

# NTT INDYCAR SERIES

## News Conference

Tuesday, January 18, 2022

### Scott Dixon

#### Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: It was a dynamic season for Chip Ganassi Racing last year: 1, 4 and 6? 1, 3 and 6? I know just the one in the middle needed or wanted to be up front.

SCOTT DIXON: Yeah, of course. Every season is to fight for the championship. Last year was definitely trying at some points, and we lost a lot of points at the Indy 500 with double points, and it was very hard -- nowadays especially with the competition, how tough it is, it's very hard to claw back deficits like that.

Yeah, it was just one of those seasons where we had some good results, but it just wasn't what it was going to take to win the championship.

Luckily we had Alex on the 10 car crew and obviously with Marcus, too, getting a couple of wins, and then with Jimmie's progress throughout the season, it was definitely a standout, I think, for our team.

We learnt a lot, I think, throughout the year, and looking forward to going into '22. It all starts from zero, so looking forward to getting going here.

**Q. Alex really had kind of a Scott Dixon type of year, meaning he won enough races, he led and delivered in the clutch. It was kind of one of your kind of years.**

SCOTT DIXON: Yeah, and I think it showed early on just the depth that he had in rebounding from maybe a big crash at Indy to a tough result with the mechanical maybe at Indy Road Course.

That's the sign of a champion. To see him and the 10 car side and the whole Ganassi group be able to pull that off was great to see. It was great to see so many smiles, I think, throughout the team on all the team levels and the progression that we made.

Hopefully we can carry that momentum through to this season and one of us have that opportunity to try and win for Chip again.

**Q. Marcus looks like after his season last year took another step. He looks like a championship contender. You've got them flanked there. You're going to have to be tops on your team, which is a bit unusual for your last handful of years at the team.**

SCOTT DIXON: Yeah, that's great. You definitely want the intra-team competition. It's definitely very strong right now, I think, and everybody kind of is maybe stronger in different situations, which is nice, because you're able to see how it's achieved or how you should try to achieve it yourself, which is easier said than done.

But to have those opportunities, I think, and to have the strong competitiveness within the group is much needed, and it's great to see.

Again, I think that will help push us forward as a team, and to see the confidence level I think from the 10 car side to the 8 car side or even with Jimmie and the progression that he made and the progression that the team is getting I think is going to be important for the season.

**Q. Jimmie just came in here beaming about the Indy 500. I sense you sense his excitement for that.**

SCOTT DIXON: Yeah, I was lucky enough to be at the first oval test at Texas with him, and just to see -- or hear his thoughts after the first run and how excited he was, him getting out of the car probably an hour later and just seeing the smile on his face, you could tell immediately he felt more at home.

He definitely threw himself into the wild, wild west I think there for this first season on the road courses and street courses, and I think that will help his confidence throughout the year, as well.

Looking forward to seeing Jimmie's progression, and man, on the ovals we know he's going to be stronger. I think our cars have been very good, especially at the 500, and hopefully that propels him throughout the rest of the season, as well.

**Q. I know I've talked to you in the past about the record book and your place in it, and you're getting up there. You're one behind Mario for second in wins, 17**



**behind him in podiums for the overall record, 10 behind him in top 5s. Are you at the point in your career where you're starting to actually look at those numbers and what you have accomplished?**

SCOTT DIXON: I think it just becomes more of a subject matter. It's not something I definitely seek out. But it's great to be in that position and to be listed in namesake with a lot of these people. It's mindboggling in a lot of senses when you reflect and go back to where it all started to where we are right now.

Obviously I think these records are very tough and have been standing for a long time. Obviously we're in the business of winning races so you kind of have to do that, and hopefully that takes care of itself.

But winning races are very tough these days, too. We'll just keep our head down. I still love doing what I'm doing. It's what gets me excited. It's what keeps me happy, including the great group of people that I get to work with. I think they push me a long way, as well, and hopefully that's true the other way around for me.

Yeah, it's good to talk about it, but right now we haven't achieved the next level, so we'll keep pushing.

**Q. Just wanted to ask you, I think your season last year was better than a lot of people probably gave you credit for when you break down the numbers and stuff. I know you usually kind of favor working on something in the off-season, particularly there's usually always something that you personally want to improve on. Can you give us an idea of the kind of focus that's been in the off-season for you in terms of taking another step this year?**

SCOTT DIXON: Yeah, there's always a lot. I think the team does a very good job of analysis. For me we kind of knew even before the season was over there was one specific tire and kind of track that was tougher for me. In low-grip situations it was very easy to saturate the front tire and then kind of dial the car out of the window.

