

NTT INDYCAR SERIES

News Conference

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Jimmie Johnson

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: Joining us this morning, Jimmie Johnson, driver of the No. 48 Carvana American Legion Honda and fresh off his aforementioned speedway test at Texas Motor Speedway, certainly all a part of Jimmie's rookie season as he now looks ahead to the final three races of the 2021 NTT INDYCAR Series at Portland, Laguna and Long Beach all coming up. All this as Jimmie comes off his most successful weekend in the series and his journey with a 19th place finish at Indianapolis Motor Speedway, which seems like a year ago by now.

Jimmie, good morning.

JIMMIE JOHNSON: Good morning.

THE MODERATOR: It seems ovals have been talked about for a while with you, but what was it finally like to drive one in an INDYCAR?

JIMMIE JOHNSON: You know, the early starts that we had was unique and different. I don't think other than the Rolex 24 race I've been in a race car that early before as far as running. Very thankful that Scott Dixon was there, shook the car down, Dario, Tony Kanaan, all the great support that I had at Chip Ganassi Racing.

The day went really well. I really enjoyed it. The first few outings. Was definitely quite different with the speed around the racetrack, the feel of the race car and how nimble and lightweight the car is.

But as I worked through my second set of tires and on, the car started to feel much more like home and certainly the track and being on an oval felt like home. By the end of the test session itself, I felt very comfortable and in a very familiar place, which was nice.

THE MODERATOR: I know there was a lot of number crunching that was going on after the test yesterday. One of the laps you turned had an average speed of over 214 miles an hour, which would have been fourth quickest in qualifying at Texas a year ago. The pace was there, and maybe another indicator of just how that test went

yesterday.

JIMMIE JOHNSON: Yeah, I think the test went really well. We were really conservative with our approach and just working into things. Running some laps, get out of the car, look at data, let it soak in, go again.

One thing that was a little disappointing was with only having one car and how hot the conditions were, tire wear was pretty bad. We thought we could get 50 laps out of a set of tires, and we were far short of that. So our overall lap count was down. The tire deg was much higher, which took away from giving me some laps, but I think it was a slick racetrack in more difficult conditions, which looking back on now I think was really good for me to get a sense of the car, and to obviously put up some fast lap times in those conditions feels good, as well.

THE MODERATOR: In the last week we've lost two what I would call very influential members of the motorsports community that I know you wanted to share some thoughts on. Let's begin with Randy Herzog, who was your first car owner in NASCAR.

JIMMIE JOHNSON: Was, yes. Obviously able to attend visitation and see his family and a lot of familiar faces that were a part of the journey, and sadly we lost his brother Stanley a couple of years ago. But two wonderful guys that just truly loved motorsports and then their involvement with me in the Busch Grand National division, but as you look through all the various types of racing including drag racing and off-road, they were in everything and absolutely loved it. It was a family sport to them, and their family was very much a part of it.

Sadly Randy had some advanced cancer show up in a recent scan, and we lost him in a very, very short period of time.

Deeply saddened by that, but just so thankful for the time that I had with him, and certainly his family and his interest in my career and me as an individual absolutely changed my life, and I'm forever grateful.

THE MODERATOR: Certainly someone everyone on this call knew and revered last Wednesday, we lost Robin Miller. You were able to sit down with Robin during



Brickyard weekend for a piece that aired on NBC. How special was that?

JIMMIE JOHNSON: It was. I was able to text and talk to Robin a few times before, getting him to the track. We were trying to set up an interview to do it on the phone, but he and I both were pretty motivated to do it in person at Indy. Just so grateful to have that day with him.

I was late to everything else after that because of the stories and fun that we had during the interview. He's such a passionate man for the sport, as we all know, and will be deeply missed, as well.

Q. You're clean shaven there. Was that to give you an aerodynamic edge at your test yesterday?

JIMMIE JOHNSON: Yeah, I have low drag and Kanaan has high drag. We've kind of flip-flopped roles. Just was attacked by my children with an electric shaver. They were interested in shaving dad's beard. The kids win.

