

NTT INDYCAR SERIES

News Conference

Sunday, September 10, 2023

Jim Campbell

Rob Buckner

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: We'll get started wrapping up this 2023 NTT INDYCAR SERIES season. We'll lead off with the Manufacturers Championship here in 2023. Congratulations to our friends at Chevrolet. Second consecutive INDYCAR Manufacturers Championship. Their eighth Manufacturers Championship since they made the return to the series in 2012.

It's great to be joined by Jim Campbell, vice president of General Motors, and Rob Buckner, the INDYCAR program manager.

Jim, congratulations. It was close, wasn't it?

JIM CAMPBELL: It was close. It was close. Big thanks to Will Power and Callum Ilott. They got the key positions for the key points to put us right over the top. Super proud of the fact this is, as you said, the second in a row, eighth overall since we returned to INDYCAR in 2012. It feels really good.

Obviously proud of the five wins with Josef, with four, Scott McLaughlin one at Barber. Certainly would have loved more wins, bunker we got the Manufacturers Championship. Super proud of that.

Congrats to Alex Palou on the championship, Scott Dixon today, and the Ganassi organization on the championship.

THE MODERATOR: Rob, for you, everybody on the team, so much blood, sweat and tears go into this. You started working on 2024 with the hybrid thing. Just to finish up this era with a championship, how proud are you of this team?

ROB BUCKNER: Just so proud of our people. I think a huge thank you to everyone that wears a bowtie in the paddock, not just our technical partners at Ilmor and our GM employees. All of our race teams, everyone worked together. Like Jim alluded to, not enough race wins. We have a lot of work to do. Not pleased with all of the results, but to get the Manufacturers Championship, huge moment

for us. Very proud of everyone on the program. Thank you to everyone who played a big role in that.

THE MODERATOR: Questions.

Q. New guys coming to the front for you, Scott McLaughlin, Pato O'Ward, Callum Ilott did well. How important is it to develop the drivers and have them start becoming the payoff guys?

JIM CAMPBELL: No question. We have plenty of veterans on the team. These younger drivers are starting to make their mark. Super proud of all of them. They certainly showed their speed today. At the end obviously Will Power, a veteran, and Callum a younger driver. Proud of both of them.

Healthy, robust programs, you need both, veterans and young up-and-coming drivers.

Q. A little bit of a messy reliability battle at the end. Who had anybody that could score them some points. Was that just from pushing the envelope to try to stay ahead this year? So many guys going to five engines isn't quite normal. It's been a struggle all year just to keep cars going forward.

ROB BUCKNER: Yeah, I think each one of those situations is unique. Sometimes it's crash damage. Can't comment on the Honda side, what issues they had. For us, I think it's a huge testament to the build quality of our engine builders, the way our trackside group works to eliminate any issues as they pop up. It really comes down to an attention-to-detail-type situation.

Also, both of us are pushing these engines so hard compared to when they first debuted. They were right on that edge of reliability. So huge kudos to our trackside group for looking after everything. They're the reason we had cars on four engines eligible to score points. Just thank you to all them.

Q. Can you speak to the difficulty of getting a full-bred race engine to 2000-plus miles? Talk about that difficulty.



ROB BUCKNER: Yeah, I think what makes INDYCAR unique, one of the reasons we love it, those engines run 2000-plus miles on different disciplines. So we go short oval, big oval, road course, street course. We really exercise those engines in so many different ways. We love the diversity of it, and it makes days like today very gratifying.

Q. Jim, '23 season is finished. '24 is approaching very fast with the new hybrid. Can you take something over from the current engine into the new hybrid technology or new piece of paper?

JIM CAMPBELL: Certainly the two direct injected twin turbo Chevy Indy V6 is a great foundation. It's all about integration to the new hybrid unit. You need strong foundation of that combustion engine combined with the hybrid system.

As a series, we'll be testing at St. Louis this week, Thursday, right? Following week we'll be testing at Road America. You have oval, a road course, in a couple weeks with production-intent equipment for the hybrid side.

Then in the end it's all about how you integrate the hybrid to the ICE engine. That's a focus.

Q. Obviously since this engine was introduced in 2012, there's been a great deal of secrecy about horsepower numbers, that kind of thing. Now that it's the end of an era, you have nothing to lose, can you tell us how much horsepower these engines put out and in percentage terms how much it's increased from 2012 to now?

ROB BUCKNER: I think if you can get Dave Salters to come in here and show you some charts, Honda number, we'll follow up with ours (smiling).

I think the 2.2 relevancy carries forward into '24. It's definitely been a huge increase. If you ran a 2023 spec 2.2 liter engine against a 2012 spec 2.2 liter engine, it would lap the field. It's been that sort of magnitude. It's all small, incremental gains, just goes towards the due diligence of the group to keep finding performance every year.

We think we have exhausted the 2.2 liter formula, and we keep finding more. We know if we slow down, we're going to get surpassed. Us and Honda really push each other very hard. It's a fun battle, one that we really enjoy.

Q. Also, can you talk about the fuel mileage improvements, over the course of 12 seasons?

ROB BUCKNER: That's another area we're always

pushing really hard working with the teams and drivers, fuel mixtures, the way they drive the car, looking for efficiency. I don't see any reason that's going to stop. Fuel mileage competition is like clean air versus dirty air. Once you know there's a huge advantage there, you're never going to unlearn those things. We'll just keep polishing on it. I don't doubt our group will be able to come back in '24 with a better package.

Q. You just mentioned teams and drivers. We've seen lots of drivers changing from one type of team powered by another manufacturer to a Chevy team or vice versa. How involved are you in any of those discussions with the teams, about the drivers that are coming onboard?

JIM CAMPBELL: Yeah, the teams are always consulting with us on who they're selecting. In the end it's their decision. We certainly consult with them on it.

For the drivers that are coming in, new to Chevrolet, we'll certainly get them on a quick orientation, into our simulators, get ready for the next season.

We have a way to bring those new drivers into the Chevy camp and we'll do just that.

Q. (No microphone.)

JIM CAMPBELL: I'm sorry?

Q. Basically once a driver comes over to Chevy, they proved success, do you do what you can to keep them in the camp?

JIM CAMPBELL: For sure. Sometimes it works out, sometimes it doesn't. We certainly urge the team owners to do that.

As we're talking about drivers that have come and gone from Chevy, it's great to have Ryan Hunter-Reay back in the Chevy camp. For those of you who have been covering the series since 2012, Ryan Hunter-Reay delivered our first championship with Andretti and Chevrolet at the time. Happy to have him back in the camp, hope he's back for the 500, somewhere in the series.

THE MODERATOR: The difference was exactly 12 points. Incredibly close championship. Congratulations to Chevrolet.

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