

NTT INDYCAR SERIES

News Conference

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Indianapolis, Indiana, USA

Scott McLaughlin

Scott Dixon

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: Wrapping up Miller Lite Carb Day practice ahead of Sunday's 108th running of the Indianapolis 500, Scott Dixon. P1 in that practice session in the 90 laps that he turned, top speed of 227.206 miles an hour, at least a one-lap average, and Scott drives the No. 9 PNC Bank Chip Ganassi Racing Honda, the 2008 500 winner, making his 22nd start on Sunday. And Scott McLaughlin, 93 laps turned in that practice session, driver of the No. 3 Pennzoil Team Penske Chevrolet. The five-time NTT INDYCAR Series race winner starts from pole for the seventh time in his NTT INDYCAR Series career.

Scott, fastest today. Race car seems to be pretty good.

SCOTT DIXON: Yeah, it started off pretty good. Conditions were definitely tricky. It changed a lot throughout. As we were just chatting, I think early on was quite comfortable. We went through some changes. Some were good, some were bad. But definitely a lot of competitive cars out there, so it's going to be one tough race. As the track got a little bit warmer out there with track temp especially, it got pretty greasy and pretty slippery.

But yeah, I think the 9 car has been fairly strong in race running, but unfortunately I think there's about 20 others that are really strong, as well.

Q. Scottie Mac, race car, how would you describe it?

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: Very similar to what we started with this week. We haven't really played around too much mechanically with the car. It felt good out of the box, and just sort of building my confidence with it. We tried a few different downforce levels there just to get an idea.

Looks like cooler temps for Sunday as well as Monday if that gets pushed back. Hopefully not. But ultimately you're just sort of going through the motions, attacking the pit

speed line. I actually sped, which was a good thing to get that out of the way now. A few other things like just pit stop practice and whatnot. I was just ticking things off the list.

Yeah, felt really good, but didn't put a big number up, but I think we're okay.

Q. Scott, obviously with the fastest time today but you're starting kind of further back, is the approach today that we saw just trying to go fast, get a lot of laps? Is that kind of a preview of what your strategy might be during the 500? What does that look like?

SCOTT DIXON: I think you've just got to roll with it. If you go in with any kind of preset notion of what you want to do, it just takes one person to change that.

I think just going in with an open mind, trying to be quick on your feet, and I think that's true for the whole strategy for our race is just ready for change because I think there will be a lot of change going on. Especially with the weather conditions, there's a lot of things outside of your control. Just do the best that you can and see where it plays out.

Q. Was there any particular strategy that you tried to drive with today?

SCOTT DIXON: Go fast. Don't crash.

Q. Scott McLaughlin, looking around you're in the iconic suit now, sat next to a 500 winner, you've got the P1 position. Feels like the perfect storm for you this year. How are you feeling going into the 500?

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: Super excited. When this guy won in '08, it made me love the Indy 500 a lot, as a Kiwi and a very proud one at that.

I guess it has been a pretty whirlwind week. Being fastest here for qualifying, obviously it's the first box you want to tick, but ultimately you want to win on Sunday, but it's still been a really cool week, and I've really enjoyed. I've really tried to soak it in as much as I can, but at the end of the day the job is this weekend.

But just really proud to represent Pennzoil, and obviously



it's 40 years since Rick won in this race car. It would mean a lot to the team and myself to do that, obviously. It would be a life-changing experience. But ultimately we need to go through all the process, all the execution to get to that point as 32 other amazing race car drivers out there are going to be chasing us down and working us very hard. Yeah, no doubt about that.

Just keep my emotions in check, just enjoy the moment and see what happens.

Q. With all that in mind, what you're wearing, yellow submarine, P1 position, and also just the news surrounding Penske all season, is there any added pressure that you're feeling going into this race?

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: Not really. I'm just very focused on the job at hand. I think we've proved that you can get a sore neck looking back. We'll keep working forward. I'm really proud of the execution all month, but at the end of the day, the main time to execute is Sunday, and we'll try and do that.

Q. Dixon, obviously we saw what Chevy was able to do in qualifying, but when you look at the race trim and how this feels, does it feel like y'all are more level?

SCOTT DIXON: Yeah, it's kind of hard to tell in race trim, to be honest. I'd say it seems more level, but they still seem to pull off and come back from fairly far back. It will be interesting to see how it is in the race. Obviously I'm sure nobody was stressing the engine too much in that session, as well.

Many a times the fastest car doesn't win, so you've just got to try and tick all the boxes, make sure you're covering everything, and see what the last sort of 20 or 40 laps give you and go from there. But I think we're in with a shot, and that's all you need.

