

NTT INDYCAR SERIES

News Conference

Saturday, August 12, 2023

Scott Dixon

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: We have the legendary Scott Dixon, who led 34 of the 85 laps today. First win of the season. 54th of his career. Third podium here in 2023. 134th of his career. The accolades go on and on. 19th consecutive seasons now with a win, which is an INDYCAR SERIES record. 21st overall, which also extends his INDYCAR SERIES record.

That was quite a race. You're going to enjoy watching that, I think.

SCOTT DIXON: I saw it firsthand, man (smiling).

It's been a strange year for us. I think we had lots of opportunity at different races. It's just never really converted. Yeah, crazy day.

Obviously for me, I felt like I had a fantastic start. I think I picked up maybe five or six spots, then got to turn seven and there was a bit of a backup there, just got spun around.

Now I can say I got a spin and win at Indy, which is pretty cool. I know it's on the road course and doesn't count, but I'll still go with that story (smiling).

Yeah, we talked a lot in pre-race about kind of pitting early, getting off the maybe not-so-good tire for us, which was the black, doing it around lap four or six. Trying to get the fuel mileage to get it done.

I was actually shocked just the pace that we had. The car just kept doing the same lap times, mid 73s to 74 flats. The fuel mileage, huge credit to Honda and HPD, it was remarkably easy to get.

I think the pace and obviously the tire deg that we didn't really witness too much was fantastic. Yeah, I think the only downfall for me was pushing too hard on the last stint on the first three or four laps, killed the tire a bit. The rest of the race we just kind of maintained a pace. It wasn't that difficult to get.

Some big laps early on in that last stint because I knew I was getting a fresh set of tires, didn't have to go that long. Kind of hurt it, I guess made it a bit of a show and a bit of a race.

Feels good. Feels damn good to get this win. Feel sorry for Graham. But, yeah, this is cool.

THE MODERATOR: Questions, please.

Q. If you could finish this sentence: the secret to saving fuel is...

SCOTT DIXON: Lifting. I don't know, man. I would say Honda (laughter).

Q. Seriously, you spin, just for a moment did it flash behind your eyes? What goes on in your mind in that moment?

SCOTT DIXON: I know you're never really out of it, right? Especially this team is a testament to that with all the cars that we have, just in general.

I knew we weren't out of it. I was kind of bummed because I'm like, Man, I had a really good start, picked up a load of spots. It was wiped out within a half lap.

But again, I think you kind of automatically just fall back to how are we going to win this race from where we are now. I knew maybe the other manufacturer was going to struggle on mileage. The cars around me with the 12 and the 2 were going to struggle to do the pace that we could get with the mileage that we could get.

Yeah, I guess the biggest concern for me was trying to figure out if the tires could go that fast, especially being on the softer tire.

Q. I'm not a technical guy. I don't understand tires. I understand that the blacks are supposed to be more durable, slower than the reds. Today was reverse. Can you explain that?

SCOTT DIXON: So I will say that typically the Indy road course has been a prominent red tire track up until maybe

ASAP sports . . . when all is said, we're done.®

May where it was a different tire they brought. This is actually a different tire. This is actually a black tire. The red tire here is a black tire from maybe Barber 2019 or something. It's that kind of construction and compound.

We knew it had the durability to it, but we weren't sure if it was going to be enough to get the laps, 25 to 30 laps on a stint that you needed to get.

It's threw a bit of a curve ball for everybody because we've been here for quite some time on a similar tire. Definitely caught us out in qualifying, kind of just missed the window on it, made a mistake on the lap that counted. You make a mistake in this field right now, you're knocked out immediately.

Yeah, I think that was the concern just because you're doing it kind of first, and we were the only one attacking that strategy, so you're not sure if it's going to work.

Huge credit to Firestone. Thank you for bringing that different tire.

Q. You talked about your early spin. What's the thought process that goes through a driver's mind when something like that happens early in a race?

SCOTT DIXON: Normally starts with a lot of swearing on the radio, then you just kind of kick into the next mode of how do we fix this.

We were going to pit. We were going to kind of try the two stop early anyway. The difference being we were on the black tire, we kind of wanted to get rid of the black tire pretty quickly. Hoping to have great faith that the red was actually going to last, and it did.

Yeah, I knew we weren't out of it at that point because if anybody tried to do the two stop, you could still win the race from that period.

Honestly, the caution was a little longer about a lap or two maybe than we thought. That helped us where we didn't have to get crazy fuel mileage.

It's frustrating, man. That's any race. It's a roller coaster, man. Your emotions are up and down like a roller coaster.

Q. From an INDYCAR perspective, sharing weekend a NASCAR, has it been a good thing?

SCOTT DIXON: Yeah, I think so. There's not a whole lot of crossover. I don't think you can even walk through anybody's pits. Well, they can probably walk through ours. I don't think we can really go through theirs.

It's kind of cool, especially for this weekend, got fellow countryman with Shane, KostECKI from V8 Supercars, old teammate with Kaboyashi here as well. Maybe some of us INDYCAR boys need to start driving both of the cars on this weekend. It would be a lot of fun.