Q. How did they do?

JIMMIE JOHNSON: They did well. Lydia of course wanted to use the proper razor, and I let one shave one half with the electric and the other on the other side and did the fine work myself to avoid any major injuries in that process.

Q. It's a little bit of a throwback for you so it stands out.

JIMMIE JOHNSON: It literally knocks 10 or 15 years off me easily.

Q. You're very familiar with Texas; how long did it take you to get comfortable in the car?

JIMMIE JOHNSON: You know, I would say the first two sets of tires was a pretty big adjustment process for me. Just trying to understand the lateral grip that the car had because it was so much more significant than what I felt in a Cup car.

The bumps were a lot smaller in the INDYCAR, which was really surprising to me. I felt like at that speed and how rigid the cars are, the bumps would be more so. But I guess the downforce that the car has in it, and then also probably something relative to ride height, as well, played a role in that.

I would say probably by the third set of tires I was feeling it and was really aggressive with the car. Turns 3 and 4 is pretty straightforward, but Turns 1 and 2 is quite tricky, and

to get through there flat out was kind of the goal, and on the third set of tires to really be able to pull that off and do it consistently felt good.

Q. How did the speed feel? Did it feel different?

JIMMIE JOHNSON: It did. I mean, it was quite significant to start. So low in the car, vision is somewhat limited. Just how quick the car responds to steering wheel input was pretty new and different for me, and then the line that you run is similar.

I mean, there's only so much you can do with an oval, but the awareness of the banking and how to support the INDYCAR with the banking was a little different for me, and my NASCAR line had me a little wide on corner entry and exit, and Dario and Scott, I got their attention a couple times with my wide entries and had to bring that in.

But once I kind of understood what to look for and how quickly the car would turn, I got into the flow of it pretty easily.

Q. What time did you guys get started, and did you go early because of the heat?

JIMMIE JOHNSON: Oh, I had an appearance in Arizona yesterday afternoon that I needed to make and then again here today for the American Legion. That's why I have this great backdrop in a Marriott Hotel.

But the way we could work in our eight-hour testing time window was to start early. So we started at 6:00 a.m. which meant a 4:30 wake-up call for everybody. I actually missed Scott. I was a few minutes late. He was checking belts in the seat in the race car at 5:00 a.m., which was quite impressive. Very thankful for his efforts to come and shake the car down for me.

Q. Are you any closer on your decision to run ovals next year?

JIMMIE JOHNSON: I'm definitely a step closer. I think that there are more conversations to be had with family, team and sponsors, at least another test session ahead of me before I can really make a decision, but driving the car yesterday only piqued my interest more.

Q. Driving an INDYCAR on an oval really gives the car a chance to stretch its legs on the street and road courses. You're always preparing for the next corner in many ways. How did it feel to really stretch the car out as a driver?

JIMMIE JOHNSON: It was a different experience. The

faster you go, it's almost the more stuck the cars are due to the downforce. That's something that I really didn't anticipate and felt the car would be maybe a little more lighter at the end of the straightaways and entering the corners and a little more uncomfortable, and the car was just stuck and planted. So that was an eye opener to me.

Something else that was a little different was shifting mid-corner or shifting in the corners with ease as you do in an INDYCAR and the paddle shift that's in there. So Turns 1 and 2 you go down a gear and then up a gear and kind of make your laps that way, and that was something new and different for me to get used to on an oval, and part of that stretching the legs. In an INDYCAR with a six-speed gearbox and the fact that you don't lose any time with gear shifts, the gearing is much different, and those top three or four gears are very close together to help you with either a tow or wind direction, track conditions, and if you get in the mindset of how to use the right gear and the right time was new for me, as well.

Q. Is the oval car, the oval setup, more of a chance that maybe we'll see the Jimmie Johnson that we all remember, the successful Jimmie Johnson that we used to see in NASCAR every week, that this would be really an opportunity for you to get out there and really challenge for some really good finishes in INDYCAR if you're able to get some oval races in?

