

NTT INDYCAR SERIES

News Conference

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Indianapolis, Indiana, USA

Scott Dixon

Chip Ganassi Racing

Tony Kanaan

Chip Ganassi Racing

Colton Herta

Andretti Autosport with Curb-Agajanian

Ed Carpenter

Ed Carpenter Racing

Press Conference

(Interview joined when stream began. Interview already in progress.)

SCOTT DIXON: -- stuff for tomorrow. Huge credit to the team. To have all four cars in the Fast Nine is pretty massive, especially with the competition level we have these days. Obviously a huge shout-out to Honda for bringing the performance that they have.

Yeah, for us it was just that first run, made a little bit of a mistake which definitely cost us a bit of speed. Tomorrow will be a different day, it's going to be different conditions. Hopefully all four of us can hit it right.

THE MODERATOR: T.K. back in the Fast Nine. More importantly for you, a shot at pole position for the 500.

TONY KANAAN: Yeah, I would say I'm not back in the Fast Nine, it's my first time in the Fast Nine. Pretty cool to be there.

Like Dixon said, the team did a stellar job prepping the cars. Honda, I remember last year. We were on the other side. It's good.

There's still tomorrow. Tomorrow is going to be a whole different day. But it's good to know I'm locked in. It's a good feeling.

THE MODERATOR: Colton, for you second quick. Dixie obviously leading the way. Herta second, T.K. third.



Obviously a big showing from Honda. We kind of saw that yesterday in Fast Friday.

COLTON HERTA: Yeah, before Fast Friday I didn't really know exactly what to expect. I thought it could be similar to last year. Honda obviously proved that. Yeah, great job from them.

Obviously it means a lot to drive for Honda. It feels good to drive for Honda. Obviously living in Santa Clarita, down the road from HPD.

Everybody did a spectacular job on my car. We got out there for two runs and learned a lot, put ourselves in the Fast Nine, so happy days.

THE MODERATOR: Any idea as you sit here and look at tomorrow what it might take to win pole position?

SCOTT DIXON: I don't know. I think definitely some 232s. I think once we look at the weather tonight, kind of figure out where it should be. We thought there might have been some bigger speeds this afternoon, especially after the line broke. Drag looked like it was going to be down several pounds. Thought there might be some big single laps, then some falloff.

Yeah, I don't know. I haven't looked or seen too much for tomorrow. If it's going to be similar, maybe quicker first laps, then maybe a bigger spread. I don't know. It's kind of weird, sometimes you roll out and the thing just goes. Sometimes you roll out and it doesn't go that well.

Hopefully we're in the situation of the car goes really well.

THE MODERATOR: Going out later in the afternoon will be a little bit different than what you had at noon today. What do you think speed-wise? Dixie is a 231.8 right now.

TONY KANAAN: I know what he's got, so we'll see. It's all going to depend what the weather is going to be tomorrow. We say similar, but then you think it's similar, you go out there, like Dixon said, it's unknown. We haven't had a time to talk about it. We're going to have our team meeting tonight, make our decisions.

Obviously as a team we have the luxury to try things. We

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have four cars in the Fast Nine. Hopefully somebody will take a gamble and then put it up there for sure.

THE MODERATOR: Also joined by the fourth fastest qualifier today, the top Chevrolet, Ed Carpenter is here. Obviously a former pole winner as well. A big sigh of relief to move on tomorrow, Ed?

ED CARPENTER: Yeah, it was nice to get two of our cars in. Wasn't sure how it was going to shake out after yesterday. The team did a nice job. Chevrolet gave us what we needed there. Excited to be able to be in the fight for tomorrow, see how it shakes out.

THE MODERATOR: We'll take some questions.

Q. Scott, you said this was the first time you'd gotten first in qualifying order, right?

SCOTT DIXON: I think for the 500. I kind of say things like that, then (indiscernible) normally tells me I was wrong. I don't know.

Q. You said before you kind of had shakes like an hour before, nervous. Were you more nervous than you expected to be? Are you surprised you still get nervous at this age?