I think it's fantastic. From my point of view, I'm a race fan, man. I love INDYCAR racing. I love V8 Supercars. I love NASCAR. I love Formula 1.

To have both of them on the same weekend is huge. I think for NASCAR to move to the road course I think was pretty special, as well.

Q. You said you knew before the race that the black tires, you wanted to get rid of them early. Was that good enough strategy that you would have stopped if you weren't involved in that caution?

SCOTT DIXON: I think we were planning to stop between lap five and 10 anyway, just to get rid of them.

I think you kind of want to see how they're going to do. When you've got a new tire, maybe with the conditions today, the conditions were fairly hot, the track temp was pretty high, so it had all the writing that maybe the black tire was going to be the preferred as well. It seemed like maybe for some cars it was.

We were lucky -- I shouldn't say we were lucky. We got knocked out in round one of qualifying. But with that scenario, we had two sticker sets, then only one set with three laps on it. For us, it was going to be black, red, red, red all the way to the finish.

Having that option is very good. That's the only saving grace when you get knocked out in round one.

Q. In the final five to 10 laps, Graham was closing in on you. Did you notice that? Did you do anything different?

SCOTT DIXON: I definitely noticed it. Yeah, I have a little gap chart thing on my wheel that I can look at. Even through sectors, see how he's gaining, which parts of the track.

Again, I think it was just my mistake for pushing so hard at the start of that stint and kind of hurt the tire, otherwise I think it wouldn't have been too difficult.

Even in the second-to-last stint, we were on used reds. We were able to maintain the gap to Graham or actually pull away. So I figured once we get to the new tires, we

can really go. That was not the right thing to do.

Yeah, we made a show of it. He was coming fast, man. It would have been interesting. I think once he got to us, it was going to be very tough to pass. We had similar overtake. Yeah, the 9 car would have been very wide.

Q. Graham was very gracious in defeat. He was lamenting the first yellow. Did you see it as going a little bit longer, do you feel like it benefited you?

SCOTT DIXON: Only like by a lap, maybe two. I don't think it would have been affected us much. I think to get another lap on the first and second stint would have been fairly easy for us, to be honest.

If we tried to do the two stop and it went green from lap one, that would have been a little more difficult. But, yeah, the difference of a lap or two wouldn't really have affected us.

Q. When it came out, Graham is like this is going to be a Scott Dixon race. Oh, no. Did you feel that way?

SCOTT DIXON: No, I was still swearing at that point (smiling). We had been crashed out. So it was probably three or four laps, We still got an opportunity.

I think the thing that you struggle with is how many people are going to do it. But when the pits open and actually nobody really pit, there were actually a few cars. I think the 18 and 28 in front of us, looked like they only took fuel, didn't take tires, which I thought that was kind of strange.

From that point on, I thought only the Hondas could make it from that point. I didn't think the other manufacturer could do it. That was a good thing for us.

Q. It's not the 500, but it is a win at the Indianapolis Motor Speedway. Anytime you get a win here, is that almost like an extra surge of excitement and gratitude?

SCOTT DIXON: It's definitely not the 500.

Yeah, I don't know. Trust me, it's always great to win here. I've lived in Indy now for 25-plus years. It's my home. It feels special. We have a lot of friends that come to this race, especially probably families come to this race or the May race, which is pretty cool.

Yeah, it's always special to win it at the Indianapolis Motor Speedway. Yeah, it feels cool.

Q. It was a great day to be Ganassi. You win the race, 19 straight years, your teammate Alex increases his

points lead over a hundred. Things are looking good like he may be back next year. The total up-surge for the team?

SCOTT DIXON: He's had a rough year, man. But the 10 group has done a tremendous job. You have to give them a whole heap of credit for that. They've definitely done well.

I haven't seen where people have finished yet or where we are, if we've gained much on the 2 car or anything like that. Yeah, 10, you can't take anything away from them. They've done an amazing job.

THE MODERATOR: You are second now, four points advantage over Josef Newgarden.

SCOTT DIXON: We'll take that.

Q. 43 years old and you're still doing this. Helio and you have been racing forever.

SCOTT DIXON: Helio is a lot older than me. I'll point that out. What is he, like 49 (smiling)?

Q. Is the passion still all there?

SCOTT DIXON: Yeah, absolutely. What it all comes down to for me is I love racing. That's the fun part for me, is when the race starts or when we go even to a test, I enjoy being in the car.

It's tough. The NTT INDYCAR SERIES right now is extremely competitive. There's so much depth between the driver and team combos, that it's very hard to win. You constantly are chasing a moving target, which is fun. That's what keeps you I think fresh, inspired. Especially when you have great teammates that are very fast, as well.

Yeah, I love this sport. Hope it continues for a lot of years.

Q. Hunter McElrea won yesterday.

SCOTT DIXON: He's Australian.

Q. He's a New Zealander, isn't he?

SCOTT DIXON: I think he claims both.

Q. Born in Los Angeles.

SCOTT DIXON: So he's American.

Q. Australians claim you, too?



SCOTT DIXON: I was born there. It was a technicality.

