

NTT INDYCAR SERIES

News Conference

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Chip Ganassi

Mike Hull

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: The 2024 NTT INDYCAR SERIES championship team in Chip Ganassi Racing who picks up their 16th INDYCAR SERIES championship. Alex Palou has been an elite list of champions, along with Scott Dixon, Dario Franchitti, Alex Zanardi, Jimmy Vasser.

Joined by Chip Ganassi, owner at Chip Ganassi Racing, as well as Mike Hull, long time manager at Chip Ganassi Racing.

Chip, congratulations. Back to back. Seems like you have a decent driver in Alex Palou.

CHIP GANASSI: Quite a guy. I was just saying days like today, I go back to when he first showed up in Alabama there with us, his first race. I know prior to that, a lot of you have heard this story, we tested at Laguna Seca, he was quickest at the test, then we went to the first race in Alabama, he was quick in practice. I'm like, Yeah, he was quick in practice, but he's got to qualify, he's got to race. Then he was quickest in qualifying. Yeah, yeah, great job, but he still has to race. Then the race. I remember he had Power and Dixon breathing down his neck the whole day. Won the race by about 10 feet over Power. Everything from there has just been a storybook unlike any other.

THE MODERATOR: I don't know what your plans are tonight. You sticking around?

CHIP GANASSI: You listening, Mike (laughter). That was your question.

MIKE HULL: Sorry (laughter).

THE MODERATOR: You've been a part of a few championships as well.

MIKE HULL: We'll celebrate a little bit. We always do. When you win, you have to celebrate because then we go back to work right away. We don't celebrate till the next time.

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

Q. When you signed Alex, part of it was because Felix was leaving. Alex is a guy who raced one season for Dale Coyne Racing during the COVID bubble. Nobody gets the opportunity to get to know him. What did you know about him or like about him?

MIKE HULL: It happened late for us in that year because Felix left us very, very late. We weren't expecting that. Palou, maybe some day you will hear the story about his weight jacker, qualifying at Indianapolis, where it stuck for four laps. He was in a Coyne car there.

By pit selection where he qualified eighth, he was next to the Dixon car. The first time I'd seen those guys in action was Carb Day. I watched the action in his pit box. Then I watched his action on race day.

I said to Chip at that time, This guy is special. For the monkey motion that went on in the pit lane for him on race day, for him to do what he did there, was absolutely extraordinary.

CHIP GANASSI: He finished fourth.

MIKE HULL: I think he did. I don't remember. I just remember what I watched.

We had an opportunity to talk to him in the fall. We snuck off to a hotel room in the J.W. Marriott and sat down and talked about it together with Chip and we chose him. I think it's validated.

Q. (No microphone.)

MIKE HULL: It was in Indianapolis.

Q. Since you've had him, three championships, he seems pretty unflappable. Who can you compare him to?

CHIP GANASSI: Good question. I don't know. A lot of guys like that. We've been lucky to have some great drivers on the team over the years. You want to make the



obvious comparisons, but I don't know that you can.

At his age to be doing what he's doing, having the experience that he has, especially with the series the way it is today now with some ovals, these guys aren't exactly oval meisters that are excelling in the series today. There are some better oval racers out there. I'm sure he'll tell you that.

So it's an interesting series now. It's an interesting mix. To have a guy like Alex on your team, I was saying to somebody yesterday, I mean, three championships in four years, I mean, I don't know how many guys have three championships, not that many. He's in pretty rarefied air right now, as they say. His name has to be among and certainly in the conversation of the great drivers. He's certainly in the conversation of the greatest.

THE MODERATOR: Chip, I'll name you some drivers that have won three or more championships: Foyt obviously, Scott, Dario, Sebastien Bourdais, Louis Meyer, Ted Horn, Jimmy Bryan, Mario, Rick Mears, Bobby Rahal, Sam Hornish Jr.

CHIP GANASSI: Pretty elite crowd. And Alex Palou.

Q. Mike, Palou is very much in the Dixon cool as a cucumber. Dario cut from the same cloth. Is there something about Ganassi that the team molds these guys or attracts these drivers?

MIKE HULL: It's Chip first of all. I'll tell you why. Besides being a terrific owner, finding resources for us that we can't find ourselves, he emphasizes to every crew member on the team, and it starts with the drivers, they have to be totally unselfish. They have to give more to their teammate than their teammate gives back to them. When that does happen, then the whole team is one team. It's one team.

