

NTT INDYCAR SERIES

News Conference

Friday, May 17, 2024

Scott Dixon

Alex Palou

Marcus Armstrong

Linus Lundqvist

Kyffin Simpson

Mike Hull

Press Conference



Chip Ganassi system to become veterans. That's really what we're all about and have been for a long time, so...

Thanks for the question.

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

Q. Mike, I've talked to pretty much everybody on the podium except for you about how you have a lot of rookies this year who are racing in their first 500. They talked about how Dario helps them. Can you talk about what makes Dario's presence so valuable for these first-time drivers.

MIKE HULL: He's done it. That's the short answer. But what he provides, what's fascinating to me about what he's done for us after he stopped driving race cars for us is that he understands the resource internally. He understands the external part on the racetrack, but he understands the resource.

He understands how to help the drivers utilize that resource because that's how driver Dario was. He dissects the racetrack totally inch by inch, not corner by corner. He emphasizes that fully. He sees in them what they don't see in themselves. He sees in them where he was at that point in their career. That goes to Scott, as well as the three people adjacent to them down the line there. He helps them just get through the day by defining priority with resource.

I understand really after having done this how important Rick Mears was for Penske Racing in that position. Much more so now. I have a great degree of appreciation certainly for him, but how he contributed to the drivers that were there at the time he was helping them.

I think we're fortunate to have Dario. I hope we don't have to clone him. I hope he stays with us for a long time.

Q. Scott and Alex have talked about how they've tried to help these rookies. How valuable is it or how good of a situation is it for these rookies to have two guys with such great experience?

MIKE HULL: Racing is a very selfish sport. That starts

THE MODERATOR: We wrap-up our traditional Fast Friday news conferences with Chip Ganassi Racing. Chip obviously could not make it today, he was called out of town, but he will be available on the traditional Chip on the Bricks event coming up next week on Carb Day.

We are joined by Mike Hull, team's long time managing director. Good morning, Mike. All five drivers are also here, including Kyffin Simpson, Linus Lundqvist, Scott Dixon, Alex Palou, and Marcus Armstrong.

Mike, I'm thinking back to the run you're on now, a ton of momentum, drivers in the top five in the championship, the NTT INDYCAR SERIES points standings, won six of the last eight races, the reigning 15-time series champion, as well. How special is this run for this team right now?

MIKE HULL: For Chip Ganassi Racing, it's the result of how we built the culture to win. It's certainly an expectation internally.

It's great that you've brought it up for me. I've never really looked back at that. For me, it's almost the first time I've heard it again because we work so hard on today. It's all we think about. The four people to my left, that's what they work on. They're the quarterbacks for our team. They represent everybody that works in the building, everybody that you see at the racetrack, everybody within the organization at Chip Ganassi Racing.

It's very gratifying to know that it continues to grow and it continues to prosper. What you have in front of you are two veterans, two people that are on their way through the



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with the driver chain downward. When you have drivers like Alex and Scott, who are willing to unselfishly help their teammates, that's very rare in this business.

Really that's how Chip has defined the operational mode for Chip Ganassi Racing. We give back. We pay forward. From the very first day I went to work for Chip 32 years ago, it started that way. We emphasize that clearly.

I don't think I'd want to work anywhere else in racing because of that.

Q. Scott, if there was one memory from over 20 years ago, what would that be?

SCOTT DIXON: Well, I don't know. It's kind of mixed. Came in with a cracked pelvis and broken hand, then I crashed under yellow in the race. It was bad (smiling). Yeah, not many great memories.

We had a very fast car that day. If we hadn't not run out of fuel, I think we had a shot at winning that the very first go.

For me, what an experience, man, coming here for the first time. I'd been a spectator the year before and watched it. To come here with a powerhouse like Ganassi was very special.

I think anytime the feeling is the same when you leave here if you didn't win it, it's kind of disappointment.

I don't know. What this place is and how it changes you is very, very special. Definitely nothing like the first time.

Q. 21 years later there's another Kiwi on the block. Marcus, your first attempt at the Indy 500. What's this place meant to you so far in the month of May?

MARCUS ARMSTRONG: Firstly, it's reassuring to know that even the legendary Scott Dixon managed to crash under yellow 21 years ago (smiling).

But to answer your question, I mean, it sounds very generic, but it's very special. The amount of commitment that it requires to be quick around here is extremely different to every other place I've been to.

Frankly, I remember the first time I went to Macau, that place was initially quite daunting because it's tight and twisty. But frankly, after running around here, there's nothing else in the world that will challenge me to that same extent.

