

NTT INDYCAR SERIES

News Conference

Sunday, August 7, 2022

Scott Dixon

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: Now joined by the champion of this year's Big Machine Music City Grand Prix, the driver of the No. 9 PNC Bank, Chip Ganassi Racing Honda from Auckland, New Zealand, Scott Dixon, with -- obviously, we know some of the bigger numbers -- second win of the season now, 53 for your career, which moves you out of the tie with Mario Andretti. 14 now behind A.J. Foyt.

We were talking about this earlier. This was the fourth closest road and/or street course event in INDYCAR Series history. Just over a tenth of a second, .1067 10,000ths of a second. So congratulations.

Another W. You're moving up. Things are getting close for the championship as well.

SCOTT DIXON: That was wild. It was a wild day. We had a good start. I thought things were going well, and then we came in for the first stop, and the air jacks failed or the hose failed. We went all the way to the back and got into the chaos in turn five or six and just got rolled over the back and hit pretty hard.

Actually, we couldn't get the wheel off because it was stuck on the brake caliper. Took the team a lot of time to get that off, but then it ripped a bunch of the underfloor off of the car as well and all the strakes.

The car was bent and broken, but for us I think strategy-wise to take no tires on that last stop was probably the key. We were able to jump a couple and have enough fuel to get towards the end, and to the end, but it was very difficult to drive.

The car just had no grip. Each time we had a restart, I was just praying for another accident. Some of those came. Some of them didn't. Another lap with McLaughlin would have been extremely tough to hold him off. He was just super fast, and I think just in a better situation.

Really cool to have a New Zealand one-two, which I'm guessing is the first time ever.

Q. Second.

SCOTT DIXON: I forgot about that. Time flies. Proper. Yeah, the other one, he had no chance.

THE MODERATOR: The numbers are, what, six pit stops, take a penalty as well. To overcome all of that, you are now just six points out of the championship. I know you are concentrated on the W here, the win here, but you're very much back in contention for a seventh championship.

SCOTT DIXON: That's wild. I hadn't seen the points yet. These races can be all over the map. And honestly, we had a really fast car all weekend. We just never really got two consecutive laps together, and we got kind of hosed in qualifying.

I was so angry after qualifying because I knew we had great speed. We saw that in the warmup this morning that the car just had generally great pace.

Yeah, you know, this race is tough to read. Last year was much the same for us where we just tried to stay out of trouble, but sometimes when you crash and almost flip the car like Marcus did last year, and us today where we ripped the back part off the car, sometimes just good omens that it's going to be a good day.

Yeah, worked out perfectly, but kudos to the team. It was a tough one, and these ones are a lot of fun because it's such a big team effort, and what we're able to achieve today was -- we got everything.

Q. Were you seeing red when the red flag came out? Because a lot of people on your crew were questioning whether that was necessary. Understand that INDYCAR wants races to finish under green, but there were a lot of people that questioned whether it should have been a red flag.

SCOTT DIXON: I'm a racer, man, and I hate seeing races go out under caution. I had the same situation today. We were watching the EMSO a race. I'm like, oh, this sucks, because you just watch it count down, and nothing happens.

I know what they're trying to do. I respect it as long as it's

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the same every time. And over time, if you are in the right place or the wrong place, it will play itself out.

I think all the drivers just ask for consistency, and that was very true from what we saw here last year to some other races that we've seen. I think that's what the fans want to see.

Ultimately, the last lap and a half for me was just so tough. That's how it should be.

Q. Also, Scott had more push-to-pass than you did. He says he played it too conservatively on the restart. How perfect did you play it on the restart to make sure he didn't have a chance at you?

SCOTT DIXON: I actually got myself into a bit of trouble on the restart. I kind of preloaded the overtake, and as soon as I took off, it just spun the wheels, and I think -- I have to look back at it, but I remember just looking at the left wall. I was kind of sideways, and I'm like, oh, my God, I just lost the lead here. But he must have had a similar issue where he couldn't put the power down.

Yeah, it's kind of fun that they add that with two laps to go. It's open for overtake. Honestly, I think I had almost 50. He had 60 maybe. You can't really use that here on a lap and a half, two laps to go.

It definitely added to pushing some buttons and trying to hold that power to the ground, but definitely made it fun. I think I used almost all I had left.

Q. (Indiscernible) Mario was here today, unlike Toronto (indiscernible)?

SCOTT DIXON: I saw him earlier in the weekend. We had a great catchup at Indy Road Course. He is such a great guy and such a great ambassador for our sport. I'll definitely see him hopefully in a couple of weeks. I just love talking to Mario. It's a lot of fun.

Q. When you talk about the omen of having things go wrong, knowing that Marcus did this last year almost the same way, were you thinking that during the race, that there's a template here to win this race with things going awry?

SCOTT DIXON: No, at the time you're like, oh, our day is ruined, our day is ruined. And I think you're okay when the car is not damaged, but our car was pretty damaged. Like the steering wasn't straight. The rear left suspension was bent. The underfloor was pulled off. The strake we had to rip off as well, which it's hundreds of pounds of down force. So I think we had to take five or six turns of front wing out

of the car.

