

# NTT INDYCAR SERIES

## News Conference

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**George Levy**

**Chip Ganassi**

**Scott Dixon**

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: Good afternoon, everyone. On behalf of the Motorsports Hall of Fame of America we welcome you to a very special announcement involving the 2024 induction class.

Joining us today, some very familiar faces, Scott Dixon, six-time INDYCAR SERIES champion. To his far left, long time car owner Chip Ganassi, a member of the 2016 Hall of Fame class.

Let's get right to it. Here to announce the 2024 class, we'll turn it over to George Levy, president of the Motorsports Hall of Fame of America.

GEORGE LEVY: Thank you. As you know, the Motorsports Hall of Fame of America celebrates all forms of motorsports, and only one person from each discipline is inducted each year.

Induction is decided by a straight vote among 200 voters, half of them journalists and media members, other sports, the other half of them inductees themselves like Chip, Mario Andretti, Rusty Wallace, many more.

When the seven names I'm about to announce are inducted, it's because their peers, not us, decide they belong. The seven members of the class of 2024:

In the drag racing category, the all-time winningest Top Fuel Funny Car crew chief, Austin Coil.

In the technology category, the inventors of the HANS device, which has saved so many lives, Jim Downing and his brother-in-law Dr. Robert Hubbard, who developed that together.

In motorcycles, a desert racing legend, especially in California, equally legendary Hollywood stuntman Bud Ekins.

In stockcars, the only person who I think has more championships than you, Jimmie Johnson in the stockcars category. Seven-time NASCAR Cup Series champion.

In at large, four time SCCA national champion, and eight-time INDYCAR SERIES winning owner, Paul Newman.

In sports cars, 1966 Can-Am champion, and championship winning constructor, John Surtees.

Wait, that's only six. Oh, that's right (laughter).

It is my great honor to announce the class of 2024 inductee in the open-wheel category, the man who is second all time in INDYCAR SERIES championships, second all time in INDYCAR victories, and still going strong, and he's only chasing one man, which was the very first inductee in the open-wheel category, A.J. Foyt. I'm referring, of course, to Scott Dixon. Congratulations, Scott.

SCOTT DIXON: Thank you.

THE MODERATOR: Congratulations to the entire class. Great to have Scott with us today.

Scott, what an honor here. I remember you were part of the announcement with your pal Dario Franchitti not all that long ago. To be voted in first year of eligibility, while you're still competing, what an honor.

SCOTT DIXON: Yeah, an amazing, amazing honor. Thank you so much, George. I think the phone call that we had when you told me, I didn't think it was real, so...

Extremely honored. I've gone a couple times for Chip's and Dario's as well. Such an amazing event.

The first thing that came to mind was reminiscing, how I got started in the sport with my family, with my parents, then obviously very large and almost the whole portion of it with the successes with Chip. I've been with this team for over 20 years and we've accomplished a lot together. Some tremendous memories.



But, yeah, the hard part is looking back, but also trying to look forward. I tell you to no extent everything is eyes forward and trying to capture that seventh championship, many more wins, another Indy 500 win and everything.

Yeah, right now it's eyes forward and trying to make these records even more. But can't thank you enough for this opportunity, and extremely, extremely honored.

GEORGE LEVY: It's the voters who decided. I think they made the best possible choice.

SCOTT DIXON: Thank you.

THE MODERATOR: I know it's eyes forward for you. Do you ever think about the young kid, New Zealand, wanting to be a part of this sport, but looking at your success? It's been a crazy journey for you.

SCOTT DIXON: It has. I think my journey, especially coming from a small country of I think at the time less than four million people, New Zealand has such a rich history in motor racing, especially '50s through '70s and even '80s.

Money become a profound part of motor racing at that point. My parents did all they could, then extending it to a group of I think we had 13 or 14 investors that paid for a lot of my junior categories. A lot of those members will be at the Indy 500 this year.

It's a lot of fun that there's still such involvement in the sport, especially with the Giltrap family, who have helped a lot of drivers, enabling them to do the same as me. Same with Peter Johnson and Craig Harris.

I think immediately that's what it switches to, right? When you're honored with something like this, the people that made it possible. Family was a very large part of that. That goes to Emma and the kids. Obviously Chip and his team is family, as well.

THE MODERATOR: Chip, ever since your induction into the 2016 class, you've been one of the more enthusiastic members of this organization that honors all motorsports. What is it like to be part of this now on the flipside and have one of your drivers, another driver, inducted?

