

NTT INDYCAR SERIES

News Conference

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Scott Dixon

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: Great to be joined by Scott Dixon, winner here at World Wide Technology Raceway. Led 123 of the 260 laps. Going back to back this season for the first time since 2020. 55th career win, 25th I believe on oval. Fourth podium of the season. 135th of his still young NTT INDYCAR SERIES career.

A lot of people have marveled, we had Pato and David up there, a three-stopper, they were amazed how you could do it. If there's a study of your career, you've done it a lot in your career. What was the difference for you today?

SCOTT DIXON: Yeah, there was definitely some tense moments. I think probably the hardest part was the restart where we were leading, having to get a pretty high fuel number. We weren't getting it. We were a ways off.

But I knew we could kind of stress that kind of second through fifth pack, get them into a pretty vulnerable situation. I knew once we caught the back markers we'd be able to save and get beyond the fuel mileage that we needed to. It actually worked out perfectly. We were able to go further and beyond where we needed to.

But huge testament obviously to Honda. I know there's a lot of other Hondas out there. But to get the car in the zone, obviously the pace was still good, we could maintain almost a flat-out pace, but get almost, I don't know, one mpg higher than you would regularly.

It was pretty special. Obviously a team effort. There were definitely times, especially when we got to the red tire as well, I don't think it's going to last. We kind of got stuck with a couple back markers there and lost touch with the 28 car at that point. Was feeling a little bit miserable.

But we were still the only ones that were going to the windows that we needed to. Luckily that caution helped us a little bit. It probably didn't really matter. I don't think it mattered if we had that or not. I think the race would have continued on fine otherwise anyway.

THE MODERATOR: You do pull within 74 points of your

teammate. Too little too late perhaps, but you're still in play. This little run has got to make you feel good, some momentum towards the end of the season for next year.

SCOTT DIXON: Yeah, a win always feels good. To go back to back feels fantastic, on two very different circuits. Again, I think it's a testament to what this team has been able to do, all four cars throughout this year.

It's been definitely a bit of a trying year for us I think. As I mentioned before, not getting the results that the team deserved.

I think what is special is going into the last two races, it can only be a Ganassi driver, which is very cool. I know that makes Chip very proud, and the hundred-plus employees that work at that place, as well.

THE MODERATOR: Questions, please.

Q. With the different compounds, what effect did that have on the race?

SCOTT DIXON: The tire was kind of interesting. It actually had a good amount of deg. But I think for next year, I think you'd almost want to double that deg.

I think having an alternate tire, you really kind of want it to - I know Firestone doesn't want to do it because that's the product they produce, they produce very good tires - but I think for falloff like we see at Iowa where you go from an 18-second lap all the way to 22s, 23s, you have good cars coming and going, people able to make changes throughout the race. I think that's what they need to bring back here, a little bit more aggressive for next time.

Ultimately it worked out. It was a tough tire to manage. Probably 15, 20 laps into my stint, I thought we were going to have to bail. We actually saw the 12 car bail off it very quickly. There were a few others you could see were really struggling with it and ultimately had to bail, as well.

You really had to manage it, which is nice to have another kind of dimension to the race, something you really had to kind of look out for.



Yeah, I think they could be more aggressive next year.

Q. For a driver like you, especially one who puts so much emphasis on fuel economy, how does it impact your strategy to have to go with a set of tires at least once that reduces the fuel economy and increases the wear?

SCOTT DIXON: Yeah, it's definitely always an interesting compromise. I think what was harder this weekend was having practice sessions that were kind of eliminated, right? We had an hour, then a High-Line. Nobody got to run the tire very long.

I think the biggest thing was going into the race with an unknown. I think it was our second full stint we went to the alternate tire. I probably would have chose to go maybe later with that just so we could see what other deg that the people had. Maybe that would have altered our decision, too, not playing it out, running that tire all the way through.

Again, I think it just adds a different variable to the race, which I know the problem in INDYCAR right now is that the championship is so competitive. There's no small teams. There's no bad teams. There's no bad driver/team combos. The competition is through the roof. To mix it up in some states I think is fantastic.

To have the possibility, as we saw this weekend, to bring an alternate to a short track oval, played out well to start with. As I said earlier, I think they can definitely get more aggressive, which will spice it up next year.

Q. The 2023 INDYCAR champion will come from Chip Ganassi Racing. How much does it mean as a team perspective to see so much team success?

SCOTT DIXON: Yeah, I think the 10 car has had an almost perfect season. Kudos to everybody on the team. They've done everything great. The days that they maybe struggled for pace, they were able to sort that out with strategy in the race. They've really just had no bad days.

When people have those years, it can be a bit hard to watch for other competitors in the field. I've been in that place, too, where anything you kind of touch just kind of turns to gold or goes in the direction you want it to.

I think what is very special, as I mentioned earlier, going into the last two races to only have a Ganassi driver only able to win the championship is very cool and very good for this team. The amount of effort...

What is special about this team is the people. They're the ones that are very deserving of the run that this team has

had this year.

Q. When you were doing the strategy meetings for this, was the three-stop strategy the first option you came up with or second or third on the list?

SCOTT DIXON: I think a lot of it depends kind of how that first stint goes. We had a pretty good start on the first start, then the restart had a good run, then kind of got trapped on the bottom and passed by maybe two or three cars on the outside of three and four, which kind of set us back into our kind of the 11th, 12th, 13th position.