Those situations you know that the day is going to be long, and ultimately, when it comes down to the fight, you're really not going to have a lot of speed.

We were just trying to get through all of it. You kind of hope for those situations, the good part of it, and you know it's possible. That happened again today. Yeah, you always hope, man. You always hope.

Q. I think it worked out well for you and Palou and one other person who pitted before that yellow that kind of caught Scotty up. Did you know that McLaughlin had a pit stop that dropped him back to 16 (indiscernible)?

SCOTT DIXON: I couldn't even keep up with my day, man. I think I went to the back two or three times as well. I knew he had great speed all day, and honestly, to get tires at the end, I don't even know what tires he was on. I'm guessing blacks.

I knew he was going to be super aggressive. He had to be with where he is in the championship, and he has been damn fast all weekend. It was a hell of a job for him to come from where he did.

Q. Just one more. Championship outlook for you, for being six points out, I know Gateway is its own animal being an oval, qualifying doesn't matter as much, but the qualifying for you seems like it's kind of been an Achilles heel this year. Is that going to be the key at Portland and Laguna?

SCOTT DIXON: If we have smooth weekends like Toronto, it bodes well. Indy road course was just a chain reaction of things that should never happen. And then here I think my first would have got us through Q1, and then the 28 was right in front of us, so that screwed my first lap, screwed my second lap. I had to abort that.

Then I got backed into the 6 car. It was just the worst situation I could be in. We missed by 900ths, but honestly, it was like a half-assed lap. We didn't get anything out of it.

Those days are frustrating, and that's why I was pissed off yesterday. Some of it is self-inflicted because we went off kind of off sequence with everybody else, and that's what typically happens.

If we get it right, I think the car is fast, and we can have great qualifying efforts. But as we know, it's not easy these days. You make one little mistake, and you are going to be at the back like it happened.

Q. You came in fourth in the points. It's a tight -- lots of drivers. Did you think you were still in it before today?

SCOTT DIXON: Yeah, for sure. You're in it until you're not. I've been in many situations -- I think probably the biggest one like that was with Montoya. I think it was double points back then, but we were 60 points out or something. Maybe more. That's the point. You are never out of it until you are. We'll keep digging.

Q. You've raced teammates for titles before, three of you from Ganassi, one of them has a little bit of strange situation. Does everybody get to race each other fair and clean going forward?

SCOTT DIXON: Yeah, I think so. I don't know what you are referring to. (Laughing).

Q. Would you like me to bring you up to speed?

SCOTT DIXON: No, I'm good. That's not my deal.

Q. I think I probably asked you the same question last year, along with (indiscernible) and Marcus after the race last year --

SCOTT DIXON: You normally just asked me I haven't won after this many races. (Laughing).

Q. Nine cautions last year in this race. I think we had eight this year. Similar amount of caution laps. I know it seems like a really exciting race, but I don't know if there's any way that the series or the promoter can do anything different to have such an exciting race with fewer cautions? Do you feel like there's anything that can be done, or is this kind of just what Nashville is maybe going to be?

SCOTT DIXON: I don't know. It's kind of weird once you get into situations like we have. I get the congestion once you get four up to five and six because the decel is kind of weird. If one car makes a mistake, then it's a bit of a chain reaction.

The other 90-degree corners are similar to a lot of places we go, and we're not sure why it happens. I think they did a very good job on opening the sight line in a lot of plays. Especially turn 11 and even turn 2 and turn 3.

I think some changes will come in the future for kind of that 4 through 8 section once that construction is done, and they're talking about even maybe we'll go up another block and then take a left, which would be great for a passing zone as well.

The adjustments that they did this year, especially the transitions on and off the bridge, were huge. It was much easier to get into turn four this year. I think you saw a lot of overtaking going into there.

It's the second race here. I don't know why there's so many cautions. It's kind of weird. It is very slippery off the line, and I don't know why that is, but kind of we see that sometimes at St. Pete, too. Especially late in the day, late in the race. Restarting on older tires can be very tricky because it's very hard to keep the temperature on them.

So I don't know. I guess it was one less, so we're moving in the right direction.

Q. All the restarts moving onto the bridge, some of the guys that have come in here before felt like, at least when they were taking restarts, maybe more toward the back of the field, there was just so many guys carrying so much speed into turn nine that had been shrunk down. Do you like where that restart zone is now? Or I don't know if you have any suggestions if you aren't as much in favor of it.

SCOTT DIXON: It's better than what we had last year. I had a moment, too, where you come over the top, and then everybody is stopped. It's kind of maybe a big accident waiting to happen unless they kind of make you go at the top of the bridge so you still have a sight line of people in front of you, and everybody that you do see is accelerating.

I think even on the first restart I kind of slowed down to the cars that were in front, and then the two behind me just went. It's because they, I'm guessing, didn't see coming over the top. A lot of it was some weird timing.

It's definitely much easier when you are at the front, that's for sure, but there was a huge accordion effect coming over the top once you were kind of 10th or 15th back. I don't know how to fix that unless they go at the top.