JIMMIE JOHNSON: Yeah, I think just looking at facts, I'm not sure we can pull a qualifying sheet from the year before and say I'd qualify fourth anywhere on a road or street course so far this year, so just that alone. But yeah, I was able to feel the car, speak the language, work through adjustments in the car. I knew what to talk to Eric about and knew where spring split worked, and I guess they call it -- using the weight jacker button, which was cross weighter wedge is what we called it in NASCAR. Just the tools and the way you make a car go was so much more familiar, and I knew what I was feeling and I could be of help.

Ovals would definitely be an uptick in performance for me, I believe.

Q. I believe the next session that you would probably do would be after the season is over at Indianapolis, and then after that how does the process work in terms of talking to the family because I know you've said they have a big role in this decision?

JIMMIE JOHNSON: Yeah, that's really the process. I'm excited to -- eager to find out when that date in October would be for the rookie orientation. It looks like Grosjean would normally be going through that, as well. A couple

notable rookies going to the Brickyard and working through the orientation process. So that would be the next logical step for me in the car, and conversations are happening certainly with my family.

I feel like that orientation would be the next logical step on track, and then following that would be more team/sponsor related conversations, are we able to do it, how would we do it, what would that look like, and kind of use that second test session as a real moment to send me on my path towards potentially running the 500.

Q. Just to follow up on Dave's point about the 214 miles an hour, was that your fastest lap? First of all, did you look at your speeds? Did you figure out what your fastest lap is? And was that around the number that you were hoping to come in at from your first test?

JIMMIE JOHNSON: I really didn't have any expectations on lap time, and they do in mile per hour, which I was really confused all day long. Even on the dash, I had mile per hour versus lap time, which I'm so accustomed to and used to.

But I think I guess -- I guess it was 3 and 4 is when I was really up to speed, and with the tire falloff being so high, going out on new tires, you really have to be aggressive to pop off that lap time.

Those two later sets of stickers, ran those faster laps. There was more than just one, there was a couple on each set of tires in that range. For myself to have that consistency at that high pace, very hot conditions, very low grip with it being a green racetrack, I think that was all just a really good sign of how comfortable I was and willing to push the car closer to its limits.

Q. To follow up, so Brickyard would be the next test; is that correct? There would be nothing between now and Brickyard?

JIMMIE JOHNSON: Correct, from an oval standpoint that would be my next opportunity per the rules and the way it all works out.

Q. And is it just a formality that you just need to be approved to be in that? I think that's a tire test; does INDYCAR and Firestone still have to sign off on it or have you been told as long as you know up there, you're in?

JIMMIE JOHNSON: I think yesterday was -- it's funny, we've all laughed about it between INDYCAR and myself, they need to see me on an oval. It's just a technicality in the rule book, so that happened yesterday. And then the

 . . . when all is said, we're done.®

next logical step to run the 500 would be the rookie -- I think they call it ROP, and there is an opportunity for any and all rookies to go through that around the tire test date that takes place in October, so I would participate in that.

Q. You mentioned the sponsor piece of it; do you expect like if you said, hey, I want to run the Indy 500, Carvana would say, yeah, we'll foot the bill, because I presume they're on the hook for TK running Indy, they'd be doing two cars? Is that sort of how you're approaching it?

JIMMIE JOHNSON: Yeah, there are a couple layers to it. From a team standpoint, I was pretty clear that I just wanted to do road and street courses. Car, crew, how does that all work out, and how do we pull that off from a team standpoint.

Certainly we have the relationship with Carvana, and are they willing to expand to an additional race, is that another partner, how do our existing partners work.

We don't want to get too far ahead of ourselves. I first need to say, yeah, I'm in, before we really get into the granular details to sort it out, but that's kind of a process.

And I think after another go in the car, and especially on the track that would be the focal point, will really give me my decision and if it's time to pursue all that.

THE MODERATOR: You've got paddings at a garage, you've got that done, you've got understeer versus push, you've got that down, so the next thing is times on a street course, mile per hour on the oval.

JIMMIE JOHNSON: Correct.