CHIP GANASSI: Thanks, everybody.

It's interesting, some things that come to mind. I guess part of the reason I think I'm in the Hall of Fame is because of this guy, what he's done for my career.

I think it's an honor to be here this day, to have not only one of your drivers go in, but probably the driver that

exemplifies what it is to be at Chip Ganassi Racing is Scott Dixon. He is what Chip Ganassi Racing stands for. He's all about that.

I think about that. I think about no small thing that George said, who votes on this. I think, Scott, that's what the takeaway is today, is the event itself will be early March, so we have a good time to get ready, a little bit of time to get ready for the event, but it's really something to go to that event and be with the people that voted for you. That's the nice thing. Obviously the media as well.

It's not something that's a pick out of a dartboard or out of the sky. You're here because you've earned that right to be here. I think nobody exemplifies what it is today in this series to represent, to be that representative, it's quite an honor.

Congratulations.

SCOTT DIXON: Thank you. Thank you. Means a lot.

THE MODERATOR: Chip, take us back a few decades ago when you eyed Scott maybe for the first time. No way to tell what kind of career he would have. You've seen him grow as a driver and a young man.

CHIP GANASSI: No question. We've all seen Scott go from somebody who was hard to get three words out of his mouth back in the day to obviously he's developed, as I've said many times, on the track, developed off the track.

Whether it's his family, whether he's at work, whether he's representing our team, he is the consummate professional. He's the star in the movie, if you wrote the script. He now will be soon a Hall of Famer.

THE MODERATOR: We'll open it up for questions.

**Q. Scott, when you arrived here with PacWest, then prior to that Indy Lights, I think you were admittedly shy, taken back by all this. When you reflect back on the beginning of your career, now you're a Hall of Famer, is it almost you're part of a movie that's still being filmed?**

SCOTT DIXON: Yes, it's definitely very surreal. I think my whole career has been a bit that way.

I think winning the first championship in 2003 was a bit of a shock to my system. The only disappointment I had of that was not really soaking it in and enjoying it as much as I should have. To the 2008 win at the Indy 500, very surreal as well, kind of finding yourself in those moments of history. You go to 500 for almost a month back then.

You're watching the TV monitors of past champions going through those moments of putting the wreath on, kissing the bricks, drinking the milk, then you find yourself in the situation, pretty crazy. That pretty much sums up my whole career.

I feel extremely lucky. Obviously a lot of it comes from hard work. I think previous teams, yes, they kind of had structure and a little bit of that, but I think when I first walked through the doors in 2002 at Chip's team, just the amount of energy that was there, the will to win. Everything was about winning. Walking through that door has changed my life, just to be around that group of people.

It still feels surreal to this day. Wouldn't change a thing. I love it. I love the sport. I love motor racing. Feel very lucky with the steps and doors that opened at the right time.

But of course you still have to win, put in the hard work. I think that's what I love the most, is putting in the effort to get the rewards.

**Q. Scott, taking the moment to digest this, you're still very much top of your game. Is it weird you want to really soak in the moment but at the same time still have a lot to accomplish?**

SCOTT DIXON: Yeah, I truly do. There's still a lot of work to be done and a lot of things that are possible. Honestly, that's all I think about.

It is nice to have these moments and reflect. I think it also puts an emphasis on what you can also do and what's still yet to be done.

Trust me, I love this moment. Again, eyes are forward to what can be done and what we will try to do. I know I'll enjoy the moment when it comes in March and really soak that in, especially with my good friend Jimmie Johnson, too. That's going to be a pretty sweet evening.

So, yeah, it's eyes forward.

CHIP GANASSI: I should add that both Jimmie and Scott were on the ballot for the very first time this year. It cements how much the voters felt they should be in the Hall of Fame.

**Q. Chip, you were inducted more than 10 years ago. To get accolades like this, won championships and Indy since then, does it motivate you to be recognized this way and still know there's a long runway ahead to accomplish things?**

CHIP GANASSI: I think it does motivate you in a sense. This is not one of those rocking chair moments. No, this is not that at all. This is about a guy that's still in the prime of his career. Obviously a first-time ballot honoree, I think that says it all right there. His career so far has been Hall-of-Fame material but it's far from over.

THE MODERATOR: Scott is the first Hall-of-Fame member that was born in the '80s. I'm not sure if that makes you feel old or young.

SCOTT DIXON: There we go.

