI: I can't really add more to that. I think the qualifying draw is a little bit -- that's going to be important. You're obviously going to want to try to get it done early before the track temp comes up. With that said, we saw this guy to my right last year doing some pretty good stuff in the heat.

It's so close now, wind gusts, upshifts, I mean, it's crazy the minutia of detail that makes a difference around here. You can't afford to have anything not really fall your way.

PATO O'WARD: Yeah, just like they said. If you draw early, you need to take advantage of it because it really does make a difference. Not that in the afternoon you can't be fast, but it just makes it a lot harder to be consistent throughout the four laps especially. Those little extra bits of just wear that you get whenever it's hotter, you really do feel it.

Q. Which one do you think has the advantage going into qualifying, Honda or Chevy?

PATO O'WARD: I mean, I think we can all look at the chart and see who is more dominant. My Chevy has been good to me so far. I think we've been doing a good job with what we have. Tomorrow obviously the goal is going to be getting to the Fast Nine.

Yeah, it's just...

ALEXANDER ROSSI: Honda with a capital H.

Q. Pato, you basically represent Chevrolet in what was kind of a struggling day with only three in the top 10 on a four-lap average. What has clicked for you compared to Montoya and Rosenqvist trying to find speed?

PATO O'WARD: Honestly kind of like in run two or three, they were happier with their cars. I was struggling with mine. It's so easy to get, like, dragged into a hole here, just spiral down and go crazy about it.

I had to work with my engineer to see what we had to do. Obviously we didn't have enough tires to be just doing 10, 15 runs. We had to be as efficient as possible with those changes.

But it is so sensitive, the window of having a good car and having a car that's undrivable in four laps, is really small. Like sometimes the changes it takes to get you from really struggling to being like, wow, this is solid, is not much.

I think the heat plays a big factor into that. Yeah, I haven't had a chance to debrief with Felix and Juan. I mean, I'd be

assuming that they're just not as happy with their car as I am.

Q. With as tight as the field is, is this as unpredictable a Pole Day or qualifying weekend that you can remember here?

SCOTT DIXON: It's definitely tight. I think it's always pretty unpredictable. I think some of the speeds that you see don't always transfer to the next day. Yeah, I don't know. It's going to be tough, man. I think your first draw is going to be critical and could play out badly if it doesn't go the right way.

I don't know. Hopefully there's enough time in the day that people can rerun and all that type of stuff. It's definitely tight out there.

ALEXANDER ROSSI: Yeah, I mean...

PATO O'WARD: He wasn't paying attention to the question (laughter).

ALEXANDER ROSSI: There's always surprises. I think this year has proved that correctly across all the races, right? How many races have we had, four or five? Five races, five winners. I think that's a testament to the series, the level of all these teams and guys. The guy that's going to be on pole is really anyone's guess.

PATO O'WARD: Yeah, what they said. I don't think it gets harder than what we've got in this paddock honestly. I think this year is really, really tough. I mean, I feel like Scott and Alex can play a bit more, this is just my second year, but it's competitive for sure.

Q. With as hot as the weekend is going to be, will we see maybe less running late tomorrow than normally we would?

SCOTT DIXON: I think it will depend on conditions. I think the falloff looks more tomorrow maybe than what it did last year, as in the temps and conditions. It got pretty quick there at the end if you could find clear track.

I think the last hour could be pretty exciting, you know.

ALEXANDER ROSSI: Yeah, because you're going to have the guys that are on the cusp of getting into the Fast Nine trying to get in. You're going to have the excitement obviously of 32nd to 35th. They're going to be a lot of guys out there trying to get runs in for different reasons, but still to transfer to the next day.

PATO O'WARD: I'm sorry, I didn't pay attention to that

question (laughter).

Q. As hot as it's going to be tomorrow late, do you think we'll see as much late running as we normally do?

PATO O'WARD: I think everybody's going to try to make their race car as fast as they can. It's going to be a big factor to win the race. It's so important to start up front. But ultimately you can qualify in the first three, something happens in a pit stop, you're going to be stuck in 20th. If you don't have a good race car, you're screwed.

I think that's probably the priority, is to have the best race car you can.

THE MODERATOR: Scott, thank you very. We'll cut you loose.

SCOTT DIXON: Thank you.

Q. Pato, they showed you on TV talking with Montoya on pit road. How much of a mentor has he been to you this month?

PATO O'WARD: Great guy to have around. You can tell how much knowledge he has around this place. His ability to be able to feel things is really quick. I mean, maybe it's that or maybe he just didn't like the car and wanted to make a change.

No, he knows what is needed to win around this place. I think that's what we can take away from him, just really be able to see what we need in terms of traffic running and racing, and compare yourself to what he thinks is a good car. If he thinks his car is good, you can be as good or even better, that should mean you're in a pretty good position.

Q. Pato, the guys who come in here at the end of each day are considered the story of the day, the people we want to talk to based on what they've done for the day. You've been brought up here several times this week. Do you feel like this is shaping up as any sort of special two weeks leading into the race for you?

PATO O'WARD: I sure hope they are. That's definitely the goal. But tomorrow a lot can happen, like Scott had said. From one day to another, things can change a little bit.

The window of happy - at least this is what I've been experiencing - is really small, so you really need to nail it if you just want to do one qualifying run, breeze your way into the Fast Nine contention, then park the car for the rest of the day.

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So far I feel like we're -- I mean, I'm in the best position that I have been in the 500. I feel like this year I've made an improvement into what we have pace-wise for qualifying. I think we've gotten better in race cars, as well.

Yeah, we just have to see how everything plays out. Many factors are not in our control. What we can control is try to maximize what we've got.

Q. Alex, today is your first day in here.

ALEXANDER ROSSI: It's awesome (laughter).

Q. Are you flying under the radar?

ALEXANDER ROSSI: No. Just doing our thing. Like I told you this morning, we go about this month in a very little bubble, focus on things that we know that we're looking for from past years' experience. Obviously with the size of the organization, there's a lot of different resources, kind of feedback at the end of the day to draw from.

From that standpoint it makes it very easy to go about your day, do your thing, then kind of debrief at the end and be like that guy found that, that or that, then revise your list for the next day.

I think the month has gone as we would have expected. We're looking forward to tomorrow and Sunday, hopefully having a shot to be on the front row.

Q. Is there anyone on the board that you two have noticed, I don't want to say they're sandbagging, but maybe they haven't jumped out for whatever reason, you've seen something?

ALEXANDER ROSSI: I don't think you can sandbag today any more. Maybe, but that's pretty hard to do.

PATO O'WARD: Yeah, I mean, I feel like it wouldn't be very smart to go into sandbagging here. I'm going to be okay tomorrow, then you're struggling in the back.

Yeah, I think what we saw today is a pretty good tell of what we'll see tomorrow.

THE MODERATOR: Ed Jones joins us from Dale Coyne Racing. Ninth quick all told on the speed chart. How happy were you with your effort this afternoon?

ED JONES: Yeah, I thought it was pretty good. After the speeds we've had the rest of the days, I thought we were going to be not as strong as that. It was pretty nice to roll out and be quick straightaway.

A bit frustrating, I'm sure everyone had it at some point, every run we did someone would come out in front of us at certain points. That kind of screwed a couple runs. Otherwise it was pretty positive and feel good going into tomorrow.

THE MODERATOR: Pato brought up a new phrase: the window of happy is small. Is that the case?

ED JONES: Yeah, I feel the same way. Certain points I definitely thought I was going into the wall. Other points it felt like it was extremely good. It's a really small window, as always. You just got to make sure that after the runs we've done today, for the different conditions, you dial the car in accordingly for your run tomorrow.

THE MODERATOR: Alex, we're going to cut you loose.

ALEXANDER ROSSI: Thanks for having me, guys.

THE MODERATOR: A lot of these guys talked about it, maybe you can expound a little bit. How difficult was it to find clean track out there doing your qualifying sims?

ED JONES: When you go out, you try to plan it with the team when another car is about to finish a run. There were certain teams out there which didn't really care what others were doing. They would just roll out in the middle of your run. Yeah, it was frustrating. That's obviously the way it is. Obviously everyone wants to get their runs in.

With how the tow sector is lined up with nine seconds, I think we're like 8.5 away, it makes you look not as good as you really are. That's okay because tomorrow everyone is going to have the track to themselves.

Q. The previous two before you, maybe Pato, too, they've all sort of mentioned that guys were out there blocking laps. Can anyone name some of the offenders getting in the way, blocking your laps?

PATO O'WARD: Yeah, I really don't know what Marco was doing in the last run where I was out. I was just making a gap, he just decides to pass me. I don't really know what he was trying to do, I guess. We got a couple laps clean, which we could really see what we had for pace. That was good.

Yeah, it got pretty messy in the end. Everyone wanted to go out, and there was not enough time to do it.

ED JONES: I don't know who in particular. The first one was McLaughlin. The second one, I'm not even sure who it was. Yeah, it was McLaughlin again. So twice.

Q. You had a very good finish here your last time here. What is it about this place that you like?

ED JONES: Yeah, I think at the end of the day a track like this, it's more down to the car than anything else. You got to work with the team to make that good. Unless you have a strong car, there's not really much you can do to drive around it.

I've been fortunate here so far. Well, the qualifying speeds the car has been good. Been working a lot. The Sullivan team has been strong here in the past in qualifying. In 2019 we were fast in qualifying, as well.

It's about how the car is. So much work over the off-season to prepare for that. It really shows up when you get to qualifying here.

Q. Have anyone of your MIT studies or your boxing lessons helped you this week?

ED JONES: Not particularly, no. I was at the Canelo fight two weeks ago right after the Texas race. It was awesome. I think it was the biggest ever attended boxing event in America. That was pretty crazy. Unfortunately we haven't had any fights this weekend. We'll see after the race.

Q. You're going to get in the ring?

ED JONES: Well, I want to do an amateur fight at some point.

PATO O'WARD: There is good money there, mate. If you excel in that, you'll be (indiscernible).

ED JONES: I just always wanted to do it, right? I don't know if Pato fancies it as well.

PATO O'WARD: I like the training aspect. I don't like to get hit.

Q. Maybe you can get in there with McLaughlin.

ED JONES: That would be good. I saw his truck thing towed away. He lost his keys yesterday. Towing the truck away. Turns out he never found them.

THE MODERATOR: Could be a prank.

ED JONES: We thought that, too.

THE MODERATOR: You train with boxing?

PATO O'WARD: Yeah.

ED JONES: In the past I used to train with a UFC team, American top team. That was in Florida, a lot of the champions were there. That was fun. More recently I haven't been over that way, but yeah, still like to do it.

THE MODERATOR: Goal for tomorrow? Where do you want to be.

PATO O'WARD: Fast Nine.

ED JONES: Fast Nine.

PATO O'WARD: I don't care where in the Fast Nine, but in the Fast Nine.

ED JONES: Same. As long as you're in there, you have a chance Sunday.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you.

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