THE MODERATOR: Your assimilation into INDYCAR continues, Jimmie.

JIMMIE JOHNSON: The amount of time a tenth of a second -- it's such a small amount. A second correlating to mile per hour is a pretty big jump so I was a bit deceived in lap time when I finally got out of the car and looked at things. Another thing to learn this year.

Q. I wanted to confirm if you did decide to do the ovals that you would also continue doing the road and street courses, and wanted to get your opinion on how much closer you think you'll be to the ultimate pace by the end of 2022.

JIMMIE JOHNSON: Yeah, that's correct. My obligations to run the road and street stuff would stay the same and we would add on to that.

When you get into the details of my progression, there's been a ton, and I know it's hard for people to see, and I know that Indy was something that was a bit more visible for everyone to notice. But Brad Goldberg, the engineering on Marcus Ericsson's car, did a nice report that showed me my progress from the spring Indy GP race to where I was in the fall.

I'm within a few tenths of a second of my teammates and within around a half of a second of pace to the outright winner of the race. To see that progression from being a second plus to now inside of a half of a second is really encouraging.

I know it's hard for everyone to see out there, but those close see and feel and sense what's going on. I'm working my way through these tracks for the first time, especially the tracks that are left on the schedule, so I have that as a part of my learning curve.

But I really hope that I can run in the top 15 this year in one of the three events that we have remaining, and then use that as my building point moving into '22.

On road courses I feel like a realistic goal for me by the end of '22 is to run in the top 10, qualify mid-pack to upper mid-pack and start running middle of the field if not forward on a more consistent basis.

Q. How tempting will it be then if you have made that progress, that desired progress, to just say, let's keep going, let's see what we can do in 2023? I'm not trying to map out your career for you, by the way, but I'm just --

JIMMIE JOHNSON: No, I'm happy to go on the record and say I'll run as many years in the NTT INDYCAR that Chip will have me and I can find sponsorship. I am having such a good time, and every rep I get in the car, I'm only going to be better. If I were to come back in '23, I think those expectations would rise up again, and my performance would be better yet.

My intent is to stick around as long as I possibly can.

Q. Just wondered, I guess a few of questions were obviously about the Indy 500, but if you do make the decision to run some ovals, will you include Gateway, Texas, Iowa in that decision making process, or are you strictly looking at the Indy 500 at the moment?

JIMMIE JOHNSON: Right now it's really the pathway to Indy. There's still so many hurdles between now and one event that to look at the others is tough at this point. But

I'm going to -- I will need to face that decision and that opportunity in the somewhat near future, and we'll just see how this next test session goes and really how everything aligns.

There are a lot more important pieces to get right and put together than just my interest in all of this, so we'll see what the future brings.

Q. I know you were quite vocal when you first made the move that you were still looking at other things, as well, like maybe a one-off in NASCAR if that opportunity arose, or you were very interested in Le Mans, as well. Is this plan going to put those things on the back burner a little bit and you're going to have to focus on the INDYCAR side of things or are you still interested in looking at those things for next year, as well?

JIMMIE JOHNSON: Yeah, I think right now my priority first and foremost is the INDYCAR program. Yeah, I'd say secondarily, the fun I've had in IMSA and how IMSA really helps me with the INDYCAR program, that's probably my second priority.

I'm running out of weekends; I only want to run INDYCAR because I don't know how other stuff fits in, but I certainly will look at any real opportunity and consider it. But priority right now is much like it's been in 2021.

Q. You need to speak to TK; he can race 57 times a year.

JIMMIE JOHNSON: Yeah, he's actually busier than me somehow. We were joking about it yesterday.

Q. Tell me this: How excited were you to be on track at Texas, given that it was your first time in an INDYCAR an on oval?

JIMMIE JOHNSON: You know, the track, especially the way it is now after the reconfiguration, it's tricky. In one respect I was nervous to go to such a tricky track middle of the summer at low grip. One car, not putting much rubber down.

But then as I thought about it more as I got closer to the test date, it would be a proper test: Worst case scenario, worst case conditions.