SCOTT DIXON: I think it gets worse. T.K. and I were actually getting changed before we came out to qualifying. He's like, Hey, man, do you still get nervous? I'm like, Dude, I'm really nervous.

TONY KANAAN: I couldn't put my socks on (laughter).

SCOTT DIXON: I was shaking to put my socks on.

Going first, normally the Friday I felt like I've done prep, kind of understand where it's going to go. But we've made so many changes overnight, then also hadn't really had any clean runs yesterday afternoon. Our first run was the only run that we did. We were kind of downforced up.

It's a big deal, right? You're rolling out, the first time you go into turn one at 240 miles an hour, you're hoping you're going to come out the other side in one piece.

Q. Colton, Michael was interviewed. He said they were looking for a volunteer, that you volunteered. The team was like, No, let's get somebody else. Can you give us your side of that?

COLTON HERTA: Yeah, I mean, I really wanted to try to go out in that kind of range of what we're going to see tomorrow. I think conditions are going to be similar, at

least I was told that. We'll see how true that is. Maybe we just did the run for nothing.

I just wanted to see what the grip was going to be like, what the bar changes were going to do to the car. Probably a little bit too heavy on downforce, but we didn't want to do anything stupid.

But, no, car felt good. I was happy to do that for the team. So, yeah.

Q. Did you have to lobby them hard? Was it easy?

COLTON HERTA: I think we were planning on going out no matter what, so...

Q. Ed, having two cars in the Fast Nine, being the best Chevy team, is there a sense of pride here for you guys?

ED CARPENTER: Yeah, it's nice. We've been in this situation before. I think some years more so than others it's helpful to start as far forward as you can. It's hard to pass. As much as anything, just trying to put ourselves in the best position for next Sunday. It's what we'll do tomorrow.

Q. Scott and T.K., obviously tremendous accomplishment for Ganassi to have all four in the Fast Nine. Does it get awkward at all, competitive at all?

SCOTT DIXON: I think it's always like that. It's always competitive. I think that's what has pushed the team forward.

It's only a positive thing. You got to be on your game. I think that's part of why you get nervous, as well. You're competitive, and you want to make sure that you're close to your teammates, fighting for that position.

I think it's pushed the whole team forward, to be honest. It's nice to have. Pretty cool to have all four in the Fast Nine.

TONY KANAAN: Same. Probably in a different position than my other two teammates. Obviously we're friends, but they'll have a lot to prove. We're just here to win a race. I know what he's got, I know what I got. We're going to play it out.

It's not going to be about tomorrow, who is ahead of who. It's about who is going to win the race next weekend. The team has that mentality as well. We have two really good teammates. I'm probably the easiest guy as far as a

teammate. I've always got along with a lot of them, so...

Q. T.K., since you're the old guy, Jimmie Johnson is on the stage practically begging to get in your car, do you have to talk these guys into letting you have the pole for old time's sake?

TONY KANAAN: I left my beard grow so Jimmie wouldn't feel that old. He's kind of... I know how much he's suffering.

I don't know actually, because the better that I do, the more Jimmie is going to want to get in the car. I can see that.

Q. I don't know how he didn't push you out of it.

TONY KANAAN: Not yet. Not yet. I got to keep doing my thing.

I don't know. Might be my last year running the 48 probably, if it goes the way it's going (laughter).

Q. Ed, there was a point earlier today Dixon said on TV they wanted a Honda lockout on the Fast Nine. ECR prevented that from happening. Where do you think Chevy is? Do you think they're competitive?

ED CARPENTER: I mean, yeah. We have two cars in the top nine. I think we have just as good of a shot at winning a pole tomorrow as any of these guys. I've been in this position enough times before.

That's the beauty of qualifying here, you have to go out and do four laps. We only get one chance at it tomorrow. That amps up the pressure again. Everyone has to make what they think is the best decision. After we all run four laps, we'll find out who is the best.

Yeah, for me, we have everything we need to go fight for it. That's what we'll do.

