

NTT INDYCAR SERIES

News Conference

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Scott Dixon

James Hinchcliffe

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: Good evening. We are joined by Scott Dixon, who finished second, and James Hinchcliffe with his best finish of the season coming home third.

Scott, recap your day. Did you have anything for your teammate there on the last restart?

SCOTT DIXON: Man, I don't really know what to say about the day. It was a crazy race. There was a lot of yellows, a lot of reds. I think we did almost 45, 50 laps on the last set of tires. We didn't take tires on the last stop. They were blacks. That was real interesting.

Yeah, kudos to the team. You got to take those wins, man. He was in the right place at the right time. I think he had probably one of the most eventful days of everybody out there, flying up in the sky, then getting a drive-through penalty and all that stuff, coming out with a win.

It was just so good I think today for me just the parade lap, seeing so many people here. That's what really fired me up, I think what really made the event.

Of course, the race was tricky. I don't know what happened back in the pack. There was definitely a lot of cautions. I felt like the front group was doing really well, taking care of each other, not making these dives that maybe created some of these issues early on.

Big congrats to everybody that was involved in putting this event on. It was a killer, man. Doing a lot of PR today around the paddock, seeing so many people here, this is what INDYCAR races are all about.

THE MODERATOR: James, Andretti Autosport had a big showing this weekend.

JAMES HINCHCLIFFE: The pace of the entire Andretti squad was quick. It sucks that Colton and Alex had their problems. Ryan and I both coming home in the top five is a great result for the team.

For us in the 29 car, it's been a rough season. We've had our own troubles, but we've also had a lot of bad luck. It looked like it was going that way again today when we got stuck in the traffic jam in turn 11. Brian Barnhart made a great call, got us in the pits there to kind of cycle through when it all shook out.

We had a great car. The Capstone car was great. The Andretti Steinbrenner guys in the pits were awesome in that second stop, got us ahead of Ryan because he was ahead of us on track at that point.

It was eventful. We were at the back, front, kind of ran a little bit of everywhere today, in the middle. Like Scott said, we probably had a few too many yellows for what we would have wanted to put on a good show for everyone here.

The crowd in Nashville, unbelievable. You think this race had been going on 40 years. It's like a Long Beach, Toronto, St. Pete in year one. Excited to come back. Huge credit to everybody that put on the event. Like I said, great result for the Andretti Steinbrenner guys and the Capstone car.

Q. Was it really the tires that kept you from making a serious run at it today?

SCOTT DIXON: Yeah, I was just hanging on, man. The rear tires were definitely pretty shot. I think everybody kind of around us on reds, I think Colton did a tremendous job to fight his way back through. He had some serious speed. I'm not sure how that equated. I know he had a big lockup previous to that. I'm not sure if that caused the second situation he had when he found the wall.

For me, when the tires are bad, it's really hard to get fuel mileage as well. You can't really roll the speed you need to in the apex. It's a bad combo.

Yeah, the pace wasn't great.

Q. James, when you were part of that pileup, did you think you'd be able to come out of that?

JAMES HINCHCLIFFE: No, I mean, honestly what saved us is going red. As much as we hate that happening, I



thought they were going to drive the field through pit lane, until we cleared up the traffic jam, we were going to be three, four laps down and kind of out of it.

Credit to INDYCAR for not eliminating all eight of us, whatever it was, that were stuck back there. We had no damage. We avoided all the carnage. The traffic just blocked.

Credit to them. I think they made a good call on that one. It's just unfortunate that we created so many situations where we had to have the safety guys out there today.

Q. How important is it for you here to really put together a streak of some good finishes, make something happen for 2022?

JAMES HINCHCLIFFE: Yeah, for sure. As the saying goes, you're only as good as your last race. We've been finding some pace in qualifying the last couple events. In Mid-Ohio we got caught up in the turn one deal. Sort of kills your day. It was nice to have nothing, well I am not going to say nothing because something went wrong, but then something went right.

It's nice that our luck balanced out today. The car did have great pace. We were having to save a bit more fuel at the end. I wasn't able to challenge Scott so much. He did a great job on 50-lap tires. Credit to Firestone and him on that.

But, yeah, hopefully we're just slowly chipping away at it and we can have momentum for the last couple.

Q. During the race on social media the critics are saying half the race is under caution, two red flags, feels like a disaster. How would you answer those people who might say could this truly be a good race? What can they do in terms of tweaking it, if anything, with maybe changing the restart location or anything like that?