After I worked through the first few sets of tires, it felt so much more familiar to me, and I would even say by the end of the day I was more in tune with the car than I've been on a road or street course so far.

The second half of the test session was very comfortable for me and felt much more like home. Now looking back at having that as my first oval test, since I've had so many reps there in a stock car, it really, really turned out to be the right place.

I know we were looking at Homestead prior to, and I think that would have been a really tricky situation for the team, for myself. Tire deg is even higher yet. So it's turned out to be the perfect storm for me to evaluate an oval in an INDYCAR.

Q. In terms of testing on an oval, it's completely different to a road course, but is there anything you can take away from yesterday that you can bring forward for the rest of the season?

JIMMIE JOHNSON: Yeah, I think I'm recalibrating my senses to the lateral G's of the car. There's no better place than running flat out around Texas Motor Speedway. That's been a spot that I've been able to improve on but still missing a little bit is just trusting the car in the faster corners and knowing that going slower is actually worse. You have less downforce and the car is more comfortable, and if you do push harder and carry a few more mile an hour, the car will stick better.

I hope that yesterday was a nice recalibration for me to understand the potential of the car.

Q. You had a wealth of knowledge around you yesterday with TK, Scott, Dario; what was the best advice that they gave you?

JIMMIE JOHNSON: Man, there's so much. I feel like I'm taking in more than I can process at times. I guess first and foremost the thing that stands out to me is how good a friends they are. The fact that all three traveled great lengths - especially Dario all the way from home in London - to come in and support me. The commitment from my friends and the team. It wasn't an easy situation for the team. We have Portland coming up. We had awkward hours of being on track, a track location change. So everyone's willingness to give me this opportunity is really probably the coolest thing of it all and the thing I take away the most from.

But being on track and really being able to understand I guess more specifically to the car how much you need to sense through the weight of the steering wheel. I'm used to being sideways in a Cup car and people can see it, I know it, the car is loose. I have oversteer, I need to work on the car. If you're at that point in an INDYCAR, it's all over and you're crashing.

So that really kind of changed my mindset and the weight of the steering wheel, that's the part that really talks to you about the grip level of the car. The lighter the wheel, nine times out of ten, the more oversteer you have in the car, and that means pit. Don't wait until it slides. You're probably not going to catch it; come in and let's work on it. I would say that was probably the more specific car piece to me that we really dialed in on.

Q. That's actually really fascinating. You're transferring from a Cup car into an INDYCAR. I'm imagining there's a ton more body roll in a Cup car than there is compared to say an INDYCAR. Was that an easy sensation to get used to when cornering at a track like Texas?

JIMMIE JOHNSON: On the ovals, we've worked really hard on the NASCAR side to take out all the body roll and to control the aero platform of the car. I think that's why things felt so familiar to me as the day went on. Very similar sensation, no body movement, no pitch, yaw, any of that stuff. From an oval standpoint it was very familiar.

You talk about a road course and they're polar opposites. That's obviously part of the struggle I've been having there.

Q. Seems like your mindset is pretty much there that you're open to the test at Indy in October. Seems like the next hurdle will be your family. Do you expect any push-back from your wife or family of going to the next step?

JIMMIE JOHNSON: You know, it's -- I hate that I've joked about it over the years that it's my family, and they certainly do have a very big voice in all this, but my family is looking directly at me and my comfort. The INDYCAR that we have today versus where it was five years ago is just totally different from the aeroscreen and all the safety it brings in so many different ways, to the fact that we don't have pack racing any longer.

My journey and my comfort in this is really what my family is looking at, and I'm trying to be systematic and work through, and yesterday went very well, and it's only created more interest for me to check out the Brickyard, so that's the next step.

But yes, there will be conversations, and I guess ultimately I'm trying not to say that it's on my family and the pressure that comes with that. But it's my journey and my wife and kids support me in whatever I want to do. Certainly they have their concerns, and their concerns are mine.

I share the same concerns. I try to be very systematic and methodical and make sure that I'm in a standard -- in a

traditional box of risk in getting into a race car.