I'm proud to be here with, like Scott said, a powerhouse like Ganassi. I've got Dario, like was mentioned earlier,

helping me out. I'm asking Alex and Scott a million questions. But ultimately I'm out there trying to experience it for myself, to understand the feeling and emotion that goes with it because that's what matters most.

Every single lap I'm learning something. Unfortunately the weather hasn't been great. That's sort of been not ideal. In saying that, I feel like we're in a good place and we're improving. Yeah, it's exciting to see what the future holds.

Q. Linus, Marcus and Kyffin, obviously you're all rookies. This has been a tough week in terms of getting track time. What has it been like, the challenge, the level of frustration of wanting to get more experience? On top of that, you have the boost coming in tomorrow. What has this week been like and has it been more difficult than you anticipated?

LINUS LUNDQVIST: Yeah, obviously the loss of track time hasn't been great. At the same time we get loads of practice around this place. It seems like you can never get enough.

It just means that you really got to focus when you are on track and try to learn as much as you can every single time. Like Marcus said, for all of us rookies, we learn every single time we're out on track. You just got to make the most of what you have.

I think that's one of the best things, as well, for us rookies coming in, is having Alex and Scott here where we don't really have to be at the forefront of trying to extract performance out of the car. We can kind of take a breath and try to get comfortable with traffic, with the quallie sim running. It does take some of the pressure off, but it doesn't mean that it's easy.

KYFFIN SIMPSON: Yeah, I mean, I completely agree with Linus. It's tough. Every lap that you get is a lap more helpful. You learn something every lap.

I think being with such a strong team like Ganassi, you know that the car is going to be good so you're not worried about making sure the car's good for the race or trying to work on setup. You can really just focus on learning everything you can every lap.

Every lap we get today is going to be very helpful, as long as the weather permits. Yeah, every lap for the rest of the week really.

MARCUS ARMSTRONG: Yeah, like I said earlier, obviously it's not ideal. We haven't had as many laps as we would have wanted.

I don't feel like it's been a terrible thing really. I feel like I'm in a decent groove. Obviously, like you mentioned, we're going to turn the boost up today. That's a new thing for us. In saying that, just want to keep it simple. Ultimately the goal is to get around the track as quick as possible. I'll try not to forget that.

Q. Scott, your perspective on that? Putting yourself in the shoes of somebody like these guys or Kyle Larson, how difficult do you think that is for somebody coming in here for the first time?

SCOTT DIXON: I don't know. I'd say it's sometimes better not knowing things. You have a lot of bad things you remember, too (smiling).

Yeah, I don't know. You got to try to keep it fresh. I think that's the fun thing about the sport, everybody chasing the same thing. It's always kind of different.

I think what these guys have been doing well is really just taking it all in, kind of not trying to rush the situation. But I think that's where the team manages it well. We have a good kind of baseline and can work off that. There's no egos. Everybody conversates really well. The flow is really good.

Even from a transition from four cars to five cars has shown that as well this season. It's a great group of people at this team. Even with the additions we've had, it mixes well. That's true across the driver lineup, too.

It's daunting. It is the Indy 500. It's also just another race, so you got to try to block all that stuff out.

Q. Mike, Scott and Alex, where do you stand on your thoughts on Team Penske right now? They seem fast. If they were to go out and put three cars in the top 12, you guys feel okay about that? Do you feel it's honest and legal? Are you satisfied with where things are right now?

MIKE HULL: I feel like at Wimbledon on the other side of the net receiving the serve from you, Jenna.

Yeah, no, it's hard not to respond to that. At the same time I think the reality is that what we've done for a long time here is we've worked really, really hard to concentrate on our program. We get the most out of it. I'm not going to try to give you some political answer here.

Were we satisfied with what happened? Absolutely not. No way. Was it handled correctly? That depends on who receives the serve.

But this is the Indianapolis 500, and we want to win this race. The less time we spend thinking about that ping-pong match, the better off we are as a team.

Hopefully everybody learned from that. Hopefully the sanctioning body learned from that. Hopefully they do something about it going forward to make us all better.

It's amazing to me in this day and age that that happened. I'll leave it at that.

ALEX PALOU: Well, yeah, I don't have anything to add. From my point of view, it's none of my business. I just need to drive as fast as I can every single weekend and let Mike and Chip deal with the rest, so...

Q. Alex and Scott, the two of you have combined for the last three poles at the 500. We've seen a lot of guys the last couple days going out and doing qualifying simulations without the boost. You've not seemed too worried about that. We understand why. Do you feel, given the changes that we've seen in the car coming into this year, still really confident about the program that you have used these last couple years to dominate qualifying on Sunday?