SCOTT DIXON: I don't know. Everybody else seemed pretty pumped. I don't know if they're drunk, but they were pretty excited (smiling).

It was a crazy race. Maybe driver (indiscernible) needs to be kicked up a bit. I think there were some regulars making mistakes and hitting people. Maybe that needs to be looked at. All the penalties need to be stronger when you cause accidents like that.

I don't know. It's a tricky track. It's really difficult. Especially on restarts with trying to get temperature in the tires, knowing that it was going to be somewhat hard to

pass, there was a lot of people trying to make it happen on restarts. I totally get that.

I don't know. It's a balance, right, that you got to try to work out. Maybe next year I think there may be some areas of track that can change a little bit that would create some passing zones, maybe make the racing a little bit better.

You look at Herta, he made the passes happen. It can be done cleanly, like he did.

Q. (No microphone.)

JAMES HINCHCLIFFE: One of the things I said when I was sitting down in turn 11 with my engine off. In Long Beach we've had this problem, too, right? In INDYCAR, on the restarts, when the green flag flies, you can pass. Nine times out of 10, that's not a problem.

What we were seeing in Long Beach, as the leader comes out of the hairpin, the green flag flies, the guy in 10th dive bombs the guy in ninth. We end up with a completely clogged racetrack. We came up with a gentlemen's agreement to not pass under the hairpin, wait till the start/finish.

I think if we did that in turn 11, said you can't pass until the start/finish line, you would have eliminated at least one of the reds and another yellow from guys just trying to get cute going into the last corner there.

There are definitely things we can look at. Look, it was the first time we were doing it, right? There's always going to be things you can improve from year one. For a first crack at it, as an event, this was pretty frigging awesome.

Q. Did you go out and sense a lot of enthusiasm?

JAMES HINCHCLIFFE: Here is the thing. This town is absolutely hopping on a weekend anyway, right? We did our little street party signing thing on Thursday. As much as we would have loved all the credit for the amount of people that were on Broadway, they were probably going to be there anyway.

To come to the race and see how many people actually took the time to show up, how many people stuck around till 8:00 to see the end. It wasn't just like some guy that heard some noise and walked in. These were race fans. There was a ton of merch, a lot of people that knew what they were talking about, knew the drivers. It wasn't just we got dumb lucky putting ourselves in a highly populous city. There's an appetite for racing here.

Yeah, we saw it. I Lime scooted or Bird scooted into the track every day. I was getting called out by people on the sidewalk. This town knew that we were here and looked like they loved that we were here, which is great.

Q. How dark was it out there near the end?

SCOTT DIXON: On the last two, I think my put my visor up.

JAMES HINCHCLIFFE: I can't do that with the vent. After the last red it was dark.

Q. (No microphone.)

SCOTT DIXON: A bit more confused, I guess, I don't know (smiling).

There was just no flow to the race, right? It was like you had six races. So, yeah, I don't know how it played or how it looked. But even our sponsors, talking to the CEO of PNC, he is like, That race was crazy.

It was exciting to watch. He's a racer himself. Everybody was cheering, cars were crashing, everything was going on.

I think from the fans' perspective, they had a ball. If there's enough alcohol out there, it's going to be a good show no matter what, so...

Q. Did you notice the water in turn three before?

JAMES HINCHCLIFFE: We were all on the radio. Hey, guys, just real quick, there's a river in turn three.

SCOTT DIXON: Somebody kicked the port-a-potty or something like that (laughter).

Q. (No microphone.)

SCOTT DIXON: I think I actually caught that on the radio. I said, He's going to win the race now.

JAMES HINCHCLIFFE: You know, I remember Dario Franchitti being backwards in pit lane with a broken nose in the Indy 500 and he won that. These races, they're not over till they're over. I learned that in my rookie season. You think you have a bad stint, doesn't matter. These things can change on a dime. That's what happened today. I think it makes it exciting.

SCOTT DIXON: I think it was definitely a thing for a while: if you changed the front nose during the first caution, there was a 50/50 shot you were going to win the race.

JAMES HINCHCLIFFE: P.T.'s last win, he went through three noses. You just never know.

Q. Scott, talk a little bit about how important today was in terms of the overall championship picture for you to get some points to make ground up.