We were all very comfortable with the risks associated to NASCAR, and through my experience this year in the INDYCAR Series, and certainly being in the car yesterday, I feel that the INDYCAR is now back in that same box. There are inherent risks when you're driving a race car, and I'm good with that, and I'm on this journey right now to prove to myself that the INDYCAR is back in that inherent box of danger of driving a race car.

Long way to get around to answer your question, but I hope that gives you some insight.

Q. I know you had mentioned in the lead-up to yesterday's test about feeling like -- along with experiencing the speeds, feeling like you needed to hit a wall at some point. Sounds like that didn't necessarily happen yesterday. Were there any points in the test where you feel like you really pushed it to the limit and got close to potentially getting up into the wall or having any issues out there? I know you mentioned some of your entries into Turns 1 and 2 were a little high and didn't know if you experienced anything like that around those areas of the track.

JIMMIE JOHNSON: Yeah, thankfully I didn't have anything on entry. A few Turn 2 exciting exits that had a sense of sliding the car and where that edge was, so that was good to experience, and thankfully didn't come around on me.

I did have a pretty good crash at Nashville at the end of the bridge, 180 or so miles an hour, and have at least one data point of what that feels like.

I certainly hope to never know what it really feels like and that I can move forward and go oval racing and never hit a wall, but the likelihood of that's obviously pretty low. I guess until that happens, I truly don't know.

Look, a few data points. I've talked to my friends after their big impacts and things that they've been through, and again, just working down this road of validating where I think the safety is with the cars these days.

Q. When you look at potentially moving forward and testing at IMS in October, a longer track, I imagine a lot of what you would get out of that different from Texas is just the higher speeds; is that really what you're looking to get out of another test at IMS to make that final decision, or is there anything else that you feel like you need to experience in an oval test to firmly make up your mind?

JIMMIE JOHNSON: Yeah, I'm just working through it, so

it's hard to give these hard facts. But I do know that my perception of an INDYCAR and how you drive it compared to a NASCAR -- in NASCAR you go fast by being on the ragged edge and having the car sideways, and I'm quickly learning and understanding that in an INDYCAR you can't drive it, and you don't set the car up to drive it there. Sure, you end up there in some moments, but it's not where you live. That's been a pretty big eye opener for me, road, street, and then just this one oval test that I've done.

What I thought it would be like driving on an oval is a little different in an INDYCAR than I had coming into it. In the Cup car in some respects, although you're going slower, you're on that ragged edge, and I've had one test, so it's probably unfair to even make this statement, but my perception was I need to drive it like a NASCAR and just hang on, hold your breath every single lap, and directionally that's not how you go fast in INDYCARs.

I need to go experience that at Indy. I remember watching qualifying all these different years and just holding my breath for these guys. I need to go experience that and see what that's like for myself before I can make that decision to run in the race.

Q. You had said earlier a couple minutes ago that by the end of the day you actually had more comfort driving on an oval than you maybe even had running the road and street courses in an INDYCAR. I know you've said in several different ways that driving a NASCAR on an oval is so very different to driving an INDYCAR on an oval. So from that I guess I'm curious, what about it made it a more comfortable experience, given -- I know that your oval background is pretty extensive, but even having the two cars on that same track are so very different?

JIMMIE JOHNSON: Yeah, so an oval, the way you make speed from a driving standpoint is the same as NASCAR. I was able to identify with that yesterday.

On a road course, the NASCAR vehicle is so heavy, steel brakes, the aerodynamics of the vehicle, the braking -- braking is more about survival in a Cup car and not about creating lap time, and that's where things really separate between a Cup car and an INDYCAR.

On a road course you worry about good exits in a NASCAR vehicle. And sure, exits matter in an INDYCAR, but the magic is done when you hit the brakes.

So your focal point is different on a road and street course in a NASCAR versus INDYCAR, where on the oval I found out yesterday, it's in the same place, and not only is it in the same place, the adjustments you make on the race car

are the same from a Cup car to an INDYCAR.