Q. You saw on the TV in your post-race that Chip did congratulate Alex. They shared a short conversation. I think the last time we talked to you about this was back in Toronto when things were still really fresh. Does the team still feel fairly normal, or as normal as it can be, given everything that's going on in the background?

SCOTT DIXON: Yeah, I think so. We're here to win. Everybody is trying to win. That's what I've always loved about this team.

Obviously, this is a strange situation, and it hasn't changed

for Chip. The pre-race meetings are the same, and all of our cars are trying to win this championship.

I know Alex is trying to win this championship as much as he can. It's in his best interest to, as it is all of ours. Yeah, some stuff gets a bit awkward here and there, but we're all here to win. That makes it pretty simple.

Q. In your title seasons you beat de Ferran and Helio, Newgarden, Montoya, and you had a couple of close ones with Dario that he came out on top on. Now you have Power. I don't think you and him were necessarily the two main competitors any of those years. How much are you looking forward to having that situation where now you are going up against Will after so many years of either he is on top or you are on top, and now it's both y'all there?

SCOTT DIXON: I think we've had some pretty tight championships throughout. I think probably, from memory, you're right. Most of them came down to a Dario-Wilson, or two that I remember for sure where it came down to the last race.

I think Wil has done a phenomenal job this year. He has been much more mellow than normal, which is strange to see but good to see. It's cool.

He is doing an amazing job. He is going to be extremely tough to beat. Team Penske, they're the benchmark as always and ones that you strive to beat every weekend.

We'll see where it goes. It's going to be tough, and I'm sure the points are still tight between the top four or five, and anything is possible.

THE MODERATOR: 43 points separate the top five.

SCOTT DIXON: There you go. Anything is possible.

Q. How valuable is the experience you have with your team? Obviously, this is only the second race that you've had here with that experience of the team. It's a day like today, yes, you win, but it's a day like today that you'll look back and say that was a championship day. We were 14th. We were all over the place. Come back to win it. Days like today is what championships are made up, and where does it stack up as a win on that toughness level?

SCOTT DIXON: Yeah, we've had some wild wins for sure, and ones that you maybe didn't expect, but, again, you kind of think more about the ones that got away. It's kind of weird like that.

This feels great right now, but I'm sure tomorrow I'll be thinking about the ones that I lost or screwed up. It's definitely up there as far as a strange race goes. I think the issues that we had throughout, the experience is kind of probably the same across the field, right? It's the second race here. Most of the teams stayed pretty much the same I think as far as working with people.

It is nice to have the consistency this year with the same four drivers. It's been a lot of fun to kind of start to work out back to the days of Dario where you would have a format. The 10 car would do this; the 9 car would do that. It's nice when you start to form those changes and understand where those things help you.

Q. How much do you think about Indy and where you would be had, let's say, you finished third or you win the race?

SCOTT DIXON: Yeah, I lost 76 points to Marcus at Indy. Yeah, I look. You know, it sucks, but what am I going to -- I can't do anything about it now. Try and win it next year.

Q. Before the last restart, the NBC pit reporter spoke to Mike Hull, and he closed his comments about how good you were in those types of situations and how good you are at what you do, period. Talk a little bit about how good he is at what he does and the impact he has had on the tremendous success you've had in your career.

SCOTT DIXON: It's a team effort, man. Mike has been a key on this team with the direction it's gone, the partners that we have since I first joined it in 2002.

Chip, obviously, is the top guy, but Mike makes a lot of the hard decisions and decisions that are week in and week out, and he is definitely very hands-on.

He has definitely been that calm voice on the radio for, wow -- I think it's only -- I think I didn't have him maybe for two or three years throughout the 21 years.

We understand each other very well. We kind of know what the other one is thinking, I think, throughout races like this. But ultimately, we're just trying to win. That's what this team has always done very well. That's all they care about. There's no politics. There's no BS. It's just how do we get better cars? How do we get people to work together better and ultimately win races? He has been amazing.

Q. You're kind of known for closing seasons strong. I think I just looked. You've got 51 more points over the last five races than any other driver. Any reason why

**you seem to close out seasons so strong
(indiscernible)?**

SCOTT DIXON: I think '20 was the first time we ever started so strong, but I think all the other championships were really big comebacks in the second half. Trust me, we don't try to do that. We try to do it like '20 where we start strong and lead the championship from the start.

I don't know, if we could put a finger on that, then we would work out both ends of the championship. But it's tough, man. I think it goes back more to how the team functions. They just never give up, and I think when they get into situations where they can grasp on to it and hang on to it and make it possible, then they never lift, man.

THE MODERATOR: David Turner was asking on the Zoom the same question about how Chip's line of "never giving up" really resonates throughout the whole team.

SCOTT DIXON: Yeah, for sure. Chip, even today, was just -- all four cars had a strategy that was possible to win. I think that's more so at street courses where you have these crazy kind of situations more so and that "never give up" attitude.

We got the big-ticket item of winning the Indy 500. It's pretty cool to look at Chip, current champion and current Indianapolis 500 champion. That's a big deal and we'll try and all do, is "never give up," and try to keep the trophy at home.

THE MODERATOR: Add to that on the West Coast. That will wrap things up.

SCOTT DIXON: Thank you.

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