Luckily enough, two of the teammates were probably a little more adjusted to that, and maybe just from junior categories, it applied a little bit better.

Again, going back to the start of having good teammates to be able to see how it's done I think is definitely a good step in the right direction, but trying to apply that is something difficult, too. When you have a natural style or something that has got you through a lot of different situations and having to adjust it is not always easy, but that's definitely been the focus in the off-season, whether it's talking with

Dario - I spent a lot of time talking with him in the off-season - to the engineering group. Even did a bit of driver coaching and things like that as well, and style.

There's always something that you can pick at. The tire changes again this year for those specific circuits, and then some of those circuits, if you look at Road America and Laguna Seca will be different kinds of circuits after this season, as well, with being repaved, so they'll go back to a pretty high-grip situation.

It's nice, and that's what keeps you in such -- at least me engaged is that it's constantly changing. That's the fun part about this sport is always trying to adapt.

**Q. You mentioned the 500 a little bit earlier on and how important that was last season, and it's actually about that this year because it's quite interesting you've got five very, very strong teammates going into that race but it's also the highest number of cars that Ganassi will take to a race in a long time. How do you feel in general about that kind of proposition?**

SCOTT DIXON: Well, hopefully it works well. Yeah, it's five cars, a lot of cars. I think when you understand the process and how many times you've been there before, it can be tricky, and you've definitely seen other teams kind of step on their toes in their scenarios. I think the way it's done and who's involved I think hopefully it should go pretty smoothly.

The 500 is such a mixed bag anyway. We've been fortunate, I think, as a team and as a group to have great natural speed. Hopefully that transfers to the season, as well, but it doesn't guarantee you anything.

If you look at the race last year, I think with that first caution it wiped out a good handful of the top contenders, and even if you go a lap down, it took us almost the whole race to try and get that back.

Sometimes it's just not your day at the 500, and times it can just fall in your lap. We'll work hard, as usual, but I think the group that we've got and the process that the team has already got in place I think is going to be strong as ever.

**Q. I'd be curious to know, after you had a couple months to digest how last season went, did you feel like it felt like an overall different experience just as far as the team was concerned? We had a lot more wins come from programs outside the No. 9, which I know hasn't always been the case in the last several years. I'm curious to know maybe what that experience was like and maybe what you took away from how last**

## season unfolded from a big picture standpoint.

SCOTT DIXON: You know, I think it's good because it's within the team. The main goal is to always try and keep the championship at home.

Some races and some seasons just don't -- you never get on that roll or you never get that maybe caution that favors a situation or you're constantly just on the back foot trying to get on top of it. It was just one of those years.

It wasn't the first and it definitely won't be the last in the same in the way the championship fight kind of worked its way out, as well.

You learn from those experiences, and I think that's what also recharges you a lot, too, is maybe seeing some of the deficits or areas that you're strong in and trying to counter what you need to pull out of it. But again, having the team that we did last year and enabling -- if we had a poor performance, someone on the team is actually out front fighting for the win and being able to pull that off, as well.

I think as a team morale situation, it was huge. There was a lot of happy faces and smiling faces, which is important. But for our side, we definitely had some work to do, and some of it was out of our control, but the things that were in our control we'll definitely work on and try and re-center and make sure that we get on top of those situations.

**Q. On a different note, we've heard several INDYCAR drivers over the last couple days voice some opinions about where the development of the car is going as far as weight is concerned, particularly with the next car that will debut in 2023. Is that something you've had a chance to experience yet either through testing or talking with drivers who have tested, talking with INDYCAR, and do you have any ideas on where you would like to see things go?**

SCOTT DIXON: Yeah, you know, I would say the INDYCAR right now is more of a junior category car. It's not particularly fast. It's not particularly nimble. It's very heavy. There's not a whole lot of grip, and some of the circuits that we go to are very low-grip, as well.

It has morphed into a car that has basically just changed. But I think the reason for some of the weight gains have been a huge safety situation such as the aeroscreen and things like that, which those are no-brainers.

I think you're seeing a lot of formulas kind of going down that road at the moment just in the way that the technology is shifting. We're maybe not as quick I'd say maybe on a chassis development or upgrading -- we've had the same

car since 2012, I believe, now.