CHIP GANASSI: I can't even think about that. A Hall of Famer to be born in the '80s. Maybe there's a special trophy for that (smiling).

**Q. Scott, where does this rank in terms of your achievements as a driver?**

SCOTT DIXON: That's a tough question.

Honestly I think because racers, it's on the day, it's in the moment, championships over a season. As Chip clearly pointed out, this is from your peers. That's all you can ever ask for I think.

It's right up there, man. Like I think by the time, when the event comes around, you soak it in, you're around your fellow peers, the people I've looked up to for many years, I think it's going to soak in that much more.

For me personally, this is one of the ultimate awards that you could ever achieve.

**Q. Chip, you have Scott and Jimmie being inducted. How big of a moment is that for you, given the fact you've worked with both guys?**

CHIP GANASSI: Yeah, they've been Hall-of-Fame guys in my eyes all the time or they wouldn't be here. They wouldn't have been on this team.

We always try to find the best drivers that are available at the time and put them in the cars. This was just another example of that, I guess.

**Q. Chip, a question on safety, the HANS device. To step back a minute, you had the crash at Michigan, Steve Olvey was instrumental by saving your life to make sure you got oxygen. Fast forward to 1999, CART or INDYCAR was instrumental in introducing the HANS device. What are your thoughts about these safety pioneers being recognized?**



CHIP GANASSI: Well, it kind of dovetails, if you go back to who votes on the entrance to the Hall of Fame, they obviously want to vote people in that are instrumental in the sport.

I think it just goes to show you how - what's the word - how instrumental or fundamental people like Olvey and Trammell or Downing and Hubbard, these guys were integral parts of threshold moments in the sport.

There's no reason they shouldn't be there. There's no reason there shouldn't be a category like that.

What's the category called, George? Those guys come in under what?

GEORGE LEVY: Olvey and Trammell came in last year under open-wheel, their contributions to open-wheel racing. I talked to Hubbard and Jim, they came in the technology category.

CHIP GANASSI: Yeah, there's no question that there are many players in motorsports that have never been in a race, let's say, that deserve to be in the Hall of Fame. Obviously there's two or four of them, however you want to look at it, that are now in it.

I fully support it. There's many more.

GEORGE LEVY: When Olvey and Trammell were inducted, Dario was their presenter. One of the reasons Dario was around to do that was because of those guys.

If you think of the Hall of Famers like Scott and Chip, Dario, all the rest that were able to continue racing, continue on because of those guys, it's an incredible contribution to the sport.

**Q. It looks like Jim Downing is on this Zoom. Is it possible to get a question to Jim? In 1999 when Steve Olvey and Terry Trammell got the HANS device started in racing by helping persuade Newman/Haas drivers to start wearing it, then CART or INDYCAR to begin to mandate it, it took about 20 years for you and Bob Hubbard to get to that point where people were beginning to be willing to accept it. Did you ever feel like giving up?**

JIM DOWNING: Certainly in the early '90s we were getting pretty discouraged. I certainly was. We knew we had something, but nobody else thought of it as something that might really happen.

Fortunately, or rather unfortunately, when Ayrton Senna

was killed, it got the ball rolling a little bit. Mercedes decided to do some testing for us. That helped. It became obvious we needed to shrink the part down, and we did that.

Then Michael Andretti was very helpful in allowing Fittipaldi and his other drivers to try it out. It began to look like it was going to happen. Thank you very much for INDYCAR at that point.

Then, of course, it finally did. Most of you know the rest of the story there. But, yeah, we were very discouraged.

**Q. Chip, if you could talk about the good fortune back when you were able to get Scott. The circumstances, how fortuitous it was to be able to get him to join your team, then we've seen what has happened.**

CHIP GANASSI: No question. As I recall, I didn't really know the deal. I knew Dixon was a Lights guy. I knew he won the race at Nazareth with PacWest. We were affiliated with Toyota at the time. I think PacWest was, as well.

They came to me and said they were going to be stopping after Indianapolis I think or soon before or after, around there, and they wanted to know if I would take on Scott Dixon.

I have to be honest with you, it wasn't an immediate Okay, yes, let's do it. It was like, Okay, I think I can. It had nothing to do with Scott, per se. We had two cars, as I recall at the time. This was going to be taking another car. That was no small feat in those days for our team.

But obviously we knew he had the talent, and the rest is history, I guess, as they say.

THE MODERATOR: We'll leave it there. Thank you.

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