Q. Kiwi motorsports, Australians, been very dominant. They're in a news a lot lately. Do you have any insight on where this is all coming from?

SCOTT DIXON: No. There's a lot of talent down there. The heritage in New Zealand is big for racing. Even if you go back to the '60s and '70s, F1 drivers, Bruce McLaren obviously and his team that he set up, many drivers that raced for some of the best teams, Ferrari, McLaren, others, in those early years.

That's what my dad loved about motor racing, then what I loved about motor racing. As far as sports go, it's pretty up there. Obviously cricket and sailing is pretty high up in New Zealand, but motorsport is a huge following down there. And Australia, as well.

Yeah, it's a small country, man. You got five million people. It's kind of cool to have Armstrong here in the same team. Earl Bamber on the IMSA, Shane maybe going to be running, hopefully he can win this weekend, too, it would be a pretty cool sweep for all the races this weekend.

Yeah, it's just the passion. I think you got to also thank Peter Johnson and the Giltraps, those families down there that a lot of us really struggled for money or didn't have any mope whatsoever. They definitely have funded myself, Brendon Hartley, Shane van Gisbergen, helped Armstrong a lot. The Giltraps have done a lot for motor racing. Without them a lot of us wouldn't be here.

Q. Can you think of a more calamitous first lap you've ever had in a first race that you've had a great result in?

SCOTT DIXON: I think Portland was the worst. Yeah, that was crazy, just in the fact that you went into, like, a big dust ball. For whatever reason I pulled the clutch before I hit the fence, then the dust kind of settled. I'm like the car is still running. Got in reverse, banged out. All I was waiting on was the INDYCAR safety truck to get out of my way. It was actually a pretty big hit, as well. Car flipped in front of us, et cetera, et cetera. That's a tough one to beat.

Q. Scott McLaughlin after the race, with van Gisbergen possibly coming to America next year, would you rather see him in NASCAR or INDYCAR, or doesn't matter where he goes?

SCOTT DIXON: I've tried to get for years to get Shane to come and test an INDYCAR. I just didn't work out. Even in the IMSA program, I think he would have been huge, great

teammate in that as well.

I think he's kind of talked a lot about maybe America. This is probably more of his wheelhouse, at least the road and street. The oval racing is definitely on another level, even for someone like myself trying to make that transition would be extremely tough.

It's cool to see him. He's a huge talent, man. The guy is crazy good, even at fricking indoor go-karting. I've gone many times with the dude, and he's super fast.

Cool to see the success he had. I was cheering for him so hard at the Chicago race. Even last night in the trucks he did a pretty good job for his first-ever race on an oval. Qualified, what, eighth today in a stacked field. He's got a bright future hopefully.

Q. On these days when you're running an alternate strategy to the guys up front, was there a point in today's race where you realized or you're told over the radio that this is actually working or are you going with the flow?

SCOTT DIXON: Probably halfway through the second-to-last stint on used tires where we were maintaining a gap. He was behind me where it pops up on my dash that he's the next car. We had a like a six-second lead. I kept looking at it, running the lap times. He wasn't gaining on us. This is crazy, this might actually work out.

For me, the pace was not too difficult to get. But I think we were kind of in a happy spot of having to get fuel mileage and also looking after the tires where maybe some of those guys pushed quite hard early on like I did on my last stint.

That was my first 'aha' moment where I'm like we're definitely in a strong position here to pull that off.

Q. We talked about extending the records of 19 straight seasons with a win, 21 overall. I'm sure you celebrate these wins. Any sense of relief of being able to get this monkey off your back this season, try to get more before the season is over with?

SCOTT DIXON: I don't know. You go into every weekend as a fresh start. For me and for this team, they only go there to win. The downside is that there's probably 26 or 27 other really competitive cars, at least 10 or 15.

I don't know. Over time I think these ones feel better. Maybe in the early parts of your career, you really don't care too much about wins. Another one will just come along.

I think with how competitive it is, what these teams have got really good at is covering all strategies. The days of where maybe us or a couple of others would go on an alternate strategy, now you might have half the field that would do it.

A lot of the drivers have done a good job of understanding how to get the mileage, how to look after the tire. There's a lot of tools now, whether it's with the simulator to onboard laps to the dash overlay stuff, all the information we get now, makes it a little bit easier to catch up and maybe cover different strategies.

Yeah, it was cool to have this one work out today and be a strong performance for our team.

Q. Not a lot going on behind the scenes with your team, the 10 car, Alex's future. You were frustrated with the way things ended last year, the distractions. Any frustration of some of this kind of boiling up again with a month left in the season?

SCOTT DIXON: No, man, that's his story, to be honest. I think it's interesting for a lot of you people. Yeah, it is what it is, man. It looks complicated.

Q. (Question about the consecutive Ironman record.)

SCOTT DIXON: That was very special. I think it was my good friend T.K.'s record. Yeah, I don't know if I've got a text from him yet. I probably haven't.

Yeah, honestly to do that consecutively, I know in the mid 2000s that was tough. Those cars, when they crash, they crash pretty big. It's night to get on a roll there after a while.

Yeah, if you could do it, that's the way you want to do it, man.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports