

NTT INDYCAR SERIES

News Conference

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Scott Dixon

Conor Daly

Marco Andretti

Callum Ilott

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: Good afternoon. We are joined by Marco Andretti, Scott Dixon, Conor Daly and Callum Ilott.

We'll start with Scott Dixon. Scott, you were fastest on the day. Tell us about the first day of the open test here.

SCOTT DIXON: Yeah, I think the conditions are always pretty ideal when you run this time of year. The car feels really good. A lot of it depends on track placement and how much confidence you have in the car, how big a toe you can get. I guess we lucked out on that today.

Yeah, we still have a bit of a test left. We didn't get through too much of it because how the session was kind of fragmented, then obviously finishing early. Still a lot of work to do I think for tomorrow. Maybe we'll get a bit of a time extension tomorrow depending on conditions.

All in all I think all the drivers were really confident with how the day went and how the cars felt. But I think that's maybe across the board because of conditions.

THE MODERATOR: Conor, second fastest on the day. Tell us what the conditions were like out there.

CONOR DALY: Yeah, I think we just wanted to be smart because we all kind of started very similar, wanted to get a read on the cars all across the board.

As Scott said, I think we didn't get through a ton, but we got through a few things just to make us a little bit more comfortable initially.

But, yeah, I'm pretty happy with the car right out the gate. It's something that was not -- we started very similar to where we were last year. Thankfully the feeling was very similar this year. You don't want to show up here with a

car all of a sudden -- don't want to start with something crazy out of the box.

I felt great. Happy to be here with these fine gentlemen, as well.

THE MODERATOR: Marco, unusual day for you. Welcome back, with the refresher course.

MARCO ANDRETTI: That part of it was a bit of a bummer. My day was over after I graduated from that. I didn't really get to run this afternoon, didn't turn a lap.

Yeah, it's hard to go less than 215 around here from 17 years of doing the opposite. Sometimes, as Scott and I were talking about, the car feels worse at that speed.

Yeah, it's not very confidence-inspiring. I think it's the opposite to go that slow because the car doesn't feel very good.

Got through it. Teammates are happy with their cars. As Scott said, everybody is pretty happy right now. The temps play a part in that.

THE MODERATOR: Callum, third fastest on the day, rookie. Tell us about it.

CALLUM ILOTT: Yeah, not too bad. First day of testing. I think I got a bit of confidence in the car. The car feels good. So far with the Juncos guys, it's been great. Obviously have to go through the rookie program, which is supposedly more difficult than driving around at 220. Getting used to that. Getting use to the car, the positioning.

Yeah, so far so good. Yeah, I can't complain.

THE MODERATOR: We'll go ahead and take questions.

Q. Did any of you guys have any issues with the grip level that basically ended practice early today?

CONOR DALY: The first thing I said all day was I thought the warmup lanes felt slick. I didn't know if I was just a bit of a weirdo, but then I saw Alex spinning, so it made sense.



Q. Why do you think the warmup lanes are slick? There was talk on TV about penetrant had been added to help water dry off on track. What is your understanding of what's going on?

SCOTT DIXON: Conor should have an idea (smiling).

We had a sealant, but it's the first time since 2018 the pit entries and exits have been done, so...

I don't know. I know when we did the engine test here, the painted sections of the circuit were quite slippery to start with, then it comes good. That hasn't come good yet.

CONOR DALY: I don't think that's coming in.

Q. And the track?

CONOR DALY: The track surface feels good. I think, like Marco said when we walked in here, you can usually get out of pit lane, be flat right out of the gate. I think there was a little bit of nervousness on maybe we can't be flat out of pit lane.

I mean, it just took a little bit of conservativeness. I didn't necessarily say it would have been worth stopping the whole day. I think we probably could have still kept running because the track surface was fine. It was quite enjoyable running in traffic, getting a feel for it again. I didn't think it was worth stopping the day. Obviously since people were spinning and crashing, yeah, that's probably not great.

Q. Callum, can you speak to your expectations of what you thought today would be like, how those were met or not met? Some general impressions.

CALLUM ILOTT: Yeah, obviously after Texas, it makes it a lot easier coming into an event like this. I think here you're running closer to the walls. In one way it's a bit more technical, in another it kind of makes it a bit easier, as well.

Yeah, with the way the rookie program works, in one way it works quite well that you kind of find your lines and find the route of the track, but then at some point when we were crossing over and running above 215, I had a few moments. You have to set up the car differently for a 210 to 220 lap. That was a bit where I got nervous and sketchy. I came in and needed to solve that.

Days like this with a green track and everything, it can be quite easy to come up to pace. I think so far I've got it. I think so far, as well, throughout the weekends it's been a good start. I want to continue that momentum instead of

staying there and everyone improving.

Obviously we got a long way to go. But so far so good. I seem to pick up the ovals fast enough, but I need to kind of continue that.

CONOR DALY: It's really because Callum and I had dinner last week and we got to talk a lot about what was going on here. I'm happy to see him up here with me.