Q. Any squeeze to carry the Chevy flag tomorrow?

ED CARPENTER: I think we're carrying the flag for Chevrolet ourselves, Sonax, Bitcoin, everyone that is a part of what we do.

Just as competitors, these guys talking about you get nervous. Yeah, you get nervous qualifying. I think being in a position like Scott before, going first out, I think it's always harder to be the first one to go out anyway. It's nice to watch a couple guys go. Even after doing it for 17 years, I feel like if you don't get a little nervous or anxious, you probably don't care any more.

Hopefully we can go out and have some fun.

Q. Alex said he talked the team into letting him go out, they did not want him to go out in those conditions. He says he feels stupid now for not listening to the team. Do you do anything to pick him up for tomorrow?

SCOTT DIXON: Yeah, obviously we've all spoken to him or seen him.

I don't know. It's good to see that eagerness. I've been with other teammates in previous years, they don't really want to go out. I'm sure he'll learn from that situation.

Honestly, they felt a little bit vulnerable as well with the position they were in. They wanted to better it. It was going to be pretty fast I think. Unfortunately they just kind of overstepped it a little bit.

Yeah, I think he'll shrug it off. Seems like he's in good spirits. The team will give him a good car tomorrow. He'll be super fast. Unfortunately it's part of the business, right?

TONY KANAAN: I gave him a couple of examples of mine, what not to do. I had the same issue back in '11, then repeated it again tomorrow. Try to lift him up like that.

Obviously he's taking very hard on himself. We tried to say, Look, man, you're in. They're going to fix the car. The car is going to be perfect. Don't worry about it.

I think he's okay now.

Q. What is the biggest surprise today? Is it the Penske guys or did you see that coming?

COLTON HERTA: I think for me, that was pretty interesting to see. They usually do a really good job around here. For sure that was interesting.

Yeah, this place is weird. You see that every year that somebody that you think should be really fast just ends up not being fast.

I think for right now, we're more focused on our program than everybody else's, what they're doing. For sure that Penske thing is weird.

Q. You mentioned nerves. We talk about the youth movement a lot this year. Five of the nine are in their 40s. Is there something to be said for veterans and qualifying here?

TONY KANAAN: Yeah, that we still rule (smiling). That's



all we can say. Maybe Colton can say something.

SCOTT DIXON: Colton brings our average down pretty quickly (laughter).

Q. A little more calming, the wiser you get...

TONY KANAAN: I don't think so. We just talked about it. It's worse for me now. Every year that goes by, it's worse. When you don't know a lot, I think it's actually better. You go in. Over the years I think the pressure builds up more, at least for me.

Q. Is there an advantage or disadvantage to have all four of your cars? Do you share information with each other overnight? Is it every man for himself going into tomorrow?

SCOTT DIXON: It's always an open book. I think we all debrief for a good hour afterwards to figure out how we can help each other. Yeah, it's always been that way at Ganassi. Very open book. You can't hide anything these days. You're kidding yourself if you think you can do that.

But, yeah, no, I'm sure it makes Chip really happy. He owns the team. It's his cars that we drive, so...

Q. Scott, today it was a bit of an advantage for you to go out first because of the weather conditions. What will the advantage or disadvantage be going out last tomorrow?

SCOTT DIXON: I don't know. The spread is obviously a lot shorter, right? Only nine cars as opposed to 35 or what it was for today.

It shouldn't affect too much just because it's such a quick shot. It's going to be 45 minutes or something to knock out the nine cars. I don't know.

We tried to strategize a little bit last year to be in the right spot to qualify and it didn't make a difference. We'll see where it takes us.

Q. By going out there in the heat of the day, did that help you in terms of knowing what to expect tomorrow?

COLTON HERTA: Yeah. If it ends up being like that tomorrow, yeah, I think there is something to it. For me, just kind of understanding the shift points and what's going to be best for shifting for tomorrow. I hate when they do that, when they put a different gear stack in, then it puts pressure on me to absolutely nail where to downshift and to figure out when to upshift, if I should upshift.

Yeah, it definitely helps for me. Like I said before, the downforce level wasn't the best for what we probably could have done. Everything else was right there, so...

