

Chip Ganassi Racing

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Chip Ganassi

Marcus Ericsson

Alex Palou

Scott Dixon

Takuma Sato

Mike Hull

Press Conference



Like you say, we had a great year last year in 2022. Obviously we come back, and the fire still burns within the team to do well, to win it again. We're solely focused on that these next couple of weekends. Looking forward to it.

THE MODERATOR: Mike, for you, the team looked pretty sharp right out of the box here first couple of days of practice. Obviously there's a strong team element.

You talk a lot about team. You have four guys who all want to win the race but they all work together and that's certainly helped out the organization.

MIKE HULL: Yes, being the master of the obvious, that's obvious. You know, I think what makes us really -- maybe one of the things that makes us really good about what we do is we're working on today. It's Fast Friday. We're going to work on Fast Friday, then we're going to work on Saturday, then we're going to work on Sunday.

What you have in front of you is four drivers that understand that concept as a team of people. That is a big deal. Only one can win unfortunately. It would be great if we have a four-seater. We don't, so we'll do our best as a team to win this race.

That's what we did last year, and hopefully we can do that this year.

Q. Scott, should you win the pole Sunday, you'll tie Rick Mears for most poles in Indy 500 history. You'd also be the first driver to win three Indy 500 poles in a row. Your thoughts on that? I'm sure that would be something you'd be quite proud of. And for Chip, you raced against Rick Mears. What would it mean to have your driver equal him for most poles in the Indy 500?

SCOTT DIXON: Yeah, that's the goal. We're here to try and capture the pole. If it's not myself, hopefully it's one of my teammates. I think the cars have definitely been very fast.

As a team, I think the pole is a big deal. The amount of effort that goes into it and the small tweaks and adjustments and everything for this race, for this weekend for the pole is very special. So it's very rewarding, and it's

THE MODERATOR: Wrapping up our traditional Fast Friday news conferences here, we do so with Chip Ganassi Racing, winners of five Indianapolis 500, six if you go back to the partnership with Pat Patrick a few years ago.

Great to have the team with us this morning.

Joining us of course in his 34th season as a team owner on the far right, Chip Ganassi.

The managing director Mike Hull is here, as well as all four of their drivers: driver of the No. 8 Huski Ice Spritz Chip Ganassi Racing Honda; the reigning Indy 500 champion, Marcus Ericsson; driver of the No. 9 PNC Bank Chip Ganassi Racing Honda, the six-time NTT Series champion and 2008 winners of the Indy 500, Scott Dixon; driver of the No. 10 the American Legion Chip Ganassi Racing Honda, last week's winner of the GMR Grand Prix, Alex Palou; and driver of the driver of the No. 11 Deloitte Chip Ganassi Racing Honda, the two-time winner of the 500, say good morning to Takuma Sato.

A couple questions for Chip and Mike, and then we'll open it up for questions.

Chip, coming back as the reigning champs, what's the team focused on to add to that list of champions here?

CHIP GANASSI: Thanks, Dave. Good morning, everyone. Here we are, it's May, we're back in Indianapolis.



always great for the team.

I think last year to have all of us in the hunt for it was very special, as well, and I'd say kind of looking at the last couple of days, the car has definitely had speed. We'll have to see if that plays true come tomorrow and Sunday.

But yeah, it would be amazing.

But for me the focus right now is to do the best we can to try and capture that pole.

CHIP GANASSI: Yeah, I would echo those comments. There aren't four guys I'd rather have driving these cars right now, and they each realize that the information flow is going to end up with whoever is the final guy in line.

But they're all four up for that. We're going to give it our best shot.

Q. Scott in particular, if he ties Rick Mears (indiscernible)?

CHIP GANASSI: Yeah, like Mike said, today we focus on today; tomorrow we'll focus on Saturday; Sunday we'll focus on Sunday. Whatever happens, those kind of things are -- certainly they're great, but those aren't what we're focused on.

We're focused on doing the best job we can for every single guy on the team today, right now.

Q. Chip, Marcus has made it clear that he's very happy at the team -- Marcus Ericsson I should say, not Marcus Armstrong. He wants to stay at the team in the future. Can you talk about things from your side?

CHIP GANASSI: Yeah, I want him to stay. Yeah, I'm working hard to do it.

Q. What's it going to take to make that happen?

CHIP GANASSI: The same thing it takes for everything to happen. I'm not a big guy to be talking about our deals or our contracts or anything, but Marcus has a big future in the sport, and I want it to be on this team, sure.

Q. To all four drivers, if there was a Ganassi four-seater, which one of you would be in the front and which one of you would be in the back?

CHIP GANASSI: It's four across the front.

SCOTT DIXON: I'll do the pedals.