Q. Where was your first visual of Indianapolis Motor Speedway? Do you remember taking a look at it? When you get here...

CALLUM ILOTT: It was when Conor told me about it back in 2013 when he came over to Europe (laughter). No.

It probably was when I was flying over, landing in the first time, probably end of August, early September into Indy to come to do the seat fit for the races at the end of last year. With our shop being right next to the track, it's pretty big. We don't have anything like that in Europe really.

It's super impressive, but I think you hear a lot about it. Driving it is one thing, but I think driving it on the day in the 500 with all the people is why you guys keep coming back to it.

Q. Scott, on the broadcast after practice had been called, Will was talking about how scary it was being a passenger in his spinning car there on the short chute. With your experience back in 2017, can you attest to how dangerous a car spinning in that area of the track is?

SCOTT DIXON: Well, I think any situation like that is not great. I think Will was extremely lucky there that the car didn't roll back any further because it would have been massive.

To compare situations like that is pretty tough. It was in the middle of the race, somebody crashed in front of me, had nowhere to go. His, he could have lost it on the pit exit.

Yeah, I'm sure he had a few bowel movements in that situation. I know I would have (laughter).

Q. Going into tomorrow's practice, I'm sure the series and track will do whatever they need to do, but for anyone that wants to touch on this, when you have seen three different cars spin in that area of the track, is it difficult to put that in your back of your mind and do the same thing you've always done?

MARCO ANDRETTI: I was talking to them. I don't like putting my fate in other people's hands. If I'm on the track, I don't want, you know, somebody -- and vice versa.

I was talking to Jay and Kyle about it. Like, I mean, we were at first going to talk about the two-stage limiter. I think it's such low grip, going from stage one to stage two would be sketchy with wheel spin.

If they could grind the track, that would be perfect. I don't know how long something like that takes, what a process that is. I would feel a lot better with that, for sure.

That's the scariest part of our business. They probably weren't pushing until then, right? That's why they didn't feel it. I felt it on my first run because I get a lot of feel for that going out of the pits. I said, This is going to claim somebody today. I didn't know it would claim three or four. Hopefully they find a remedy.

CONOR DALY: I think it's also cold and it's day one. I think it's definitely, like, just tell everyone, Hey, I think it's more important for us to get on the track and just continue to keep doing laps. Every lap that people are leaving the pits, it's probably going to get better.

Again, every lap we feel more comfortable. We're like, Oh, let's go faster out of pit exit. I think, again, it will get better. Obviously there is something that is different.

Again, I think the more laps the better. I don't think it's worth shutting it down. I think obviously us drivers just want to get out there and get into traffic quite quick. That means trying to leave the pit box quite quickly. It's unfortunate, but I do think we can run if we just try to be a little bit more responsible out of the pit lane.

CALLUM ILOTT: No one has been on it for six months since it's been sealed. Maybe it just needs to be rubbered in a little bit. I don't know.

Tomorrow with a bit more temperature...

Q. Scott, with Ganassi going up to five cars for the 500, what impact does that have for you particularly, then having T.K. back on the squad as well?

SCOTT DIXON: You know, I think it's great. Obviously it's a great group of people. It's tough, I imagine, just on the team side. Everybody is struggling right now to find people, right, find mechanics, find engineers, find anybody right now. It makes it kind of thin.

I think we went through a pretty tough growing stage with adding an additional IMSA car, Extreme E, all that stuff

going on, and then a fourth car on the INDYCAR side and fifth here.

The way the season is laid out, I don't think we're too bad because I think the IMSA program will take most of that grunt. There's a lot of depth to the team. Hopefully not too many issues.

As far as everybody working together, it's a great group. It's been a lot of fun already.

Q. When it comes to practice, you'll be up to practice as a group of five like Andretti Autosport, as well?

SCOTT DIXON: That would be the goal. It doesn't always work out that way (smiling).

It depends on people's schedules. When you have more, it's much easier to do that, even to join some of the other groups and make a bigger pack. It gives you a little more flexibility. It is nice to have that. Hopefully we can use that, for sure.

THE MODERATOR: I'll excuse Scott because he has another obligation he has to get to.

SCOTT DIXON: Good job you guys (laughter).

Q. What piece of advice, if you could give the rookie one piece of advice, what would you guys tell him?

MARCO ANDRETTI: I'd say trust your butt. Sometimes you want to think you can do something different. But normally if the car is trying to tell you something around here, I think it's trying to tell you something.

CONOR DALY: Yeah, even I at the end of the day today, I was just like, let's just keep our program in sight here, one lap at a time.

Even that last run that we did was cut short. We came back in. Do we need to make a change? I said, Probably let's just keep running. I have tools in the car myself that I can work on. It's only day one of a very long program, so...

He'll be fine. He's a smart kid.