Granted, the car, the shape of the car is a little different and it seems that the ride height settings are different, but the mechanical piece to it in springs, shocks, cross weight, tows, all the things that we play with, cambers, it was the same school of thought. So I felt much more at home, not only from a driving standpoint and where to create speed but also how to help the team adjust the car and work on the race car.

Q. What is the hardest part of adapting from the NASCAR Cup Series to INDYCAR? And secondly, I understand you already tested at Laguna Seca. What are your expectations for that race in particular?

JIMMIE JOHNSON: Yeah, excited to get back to Laguna. That's been a track I've always wanted to compete at, growing up in Southern California, knowing that track was not far away and just how amazing and cool it is. So I'm very excited to get back. Thankful that I've had a chance to test there.

I guess the first question, the difference is really just the potential of the car, especially in the corners, braking and cornering. It's probably three to four times what the NASCAR vehicle is capable of.

Safely trying to find the edge and find that limit has been my journey this year. I didn't want to step over it and crash a lot of cars and make a lot of mistakes. Trying to work my way up to that edge has been the most challenging part.

THE MODERATOR: You tested at Portland, you tested at Laguna. I'm assuming you would test at Long Beach if you could.

JIMMIE JOHNSON: Absolutely.

Q. You said you were surprised with the difference in speed, that you could really feel the difference between the Cup car and an INDYCAR. You ran it more than 210 at Michigan in the Cup car, so it totally feels like 10 miles an hour, doesn't seem like a big difference on paper, but were you surprised you could feel the difference in speed between the two that much?

JIMMIE JOHNSON: Yeah, Michigan is a two-mile track, so the radius of the corners are a bit more forgiving. Yeah, there's no way of hiding that extra four or five miles an hour of speed in an INDYCAR. I don't know if it's the way you sit in the car and how low you are to the ground, but man, the sensation of speed is just really, really high.

I was pleasantly surprised with how stuck the car was through the corners and I was, I guess, kind of talking about that a question or two earlier.

The NASCAR vehicle at 210 at Michigan, you're at four or five degrees of yaw through the corner just turning right, saving the car, trying to tell your foot to stay down on the floor, so you're in a very interesting conversation with yourself making a lap like that, where the INDYCAR, every time I pushed it, it continued to stick more and more.

I know there's a limit out there at some point, but it's just a different argument with your foot and how you work up to that.

And then the sensation of speed and G-forces are so high that every sense in my body is telling me to lift, but I know the faster I know, the better the car is going to handle.

Q. You had eight hours of running yesterday, so I imagine you started with the car pretty stuck and wanting to have a good feel. Could you make some adjustments? Could you start really talking with the engineers and make some adjustments on the car? And were you comfortable enough to start dictating a bit what you wanted from the car a bit more?

JIMMIE JOHNSON: Yeah, we had a close eye on the track temperature and how it was coming up. Mid-morning we were in excess of really any useful track temp for me to go out and push and to try to run fast laps. At that point we decided to work through changes on the car to see if I could feel them, where I would feel them and how they would apply to maybe what Scott or one of my other teammates, the data they had on those changes.

To work through that was really fun for me and to understand spring split, rear spring, ride height, front wing, camber, tow and piecing that all together, just how familiar it was for me.

One downside, though, is we had all of that time to test, but the tire deg was so high that we expected 50 laps per set of tires and we'd get 30, so we had to slow ourselves down because we were going to be out of tires just really fast.

And then the track temp got so high where it was like, well, let's get through this last set of tires because we're way outside of the window of track temp now. The guys were just super smart with how we worked through it and thought it was really useful.

But hoped to have run more laps and taken more time to work through the eight hours that we had allotted.

Q. You had something that a lot of rookies don't have; you can speak to five Indy 500 winners and 11 INDYCAR championships with TK, with Scott and with Dario. Did you feel like you had that luxury, and does it make it a bit easier for you to make a transition? Of course you have a huge experience on the ovals but it's still a whole new thing to learn.