Q. For either of you or both of you, most tracks we go to, when conditions get cooler, you just know it's going to increase grip, but this place kind of seems especially finicky. What kind of mystery are we looking at if we get the overcast and the cooler temperatures Sunday and Monday?

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: Scottie has got more experience than me.

SCOTT DIXON: I think it's the same trend. The pack will just get tighter.

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: Yeah, I agree. I think it will -- yeah, we'll get more grip, but everyone will get more grip,

so I think we'll see the same gaps and stuff like that. It's a matter of being able to follow close enough when they make mistakes and capitalize.

Q. Dixon, I know it's been a while since we've had weather really impact race day. I think the 2004 and 2007. Can you kind of just look back for us and tell us what those race days are like when you don't know when you're going to be racing, you don't know if you're running 200 laps or 150 laps? What are those experiences like for folks that either weren't around here or weren't racing in those?

SCOTT DIXON: I think you can't look into it too much. It's the same for everybody. You can't do anything about it.

It was weird, I think I remember having a nap in between the start and the finish of one of those, and then obviously it finished in the rain with -- was that '07, Dario beating me under caution, so that was not fun. So not a good memory. But yeah, it's weather. It is what it is. It might favor somebody in the end, might not. Hopefully it's you if you can ride that kind of train.

But yeah, I don't know what to tell you.

Q. Scott, with you guys having three Penske cars across the front row on Sunday, how if at all can you guys work together to try and control the race? Is that something you guys have talked about yet, how you guys will approach that, or is that something you guys won't worry too much about?

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: I think we've seen over the years, I think Scottie and Alex have done this before, really controlled that first sort of 100 odd laps and whatnot, so it is able to be done. But we haven't had an active discussion about it yet, but at the end of the day I'm sure there will be a sit-down with all three of us before the race and sort of analyze a few things.

At the same time, I guess everyone knows that when you're out in front, you're chewing a lot of gas, so ultimately I think we'll take turns maybe at doing that or making sure that we keep ourselves in good track position. Ultimately that's what I'm thinking about.

But yeah, certainly when you get back to sort of six, seven, eight deep it's quite definitely, so we need to make sure we're up in the front.

Just let it come, let it happen. I haven't been at the front; starting 14th is best I've had. I'm excited to see what it looks like.

Q. Scott Dixon, we talked to Chip this morning, and he said he felt like Honda gave something up in qualifying but it was also sort of a team thing that kept you guys from making the Fast 12. He felt like you guys had rectified it. Could you elaborate on your perspective on that and did you feel like you guys fixed whatever was going on in qualifying the last two practices this week?

SCOTT DIXON: Well, it is Chip's birthday today. Yeah, I haven't been -- obviously our relationships are much tighter with like our direct engineers and you kind of come in each day and hope for some news. But I wouldn't say there's been any news, so I'm not sure what Chip is maybe alluding to.

But I think as we spoke earlier, there was some separation in qual, but separation for us from where we were last year, and I think the biggest thing for us is that we weren't the fastest Honda. We missed something there.

Where Honda lies on where they think their performance was is something a bit different, as well, too, but we'll be digging pretty deep. We've gone and had some discussions already. We think there's a couple of things that we missed, but all in all, it's going to take some time.

Q. Scottie Mac, Simon Pagenaud of course is here and we interviewed him during practice on Peacock and he confirmed to Marty that he's your secret mentor, and he was highly complimentary of everything you've done and about how you came to him and have absorbed everything. Can you give us more perspective on how it came about and how much of an impact did he have on the pole? Were you using things in terms of lines and things that he was telling you?

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: The line I think came a little naturally to me, but yeah, he's a very keen observer of many things, a note taker, and we've been exchanging notes all week. I asked him to do this like February, January or February, and we've been analyzing a lot of things since.

But at the same time, he's always been a Team Penske member. He's won the 500 for us, and at the end of the day, we all just want him to be okay. So this is for me an opportunity for me to work with him but also an opportunity for me to help maybe bring him back to the race and get his name back involved. Whether that's not driving a race car, at least he's involved, and he gets that feeling of being at the 500 again. I'm sure it's so hard for him right now. It's his first 500 he's missed in a long time. He's a 500 winner, and he's at a point in his career where he could

easily keep going for many, many years.

He's just a nice guy. I've always got along with him from Penske, and he's been a lot of help. Yeah, there's definitely a lot of things I've used this week that have helped, but at the same time, we've had great car speed, which has made it a lot easier. But just leaning on him has been nice.

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