ALEX PALOU: Well, from my side, I'm confident, but at the same time we don't really know until we turn up the boost and we know how the car feels on those conditions.

Yeah, we know that the team did a tremendous job behind all those qualifyings that we've done. They did the same or even more this year.

Yeah, we didn't really try it yesterday because it changes so much, you go so much faster with the boost, you would feel so much better yesterday than what we're going to feel today.

Yeah, we're confident, but at the same time I think a lot of teams caught up and we have a lot of work to do today to try to fight for qualifying again this weekend.

SCOTT DIXON: Yeah, I think the last couple years we just felt like we got out of sync with what the packs were doing. We would try to race run, then trim out in the afternoon. Yesterday was just a bit of a mess. We still have a long list of stuff to get done for race running that we didn't get through much of it. I think obviously Monday and Carb Day will be pretty busy, as well.

Yeah, as Alex said, I think the team's confident. I think there's some other teams that have gained some setup sheets and some good information over the off-season, which will definitely probably tighten some things up, so...

See what Honda brings, and hopefully it's good.

Q. Mike, sometime around 2007, 2009, you gave an impassioned plea about how Indy should stand for innovation. We're we are 2024, cars are getting pretty old. A couple of the OEMs said that INDYCAR is pretty far down the road in discussions for a new car. You're one of the bigger teams. You've done an awful lot with this particular car. What is your viewpoint on how badly the series needs a new car? What does that new car need to be like and do?

MIKE HULL: Yeah, I know the car now qualifies for vintage racing, but...

I think a lot of the innovation that we have in INDYCAR racing today is unseen. We do a lot of things that aren't public because prior to the era that you referenced there, people showed up with different race cars, different engines, different technology, lots of things. It drove people from my generation to work in this sport. We enjoyed that. We enjoyed that freedom of expression. Today the freedom of expression is totally different with how you operate your team and what you do.

I honestly don't know where the owner of this series and the sanctioning body are going. I do know that we need to not just express ourselves as we have as a series on the racetrack, but we need to find the public's eye more seriously than we are.

Maybe that's the innovation we need going forward. Maybe it's not about technology. Maybe it's about things that my generation doesn't appreciate. I don't know how to say that. We lost Eddie Gossage yesterday. We heard about it this morning or last night. Our generation is disappearing.

It's all about the next generation in terms of public perception of what INDYCAR is all about. That really needs to be where it's driven. I love going to see cars that raced when I was growing up, but they no longer race.

The things that's in common today are these guys here. They're still race drivers. They still race cars. That's what gets me going in the morning because I do really enjoy that. I hope for a period of time going forward I can still do this.

Let's concentrate on INDYCAR racing today.

Q. From a business standpoint, Dale Coyne said with the cars, the age they are, it costs about \$1 million a year to keep these things fresh and up to date. Do you

see that, running the entire operation as you do, as kind of a challenge to keep these things on the road in top-notch condition?

MIKE HULL: I don't quite understand the question.

Q. He said it costs him about \$1 million a year just to keep the 2012 chassis.

MIKE HULL: I don't think he's far off, first of all. We certainly would validate what Dale has said there.

Let's face it, for quite a long time sanction office has tried to save us from ourselves financially by trying to continue to fill the field. But guess what we have today? We actually have a waiting list to qualify at all the races except this one.

Strike while the iron's hot.

Q. Linus, you haven't really been able to get on the track since the crash yesterday. You said you're learning something every lap. What can you learn from a crash on this track as far as your strategy moving forward?

LINUS LUNDQVIST: You learn that you don't want to do it again. That's the biggest takeaway of it all.

Obviously, like you said, missed out on a couple of laps, which wasn't ideal. You kind of just look back and you reset. Obviously luckily I was okay. Car is back together. Hopefully we can get to do a little bit more running today.

But it's never easy. This is by far the biggest crash I've had in my career. It was not fun. A lot of people have told me there are two categories of drivers around this place: people that have crashed and drivers that will crash. I'll put myself in the second part of that now.

Hopefully we can bounce back. I'm sure we can. Just focus forward from here.

Q. You said this is the biggest crash of your career. Are there nerves when you get back in the car after a crash at all?

LINUS LUNDQVIST: As of right now, no. I'm honestly more eager to get back into it. I think the longer time goes by, the longer you start to think about it. Even yesterday I was like, Let's try to get back out there if we can.

Obviously we'll throw a bunch of downforce in today, get my confidence back up. I'm sure once I feel everything is back to normal, we'll go back at it.

THE MODERATOR: Wish all you guys the best of luck this weekend, certainly a week from Sunday.

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