Q. Scott and T.K., should it happen that you both start in the front row, how cool would that be considering how far back you guys go, how good of friends you are?

SCOTT DIXON: It would be great. Hopefully we can have the first four spots. Might be getting greedy, but, yeah, that would be fantastic.

TONY KANAAN: I've been saying that every time I've been up here. I'm very fortunate at this point of my career to be where I'm at. But the boss was nice to me and remind me why I was there today right before I'm qualifying. I understand now why I'm here and what I need to do.

Q. Tony, Helio is in the top nine. For you personally, when you come back here, is it like getting back on a bike or getting back on a bike on a high wire?

TONY KANAAN: I mean, the guy I lean the most on in the past few years is actually Ed because he's been doing that more often, four, five or six races. Actually last year was really awkward for me.

I guess this year wasn't as much, probably because obviously I'm driving a better car, which makes your life a lot easier. We have more resources, so on.

Coming back to Ganassi, actually even the truck that I'm at is the same one when I was there with them. My locker is exactly the same. It made me feel extremely comfortable.

But that doesn't mean you're going to drive better or worse because of that. Obviously the team has stepped it up. They've been proving that the last few years. It was a lot easier than it was for me last year when I stepped out from full-time only to do six races.

Q. (Question to Scott regarding winning the Jim Clark Award in New Zealand.)

TONY KANAAN: Scott for president of New Zealand.

SCOTT DIXON: I did record a video of that. Hopefully they did receive it.

The Jim Clark Award is a big deal in New Zealand. Actually I think through other parts of the world, as well, the UK and Scotland. Dario told me he won it several times,

too.

Just through this period of time, I wish I could get back to New Zealand to see my family, everybody. Haven't been down there for almost two years.

Yeah, it's always nice to see that. Hopefully we can win it again.

Q. Looking towards the race itself more than what's going to happen tomorrow, what is the key difference that you're seeing between the race last August and the month of May?

SCOTT DIXON: I don't know. I feel like it's going to race pretty similar. I think some of the aero additions have been good. I think for a lot of us, at least the way I think, is the ambient conditions may have a much bigger toll on it. If it's going to be hot, it's going to be tough to pass. I think we saw it earlier in the week when the weather conditions were pretty good, the passing was definitely a little bit easier.

I don't know. This race is the toughest race in the world to win. I don't see it being any different next week. If you do and are lucky enough to win this race, you can feel very proud of it.

Unfortunately there's 32 others that are pushing as hard, have a good shot at it, as well.

Q. Ed, you and your teammate obviously drive Chevys. What did you find that the other teams that drive Chevys couldn't quite find today?

ED CARPENTER: It's a hard question to answer. I think our team, everybody at our team, engineers, mechanics, do a phenomenal job of getting prepared for here, put us in position. Days like today, when it goes well, the driving part is easier than kind of the years where you qualify middle of the pack around here.

I don't know what we found that other guys didn't just because you don't ever know that. But I'm thankful that we do have a good team and people that have done a good job to put us in this position.

I also want to congratulate my daughter publicly. She won the middle school state championship today in pole vaulting, jumped 10 feet. I'm very proud of her. It's a big day for the Carpenters.

COLTON HERTA: Six inches off the state record, right?

ED CARPENTER: Six inches off the national record.

She's a stud.

TONY KANAAN: Better than her dad.

ED CARPENTER: She's smarter than me, more talented. She did set the state record. That's in the books.

Q. Rinus had great a run today. Can you talk about his development as an oval driver.

ED CARPENTER: I think he was pretty good at it last year, too. I'm pretty proud of him overcoming the testing accident he had here in April, shrugging that off. I think that shows what he's made of, how resilient he is.

I thought he did a great job to go out back when he did and better himself. He was outside looking in. He got back in. He's doing a great job.

THE MODERATOR: And your daughter's name?

ED CARPENTER: Makenna, M-A-K-E-E-N-A.

THE MODERATOR: Congratulations, Fast Nine. Good luck for pole position for the 105th running of the Indianapolis 500.

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