That will change in due course, but the big focus right now is the introduction of the hybrid system, new engines from the manufacturers, and those are big shifts.

We'll see introduction of possibly an extra 200 horsepower. That will definitely make the car wildly different to drive. Firestone is always working to get better performance out of their tires, and we've seen that in some off-season testing with some other drivers.

So it is constantly evolving. The weight thing is probably something that's at the forefront because the cars are getting heavy, and I think that becomes a safety issue at some point just because the speeds are staying pretty similar.

I think the counter sides that we've had of introducing the safety implements have been far outweighing. In due course the series is always working extremely hard to make the sport better and the competition better. I don't think there's any formula in the world that is as competitive as what we have in INDYCAR right now, and they're making it better.

It's all on the right road, and there will be some things that they correct in the next few years, as well.

**Q. What expectations do you have this year from INDYCAR, and can you win a second INDYCAR 500?**

SCOTT DIXON: Yeah, I think you named the goal, which is to, first of all, try and capture another Indy 500 win, which has been very difficult. Just the competition as always at the Indy 500 is always crazy. It's the toughest race in the world to win.

Basically for us we always set two goals, first, to win the Indy 500 because it comes so early in the season, and secondly to win the championship, and those goals are no different.

The prospects I think for those opportunities should be good. We've had extremely competitive cars in most conditions and most circuits throughout last season and the season before. As always, there's areas that we can definitely work on, but I think we have a good foundation, and obviously as we talked earlier with the competition level and just what we have as a team with the team combo and driver situation, I think we have a great shot at doing that.

Those are the two goals always. Win the 500 and win the championship.

**Q. Now that you've had more than two decades of experience in INDYCAR and you're coming off a season like 2021, is it harder to dig deep and find a way to take on a teammate at his own game kind of thing, find a new way to tackle him, or can you lean on 20 years of experience to figure out how to beat him to the championship?**

SCOTT DIXON: I wish it was just one person. It's never that way. Ultimately I think even last year we saw four, five, six different drivers and team combos that are at the forefront. I think this year we're going to see even a wider array just because of team combinations that are going into the second or third year to personnel moving around from team to team to some of the smaller teams getting a bit stronger.

I think this year will be as tough as any, if not tougher than any other previous ones.

I think when you're in the team and you're in the environment, you can clearly see some of the situations that you can do a better job at or try and find some fixes for it, and sometimes again, it's just not your year. Whatever dice you roll, it doesn't work out, and we had that definitely several times I think this year on strategy where it looked pretty straightforward what we were doing, and ultimately whether a caution fell or whatever, it was the wrong thing to do.

Not to take anything away from what other contenders did throughout the season, but I think there's always an easy way to look back on how you could have changed things slightly and had a much better season. But everybody has those stories.

Yeah, dig deep, man. It's always a process. It's more about the process. It's always about the rebound and the fight to get back there, and that I think losing sometimes always gives you that little bit more fight to try and turn that around, and that definitely hasn't gone anywhere, that's for sure.

**Q. Also I wanted to ask, as far as race control is concerned, there have been a couple of question marks over the last season about how, for example, cars were reordered following yellow flags or even red flags in the case of Nashville. Do you guys as drivers have open discussions with race control over those matters? I'm particularly thinking of the first turn at Portland where you and Alex kind of did the right thing to try and avoid an accident and you got penalized for it and got moved back to 14th and 15th in the pack.**

SCOTT DIXON: Yeah, it's definitely been several times when you're in that situation and then it changes later, right. I think we all see that that won't happen again. To me it was black and white and something that was very obvious, but obviously for some other people it wasn't.

But there was a lot of things kind of going into that race and the discussion and how and why it turned out the way it did.

The red flag thing did get to become a bit of an annoyance to me. I think they should only ever be used to finish a race. It should never be used in the middle of a race. Nashville was unique in some ways, too, but to give eight cars that were going to go a lap down their lap back in theory from our standpoint wasn't fair.

But it is always evolving. There's things that we've had in the past and then that we've fixed and moved on from, and I can say the same about Kyle and race control. Now they're always asking how they can improve it, and they are working hard.

I think we had a great discussion in the off-season in December with whether it was practice session times to how yellow flags should work to penalties. I think everybody is kind of on the same page, which is a great step forward.

Again, I think sometimes the mistakes that we make on track or race control do, they're never ill-intended, it's just part of the process. I think they're doing a very good job of turning those around.

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