The thing for us is that we could just maintain the pace with everybody in the group, go 10 laps longer. Once we saw everyone was peeling off, even teammates... I know the 8 car went aggressive and did the undercut. It played out pretty well for them because they gained maybe five or six spots. At some point you're going to have to pay for that.

There were probably a couple of points where I was almost arguing a little bit to bail off what we were doing. So good job by Mike and Chip, everybody on the 9 car stand, Simmons as well, to sticking to their guns on the strategy side. It worked.

Q. What satisfaction do you get when there's so many confused paces on pit road going, How the hell did he do that again?

SCOTT DIXON: That was cool. I think the margin, too. I know Power was pretty short. They were trying to push us to stop us getting the mileage we needed. We were just kind of monitoring, keep him at bay, even stretch it sometimes if we needed to.

Obviously Ross, the engineer, did an amazing job with the car, had a car that enabled to kind of save the fuel we needed to. Yeah, I guess about 10 to go, I asked them, How much heat are we getting from behind?

They were like, It's over 20 seconds, so just cruise.

It's been a long time since I've had a race like that.

Q. When you took red tires for the second stint, you said you wanted to use it later, but finally that stint was shortest for you. It was kind of lucky situation for you?

SCOTT DIXON: I think I'd have to look back. I think we were still able to get more laps. I think we just made it to the window that we needed to.

I think Ross was pretty set on making sure that we got



those tires on early, which looking back, otherwise it would have compromised maybe the way we thought about how to process that race, maybe use those red tires. Probably a good thing that we just went to them and stuck with them.

But yeah, I think the car has to be good, and you kind of have to run a pace that's not going to hurt them. I think that was also true two weeks ago at Indy for us. As long as you didn't push too hard, still maintain the leader pace, but didn't go for the big, greedy laps, you were able to maintain for the full window.

They're an interesting tire. They definitely drive a lot different than the primary that we had. Yeah, be interesting to see what they bring back next year.

Q. People talk about your fuel save. You killed everybody on red tire length. Was that the actual key?

SCOTT DIXON: Yeah, I guess it was, because it would have put us on the same strategy as everybody else. I was moaning a lot. I felt bad, like I felt slow. But then when I started looking at the times, Mike is like, You're doing the same pace as on the primary tire.

You're right actually.

It just felt bad, but the tire was still able to get it. I think it was being able to hold that pace, get the mileage at the same time, yeah. It worked.

Q. The mindset looking at the points gap to Alex, how you feel about that. In the context of looking at the last two races, does that give you more belief, more confidence that you can pull something off in the last two races here?

SCOTT DIXON: I would much rather be in Alex's position. That's a pretty healthy lead. He's maintained and done an exceptional job all year.

It would take a pretty big hit I think. It would take maybe a mechanical or a crash to make it interesting for Laguna. But anything is possible, right?

I think all of us have seen, myself personally been involved in situations like that before. There are no double points, none of that stuff going on.

Yeah, he's got a healthy lead. Until we're mathematically out of it, we'll keep pushing as hard as possible as we always do. The goal for us the last two races is to try to win them.

Q. Do you feel there's been any big areas of deficit?

Long Beach, apart from that your worst finish is seventh. Other things you look back on that could have made a difference?

SCOTT DIXON: Yeah, you can dissect so many. I think even Nashville, had we got past Josef, it would have been a different race for us. Had we got past Herta at Mid-Ohio, it would have been a different race for us. My mistake at Elkhart Lake, we came from the back, got to a fourth finish. With the performance of the car, should have been a quite easy podium.

It's easy to look back throughout the season and see maybe errors or just races that maybe didn't roll our way. That's how championships go. It's what keeps you hungry and wanting for more.

Q. Removing from this event, looking at something you did recently, what are the first thoughts on the hybrid engine for next year?

SCOTT DIXON: It's definitely still a work in progress. I think the last few iterations have been a big jump forward. I think there's a big relevance for technology that is key for our manufacturers, right, and what they do on a global kind of scale, especially what cars they produce for Honda. The hybrid situation is very big for them. I know they've put a lot of effort into it. The same with INDYCAR. It's something that they've committed to.

I think it was kind of iffy for a period of time there for next year. The last test went really well at Sebring. Logged a lot of miles, kind of October, November, December, even in January with a lot more cars running it.

The technology is pretty cool. It's not our usual systems that I think we've seen in IMSA or other formulas. I hope they stick to not going automated, that it's really on a driver input factor, which I think will spice up our racing, as well.

I think it's heading in the right direction. We'll have to see once we get closer to the time. There's a lot of effort that's brought to this and it's cool to see the tech they're bringing it.

Q. (Question about the hybrid sounding like an INDYCAR.)

SCOTT DIXON: Yeah, for sure. I'm passionate about cars that sound like race cars (smiling). That is definitely prominent for INDYCAR's future.

Again, hopefully they spotlight the technology, too. I think it's definitely different from what we've seen in other formulas.

Q. Where does this race win rank for you in terms of your accolades so far in your career?

SCOTT DIXON: I think they're all special, right? It's like kids: you love them all in different ways. No, I'm joking (laughter).

I think some are from pure speed. These last two races I think have been good on all fronts, right? We've had to cover all bases, whether it was speed, strategy, consistency throughout, great pit stops.

These ones feel big as a team. I think especially when you have to come back from such a deficit, obviously two weeks ago kind of the spin, thinking you're down and out, and today getting the good penalty with the engine change, you feel in the same situation.

Definitely much more appreciation for race wins as you get older. I think I've mentioned that a few times. Especially with the competition of the NTT INDYCAR SERIES right now, as well.

This is the newest one, so I love it very much.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you.

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