Q. Scott, with the extra aerodynamic package that INDYCAR have allowed for the 500 this year, are you noticing a difference either by yourself or in traffic out there?

SCOTT DIXON: I don't think the conditions have really -- I think some people have tried all of the bits. I'm not a big fan of adding a bunch of downforce. I think it makes it a little bit easier for the lesser cars, so I think it would be better not to have it.

But the adjustment I think is pretty massive this year, especially if you decide to run all the rear wing. It's a lot of downforce. We'll have to see how that plays out.

I think once we get to some hotter conditions, you may see that play more of a factor.

But yeah, I thought last year -- this place is meant to be difficult, so I'm never a fan of making things easier.

Q. Marcus, had a lot of drivers over the last couple days asked about your winning move over the last couple laps last year. If you were in the opposite position, in say Pato's position from last year, do you feel like it's something that can be beaten with the right technique or is it hard to do with no rule changes from INDYCAR over the last 12 months?

MARCUS ERICSSON: I think it's harder to lead this year with the aero specs we have. I think if you lead in a scenario like last year it's going to be harder to keep that lead is my feeling. But if I'm in that situation I'm going to try my best to keep it. But yeah, I think it would be a bit harder.

Q. For any of the drivers, we've had Scott on pole the last two years, Marcus won last year, and I think you could argue you guys have the best car at least three of the last four years, maybe four of the last four years. Do you guys feel a lot of pressure coming into this race? Do you feel like it's you guys' to lose, or is it too early to know that yet?

MARCUS ERICSSON: I don't think it's a pressure, I think it's a privilege to know that you drive for an organization that can provide us with four cars that's super fast and that we expect to be up front and fight for the win. I think that's something to be proud of, and I think all four of us are super excited about this opportunity.

This race is extremely hard to win. What we usually say in Ganassi is we need to prepare and put ourselves in position to win, and then we see how the race plays out.

But I think this team does a very good job at giving us that opportunity.

Q. Chip, following up on your answer to Jack about Marcus Ericsson, you said some things need to happen. What needs to happen to make it work?

CHIP GANASSI: Yeah, we just need to finalize some sponsorship, and away we go.

Q. Are you close in terms of --

CHIP GANASSI: I think we are, yeah.

Q. Are you prepared to lose him? I know you want to keep him, he wants to stay, but do you have a plan in place for that?

CHIP GANASSI: Here's what we're doing today: We're focusing on today right now. Okay? I'm not here to talk about my drivers and their contracts. I'm here to talk about Fast Friday and qualifying on Saturday and Sunday.

Marcus is a valued -- all the drivers are valued pieces of the team, and I want them all here today, I want them here tomorrow, I want them here next week, I want them here next year.

Q. With respect to your position on not talking about contracts, Bob Rahal did have to sit here next to his son before you and answer many, many questions about his son's future at the race team. So nobody is picking on you.

CHIP GANASSI: That's okay.

Q. For the drivers, two days, a lot of hours on track. Could you explain a little bit about the process that you go through with the time on track in qualify, psychology, technical, to get to the best qualifying position?

SCOTT DIXON: Well, they keep changing it every year is one. So I guess that makes it fresh.

But I think the obvious answer is that you've got to be fast. But last year we found ourselves in a pretty tricky situation of not -- almost not making the Fast Nine, so you have to be careful, especially on that first run, especially with the conditions to make sure you get it right.

But I think Marcus summed it up. I think coming with a team like this and the effort they put into it, it's definitely a privilege to go out there every day with such fast cars. And I think again, to his point, it's the preparation before you

even get to tomorrow.

Yesterday was very important. Today is going to be very important. Just trying to understand what you need to do and what you need to accomplish each run.

Feeling comfortable is the biggest thing, and then being confident I think in your whole team and your whole package and making sure that you make the right changes.

Luckily in this day and age there's a lot of tools to predict what the weather is going to do, downforce-wise what you need to do. Back when I first started it was a little different to now.

Q. For Scott and Mr. Hull. Scott, I believe early in your career they still had qualifying engines here for the Indy 500, that you could switch engines and have a hand grenade ready to go for qualifications. Do you miss those days as a competitor, to put the fastest thing possible in your car? And as a follow-up to Mike from a team standpoint, do you miss any of that, but you probably don't miss what it did to the budget and also potentially having them blow up.

SCOTT DIXON: I think as a driver you do miss those days, because each weekend you kind of had something new, whether it was a new set of exhausts or turbo or a new engine that only did 100 miles. It was probably not fun for the crews where you were changing -- on a typical race weekend it was three engines a weekend.

But yeah, it was fun because the process was always changing, you were always learning things, you were always pushing things to different boundaries.

Does it matter for the public or what people see? Probably not. They don't notice any of it. But I think being in the sport and part of pushing the technology, that was always a lot of fun.

MIKE HULL: Yeah, certainly an open-ended question. Today -- what's in common with what we had is we still have strong manufacturers in the series. That's number one. That's what we had in the days you're talking about. We had strong manufacturers in the series.

Things have changed now. Let's face it. Financially they've changed, and so what the sanctioning body, the INDYCAR sanctioning body has done is they've done a good job of saving us from ourselves. They have.

What you don't see as journalists, what the people in the grandstands don't see, is how hard we work underneath the body panels to make the cars better than the rest,

within the rules.

Yeah, when I started here as a young guy we came here with two cars per driver, enough manpower to be able to roll the cars back and forth to the practice area on a daily basis with different setups on them. You had at least three, maybe four engines manufacturers, two tire companies, three chassis companies, and the lights never went off in the garage area. We never went home. We'd go home at 3:00 in the morning, come back at 6:30 in the morning, go back to work.

I don't know today with human resources if we'd get away with that, quite frankly. It was fantastic. It was fantastic, but the reason was because we had terrific manufacturer and vendor support in those days, which included the financial side of it.

I would love it if we could go back to that, but it's probably not going to happen. If you look at this series, if you forecast this series down the road, I'll make a prediction. Five years from today there's going to be 10 teams with three cars each. There's going to be 30 cars in the series that are well supported. That's where it's going.

What's going to happen then? By then we should have new cars. By then we should have three, maybe four engine manufacturers if Mr. Penske's group do what they're working to do. Hopefully we have a tire company still that will stay up with that.

If you look at these drivers, they represent generationally what's coming next. We can already see what's coming next. This series is going to become more carnivorous than it is today, in a different fashion.

But we're still doing one thing in common with those days. We do one simple thing here: We just race cars. That's all we do. That's what we do. That's why it's so much fun at Indianapolis.

Q. Mr. Ganassi, can you talk about Takuma Sato? Are you happy with the addition of him to the team so far?

CHIP GANASSI: Yes, thank you. Anytime you have a two-time winner on your team, they bring something that's intangible, yet the contribution to the effort is -- from a different perspective, it's from a winning perspective, and you don't get that with just anybody walking around the garage area.

We're happy to have Takuma, and looking forward to his -- as you saw on opening day, he knows how to wheel one of these things around this track, and that's what we're looking for come Saturday, Sunday, and next Sunday.

Q. When the Rahal team was in here, they were kind of lamenting the fact that there's not as much practice, and when you lose a day, it gets even more super compressed. Would you like to see more track time to get ready for this race?

ALEX PALOU: Yeah, as a driver, you always want to be in the car. I would be driving the car each day if I could. But honestly, I think the amount of practice we have nowadays, it's good enough. We had two days of open tests, obviously one was washed out, and then Tuesday we couldn't do any practice, as well.

It just makes it a bit more tough for the teams and the drivers to get used to, but I would say we're not missing practice time.

SCOTT DIXON: Yeah, I think there's a good amount. It's different from many years back. And I think maybe in a situation with our team, maybe less days are better.

Q. Mike, you were just talking about the series has done a good job of saving teams money. I know it costs more money to put cars on track, but would it be better for the show to have more laps, more time?

MIKE HULL: The reason we have six hours of track time today is because guess where we race: Indiana. The weather changes every five-minutes here. The wind hasn't blown the same direction since we've been here this week.

But with six hours of track time, if you multiply that times three or four days this week and you get half the time, that's more given time than you get a practice session at any other racetrack anywhere else we race.

This is the Indy 500 and it is important, and you can lament when you're trying to go faster and you can commiserate when you're going faster.

I think that's the bottom line. INDYCAR works really, really hard to give us ample track time here and we're satisfied with what we have, and we're satisfied more importantly with what this represents, and that is racing in front of a large audience in a Sunday or two from now.

Q. You mentioned how much INDYCAR has helped financially. I'm curious, Chip, when the charter deal in NASCAR worked out pretty well, would that be something you'd entertain for growth for INDYCAR? Should INDYCAR teams have charters like that for a business model? Would that help even bring more teams over to the sport, too?

CHIP GANASSI: I think I would certainly be up for exploring that, yes.

Q. Do you think that would help even bring more teams here, too, having a business model like that?

CHIP GANASSI: It's not necessarily about more teams. It's more if you solidify the teams that you have -- you have strong teams. I think one of the things that the charter system showed in NASCAR is it leveled the playing field a bit among the teams, which I think was sorely needed, and I think it would solidify some sort of, if you want to call them, teams that are further down the grid. It would solidify those from a financial point of view.

THE MODERATOR: Thanks for coming up. Best of luck, Chip Ganassi Racing, as we head to Fast Friday and qualifying this weekend.

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