Q. Marco, how exciting is it for you to be back in action at the 500 and actually at the Speedway?

MARCO ANDRETTI: Yeah, I was telling my team, it does feel different. Usually it's a continuation of the season. I think I'm just more excited actually because obviously I'm putting everything into this throughout the off-season, stuff like that.

Yeah, I think kind of just more chomping at the bit to get back behind the wheel. It was good to get a couple runs. They slowed me down a bit to pass the phases, but we got through it. Now we can actually get to work.

Q. How exciting is it for you to be back on track getting ready for the 500? Is it the case that you have pressure on yourself or is that mental pressure for yourself instead of the team?

MARCO ANDRETTI: I mean, it's my 17th, so I'm just trying just get through it and tap into some experience, balance that with the speed of the rookies, try to be smart, then.

Yeah, I mean, hopefully just be there when it counts. We have a little bit of a car speed issue right now which makes life a lot more difficult at the Speedway. Horsepower makes everything a bit easier. Hopefully we can close that gap from now until when we come back for the race.

Yeah, kind of a second year in the row where we don't have the fastest car on the team by a longshot. That makes it difficult. Probably right now if we had to qualify today, we would probably qualify in the 20s. That's not exciting to me.

But, yeah, as far as just mixing it up with these guys in traffic and stuff, it's a blast.

Q. Callum, just wanted to know how difficult has it been this season but also here at Indy today not having a teammate?

CALLUM ILOTT: Yeah, I mean, I miss a reference a lot of the time. Well, I have no reference, shall I say, a lot of the time. With Texas, it was a building weekend, lots to learn. I want to say we came out of that weekend with a lot of things to improve, which we've started to work on here, which is good.

The problem is, it's slower paced than having a teammate, for sure. During the weekends, you can't split the directions and try and find out the best way.

But I think, to be fair, where it's kind of really made me struggle is Long Beach, for example, a track I raced at at the end of last year, had a good feel for. We started up not where we should have been really. The progress we seem to be making kind of gets hindered.

But, yeah, without a teammate, it's difficult. I'm a rookie, the team's a rookie. It's hard to get the direction sometimes. But we're making the best out of it. I think we're doing a better job than some people. I also think if

we continue the momentum, get some of these improvements solidified, we can definitely do a good job.

Yeah, like here we can show a good bit of pace every now and then. We got a lot of people working behind. It's a long year. I hope we can put some good results in.

Yeah, a teammate sometimes would be lovely. Sometimes you may not like them, but... I'm sure they all love their teammates (laughter). I think I'll be the only one complaining.

No, no, it's all good. I would like one at some stage. We'll see.

Q. Back to your rookie orientation. What was the experience first hitting the track?

CALLUM ILOTT: Yeah, cool. Again, it's a bit tough, like I said, with running a bit slower. On the other side, the track's awesome. It's a real challenge, especially when it's quite windy, trying to get the positioning and feel at that speed. Then when we come on after the rookie orientation, you're out with 33 cars on track, yeah, it's a bit tough to find the space.

You start to learn the technicalities of oval racing, which was something I had to learn quite quickly in Texas. But, yeah, it's awesome. The place is ginormous. Yeah, good load of fun.

Q. Everybody shows up here with a checklist of things you want to get accomplished. How hard is it to work through that checklist with changing weather conditions, track conditions? Does it get frustrating when you can't check off a whole lot from your list?

CONOR DALY: I think this year, from what I remember, it's actually quite consistent from year to year when it comes to the aerodynamics that we've got, the changes that we can make when it comes to small bits and pieces, whether it's wickers, barge boards, straights, whatever it is.

For us, the list I think was smaller than it has been in the past in my experience. I think in general you just want to do laps, just knock it out, kind of get yourself back into that 220-plus mode. I'd say that's kind of the summary of it.

Q. Callum, being a rookie?

CALLUM ILOTT: I've noticed sometimes you kind of play catch-up with the conditions, which has been one of our main issues at Texas and Long Beach, obviously Texas being the oval.

Coming here it's like we've got to get our items in but not get chased into this getting it wrong with the conditions, shall I say, and always trying to be ahead with the changes that kind of brings.

Yeah, we have our checklist. There's obviously the lone car running, (indiscernible) and the race running, which can be quite temperamental at times with all the gaps, the conditions, trying to feel what it is.

I've got to get through it, I've got to learn on the way, try and give the most useful information I can. But these guys have a lot more experience, so I'm sure they can answer that better.

Q. Anything for you, Marco, coming back here, knocking the rust off?

MARCO ANDRETTI: My normal saying, comeback to that, it's the same for everybody. But for me it wasn't today because I didn't really get to run at all.

Yeah, I mean, I definitely missed out on a couple group runs which I'm pretty bummed out about. This is a place where you have five. That's why the one-off guys can make it work because it's not like Long Beach, you practice, qualify, race.

We have some time to catch up. Yeah, I mean, it's a bummer to lose track time whenever you lose track time.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you, gentlemen, for coming in. Have a great day tomorrow.

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