JIMMIE JOHNSON: Yeah, it doesn't get any better than that. All those wins, championships, knowledge, one being teammates and then most of all being great friends. They showed up and gave me a ton of support, and I'm really thankful.

Q. Last question, imagining if you were committing to the Indy 500 and if Texas is still ahead of Indy on the schedule, is it something you would like to have the opportunity to race to have a little bit of traffic running or do you feel like the week of practice in Indianapolis would be enough to get a sense of how the car runs in traffic because you have six-hour days at Indy?

JIMMIE JOHNSON: Yeah, there's certainly a lot of time to practice in Indy. I truly do feel every rep helps, so it would be something to consider.

But really hasn't been on our radar just yet. Again, there's so many things to consider with team personnel. There are various series in racing -- I'm not sure if there are any conflicts between my IMSA schedule and INDYCAR, if I was to run IMSA again next season and figure all of that out. There are a lot of moving parts to all this yet, but every rep does matter, and I'd probably have to look hard at that.

Q. It's been so refreshing and fun seeing how much you love and take in the world of INDYCAR; what's been some of your favorite things of INDYCAR that has refreshed and made you as competitive as ever?

JIMMIE JOHNSON: I'd say driving the car. I mean, this is the most aggressive vehicle I've had a chance to drive and to really challenge myself and go this fast and feel the G-forces, the stopping power of the car and try to hone that craft has really been fun for me. It's been more about the experience of driving than anything.

Q. What songs would you say best described your rookie season in INDYCAR?

JIMMIE JOHNSON: Oh, man. Gosh, I'd need to think about that for a minute. Something that would suggest having a ton of fun while trying to climb a very steep learning curve, whatever that song would be.

THE MODERATOR: Did somebody call you out for having Sheryl Crow on the radio on that initial lap you did with Scott and Tony?

JIMMIE JOHNSON: I was riding in Scott's rental, so we'll pin this on Scott.

Q. Your trip to Arizona, I know you've got a lot of functions that you've got to be a part of at the convention; did you have any yesterday, and what are your duties today? And what do you think of having 10,000 legion members all in one place?

JIMMIE JOHNSON: Huge honor, certainly going to be a lot of fun today at the convention. Everyone from the legion has been wonderful to work with. Their enthusiasm of motorsport and the connection to the race team and the connection to all legion members has been really impressive to see and fun to be a part of.

Yesterday I was able to take many on rides in some cars out at the Radford Racing School, which was formerly the Bondurant School. A familiar place that I've run plenty of laps on, saw some old friends and instructors, met a lot of new friends with legion members, and took them on an e-ticket ride around the racetrack.

Fun day yesterday. Very hot. Obviously it's still pretty hot here in Arizona. But the convention is coming up in a few hours, and make my way over there and meet 10,000 new friends, close friends, as well.

Q. How many hours were you in a race car yesterday, counting the rides?

JIMMIE JOHNSON: That's a good question. Probably two hours for rides and then whatever time it worked out to be in the INDYCAR in Texas.

Q. Are your appearances at the convention, will you be speaking to the group or are they more private functions that are set up on the side?

JIMMIE JOHNSON: Today is a large speaking format, myself, Kanaan and Chip will be on stage doing a question and answer, I believe.

Q. You mentioned you were able to get more comfortable on the oval during this test, but how different do you think it'll feel testing in traffic on the oval like in a race?

JIMMIE JOHNSON: Yeah, that's an important -- I don't know if I can have that next step, but I've wondered about that quite a bit. I know how the Cup cars act in traffic. A

little bit of experience at some faster speeds on the road courses with an INDYCAR in traffic. But that's a great question and one that I'm not sure I have an answer for because I'm questioning that myself right now.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you so much for your time, Jimmie. We know it's a busy stretch for you, and of course we'll see you at Portland International Raceway a week from Friday. There will be a bullpen out there late Friday afternoon, so we hope to see you out there. Grand Prix of Portland comes up Sunday, September 12, coverage at 3:00 p.m. on NBC and the INDYCAR Radio Network. Thanks so much for joining us wherever you are. Have a great rest of the day.

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