SCOTT DIXON: Yeah, it was definitely I think a good gain on Pato. I think Alex still had a pretty decent race. They caught back some good points there. I think we're just over 40 points behind. There's definitely loads -- 250 plus points left on the table, there's lots that can happen, especially at some of the racetracks we're going to.

Yeah, big day for us for the points. Obviously a win would have been that much better. But, yeah, I think this is where it's going to separate a little bit. We have to see how that plays out.

Good day for Ganassi in general obviously with two on the podium. For us, it was a good headway for fighting for the championship.

Q. How much does this result give you confidence going forward for the rest of the season?

JAMES HINCHCLIFFE: Yeah, I mean, like I said, we've been kind of finding some pace the last few weekends. Mid-Ohio sort of ended before it started for us.

I think the team is doing a great job. I think we're really gelling at the moment. We've had a few good ones in a row. We got a couple tracks coming up that we really enjoy.

Hopefully this is some momentum that we can carry through the last five races of the year.

Q. Scott, you've closed the gap to Pato and Alex. How important was that for you for this weekend with it being a brand-new circuit?

SCOTT DIXON: Yeah, definitely. Obviously it was a tough weekend for Alex just because of the fact that he had a six-spot grid penalty through no fault of his own. Those weekends are definitely frustrating, especially on a track that it looks like you could have started anywhere. Maybe you were better off starting at the back for this one.

Yeah, obviously it's a race for us against teammates at the minute. You want everybody in the team to have great results. It was great to see Marcus grab another win here. Obviously he's closing the gap on the championship, as well. Be fun to have three cars fighting it out. I'm sure

Chip would definitely like that.

Q. Was the track as bumpy as it looked?

JAMES HINCHCLIFFE: It was pretty bumpy. Honestly, the track is actually really good. It's just the bridge. Even over the bridge isn't that bad, it's just the transitions on and off that are really the issue. If it wasn't for those, I think it wouldn't even make top three bumpiest tracks. It was pretty good otherwise.

Q. Hinch, this is an inaugural race. You are now on the podium again. How does that feel for you? It's a comeback for you. You've got to feel some emotion there.

JAMES HINCHCLIFFE: I think anytime we come to a new venue, come to a new event, it's good to be part of the opening class of podium finishers. Whenever you come to a new place, every team, every driver has the hope they are going to kind of figure it out first and have some kind of advantage.

If you look at the pace of the Andretti cars, they did a great job. Huge credit to the team. We should have had all four cars in the top six probably at the end of the day. But the way it shook out, unfortunately some of the others had problems. Two in the top five is solid. To have the Capstone car in the podium is great. To be one of the first guys on the podium here is awesome.

Q. Scott, how do you reflect on this race? You've not had a lot of time to think about it. Is it a positive in the sense of points gained on Alex or do you feel like it's a missed opportunity in the sense it's been a crazy race, but he came from 18th and won the race? How do you interpret how the weekend went?

SCOTT DIXON: I think the weekend went really well honestly for all of Ganassi. We had great speed. There were definitely some misses with the 8 car in qualifying, Jimmie unfortunately as well.

I think Alex did a fantastic job and tried to create as much damage control as possible with the grid penalty that he had. Today, honestly, man, I think with where we ended up, some of the places we were earlier in the day, it was a great result.

I don't think you can be bummed or disappointed about it. All of us, of course, want to be winning the race. That's just how INDYCAR goes sometimes. It's just not your day, and some guys just get really lucky, and that's the way it is.

I feel like over the consistency of the season or duration of

a season, that plays out for everybody. Can't be disappointed for the second place. Big congrats to Marcus.

Q. How does a driver process the notion of being back in it after a stoppage?

JAMES HINCHCLIFFE: I mean, for better or worse, it's kind of become more commonplace for us the last few seasons. So we've had a little more practice doing it than certainly the first half of my career.

Yeah, I mean, you're strapped in the car the whole time. You try to never really get out of it. You don't think about having to get back into the mindset because as long as you're in the race car, you're still in the race. You never really get out of it.

For how hot it was today, it would have been interesting if we ran more green flag laps, if we would have felt worse at the end of it. We had cloud cover, which was nice. A couple long breaks which helped take care of us.

Mentally we're all pretty used to it now. It happens from time to time. Obviously it is done to try to give the fans the best race we can give them. Certainly at the end there for a green flag finish.

THE MODERATOR: Congratulations, great results for you guys this weekend.

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