Race drivers like Alex, if you study all the people that Dave mentioned, you look at their career at the time that they begin to do extremely well, it's at that moment, that crossover moment when their ability, their experience and the team and its resources come together. You have to take full advantage of that because in that case it's all about today.

Hopefully today lasts for quite a while with Alex with Chip Ganassi Racing.

Q. Can you talk a bit about Alex Palou as a character, not just as a driver. What is it like working with him, the person?

CHIP GANASSI: I think a side of him that a lot of people

don't see is his humor. He's got a great sense of humor. I think to me that's important in the world today. There's a lot of things going on in this world on a day-to-day basis.

Alex, yeah, he is as serious as they get as a race driver. I can tell you he has a good, sharp wit and a sharp humor. I like that a lot about him.

Q. Looking back to when Alex first moved over to Ganassi, what kind of expectations did you have? Did you expect him to be immediately a champion, a three-time champion?

CHIP GANASSI: I can tell you that my expectation was that I was just hoping that we had a guy that liked ovals, liked road races, was going to grow with the team.

I had no idea what three of the next four years were going to be like. If I told you I had any other idea or expectation, I'd be lying to you. I had no idea it would be this much fun and this successful.

Q. Chip, Alex is still very young, still developing. This year in particular, what have you seen from him new? How has he improved?

CHIP GANASSI: I think the biggest change that he's gone through this year is having a daughter. I think that's brought him even more focus. He was focused before as a race driver. I think having a child has focused him even more on his career and his life, his family. There's a lot of speed in that.

Q. Yesterday when Alex uncharacteristically had a poor qualifying effort, he seemed to be not really concerned. What was it that happened to him in qualifying, how he reacted?

MIKE HULL: I think what Alex does well and better than most is he recovers. He mentally recovers. He works immediately with his teammates and the people that work on his race car. They solve problems together.

With the way INDYCAR racing is today, the cars are so equally matched that where you qualify often determines where you race in the race. You can do one of two things. You can call the 800 suicide prevention watch number or you can figure out what it is that you should be doing. That's what Alex does.

He gets the most out of today. Guess what that does? The fallout from that is every team member sees that. It raises the entire room. Guess who else does that? Scott Dixon. Alex Zanardi, Jimmy Vasser, Juan Montoya. They all had that in common. They raised the level of the room.

That's what he does.

Q. (No microphone.)

MIKE HULL: I think it's fantastic. We support teammates like Barry. We've had many others exactly like Barry. Barry is in the spotlight so everybody in the room knows exactly what went on with him. We've had others that we've supported just like we supported Barry.

I personally have known Barry for a long, long time. Glad he's with us.

CHIP GANASSI: I've never seen a group of guys that never give up. I got to tell you that a couple times over the last five years, I've felt like giving up or I felt like we were out of it or I felt like everything was coming to an end, I was about to call the suicide hotline or whatever.

But I get from the team the never-give-up. Our guys never, ever, never give up. Never give up. That's what the greatest thing about this team is.

That's why I keep coming back every week and coming back every race and coming back every year. It's the group of people that I get to do it with, okay? It's what we accomplish together as a team.

Q. There's potentially a lot of change with the team working with Meyer Shank and the INDY NXT program as well. How do you go about replicating the form you've been able to produce?

CHIP GANASSI: That's a good question. I guess it will be Monday before we get into that (smiling). Right now I think we're just going to celebrate a little bit tonight.

I mean, I think it's not a big stretch for us. Basically we're turning our sports car team into an INDY NXT team, and we'll go from there. We still have a great group of engineers. We still have a great group of people. Bringing on a technical partner like Mike Shank is a good thing for our team, and I hope it's a good thing for his team.

I look forward to it, yeah.

Q. So you're not going to be in sports cars in 2025?

CHIP GANASSI: Somebody has to fall from the sky pretty quick for that to happen in 2025. I'm not holding out any hope for that for '25, unless something falls out of the sky and hits me on the head.

Q. (No microphone.)

CHIP GANASSI: Like I said, if something falls out of the sky and hits me in the head, great. Don't look for us in 2025.

THE MODERATOR: Congratulations.

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