

NTT INDYCAR SERIES

News Conference

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Chip Ganassi

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: Joined by the championship team owner and soon Alex Palou will also join us. Congratulations, Chip Ganassi, sixth Indianapolis 500 win, joining the likes of Juan Pablo Montoya in 2000, Scott Dixon in '08, Dario in 2010 and 2012 and Marcus Ericsson in 2022. Just your thoughts, Chip, on another victory here at the Indianapolis Motor Speedway.

CHIP GANASSI: It was just an incredible day. From my point of view, it was slow getting the thing started there, obviously, with the rain and some yellow there at the beginning, on and off a couple times. I think it was difficult for some guys to get into a groove. It was difficult, guys getting started, and they sort of jumbled around.

You had a lot of activity in the pits today that seemed to hinder some drivers, also, and I felt bad some guys had some issues early on. Some of our -- people we thought we were going to be racing at the end had some issue; they weren't there.

I'll tell you, that kid is a good driver. He's off to -- I think he's off to a good start. We're going to have a good season.

Q. Where does this rank in terms of your career as a team owner, given that Alex has been so successful so far?

CHIP GANASSI: It's certainly my new favorite race, my new favorite win. This is a big, big thing. The Indianapolis 500 is a big damn race. He will always be known now as an Indianapolis 500 winner Alex Palou. It's that simple.

Like he said last week, if he was to go through his whole career and not win here at Indianapolis, it wouldn't be a complete career. I don't want to say his career is complete now; he's got a lot in him yet. He's just an incredible driver. What can you say. Look at the last five, six races we've had. It's just incredible. He's on a roll.

Q. In terms of 35 years for you as a team owner, can you talk about that a little bit.

CHIP GANASSI: I think he's one of the greats. It's that simple. Certainly we've had some great drivers on our team, and he's right there, at worst, shoulder to shoulder with all the rest of them. You've got to talk about Franchitti and Montoya and Dixon and all the champions we've had, Vasser and Zanardi, and it just adds to it, Ericsson won here with us. It's just a great thing. He's clearly in that group now, clearly.

Q. Did you ever get the feeling that the fact he hadn't won on an oval was starting to get in his head at all, and is there anything that he did today that you felt like he didn't do previously on an oval?

CHIP GANASSI: You know, I really didn't look at that as much. He could have won Nashville last year I thought, and he didn't have to. He kind of rolled out of that one.

Yeah, coming from my perspective, I didn't put much into that just because the circumstances -- I'm a little closer to the circumstances than most of you are in terms of what's going on in the team and what was going on that particular day or whenever when he didn't win on an oval.

Yeah, I didn't put much into that, so I don't -- and winning at Indianapolis is -- this race is won more like a road race as opposed to a short oval. I think in terms of the strategy and how you plan out this race and map it out, because it's a longer track, two and a half miles, when you look at distance and time in and out of the pits and what have you. It's a little different than -- way different than an Iowa or Milwaukee in terms of how you run the race strategy.

Q. Chip, what would Bill Simpson say to you right now about Alex and this particular win?

CHIP GANASSI: You know, boy, I miss my pal Bill Simpson. What would he say? Well, he'd be over in his suite over there in Turn 2 having some happy juice and he'd invite me over and he'd probably be cheering us on for sure. I know that. He's cheering us on from heaven right now, or hell for that matter; who knows where he is. I know he's cheering us on.

Q. You talk about Scott Dixon historically being able

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to save fuel. What about Alex Palou the last two cycles today? That was incredible.

CHIP GANASSI: Yeah, so I didn't get down to his car until about lap 100, so I was kind of playing catch-up myself on what was going on there.

The way those guys operate with the mileage and what have you, it was a lay-up. I think at lap -- I think it was like at lap 150, there's an 85 percent chance there's going to be a yellow yet, if you look at historically, and that didn't happen today because also when everybody is out there sort of -- with one stop to go and they're trying to get to a lap to get to the finish, and when that's going on, guys are a little more conservative in that 150-to-190-lap range. They're a little more conservative. That's why you don't see a yellow. Nobody was flat there.

Q. When you signed Alex from Dale Coyne, not everyone saw what you saw. You obviously saw something special when you signed him. And over the past few years you've stuck by him, shown a lot of faith in him over the past few years. Do you feel like he's rewarded you or delivered on --

CHIP GANASSI: He certainly delivered out of the blocks there at Alabama. His first race with us he won. The guy continues to just change the record book. It's that simple.

I mean, I think he's got a good team under him, but I mean, I think he's doing the job, too, unquestionably.

Q. Apologies if anyone has referenced this. I think Alex and the 10 team are the fourth team in modern INDYCAR history to win five of the first six races of the year. Not sure how many of those even included the Indy 500. As a historian of the sport, can you put into perspective just how rare the execution and the talent from Alex and this whole 10 team has been over the course of the season?

CHIP GANASSI: Believe me, I'm riding the wave just like everyone else. I'm out here on the wave, and I want to keep riding it. That's all I can say. I wish I had an answer for you. I can tell you that some of the people on that team are our most experienced people, and they do a great job. My hat's off to that 10 team underneath him. He'll be the first to tell you, they have a great communication. They have a great communication working right now between the car and the pit stand. It's incredible to me to listen to those guys, Barry, Julian and Dave, the fuel mixture guy.

Q. I don't know that we always know when a pass is made over the course of the final 20 laps whether it's going to be the winning pass or not. Alex makes that

pass of Marcus --

CHIP GANASSI: Or you pass and maybe a yellow comes out or someone else makes a pass and a yellow comes out.

Q. In the moment did that feel like as crucial of a pass to you as you were watching it as it ultimately came down to?

CHIP GANASSI: I'm trying to think. We lost here not that long ago. We finished second here at Indianapolis because the leader -- after the last stop, the leader came out and was drafting off of some cars in front of him, and that's what happened today. We picked up the draft of two guys that were on the lead lap. They didn't want to get lapped, so they were going like hell. They didn't want to get lapped, and it was good for us.

We happened to be in the right place at the right time certainly. We've won the race that way and we've lost it that way. I wish I had -- somebody can look that up. It was Ryan Hunter-Reay I remember in the DHL car -- was it '14? No, not when he won. We came out of the pits, we were drafting behind him, and we couldn't get -- someone else was drafting behind him and we were in second, and we couldn't get to the lead. That's what it was. But I remember it was Ryan Hunter-Reay.

Q. I don't remember if this is exact. It was on the leaderboard in here. I want to say the gap now between Alex and Pato for second is larger or as large as the gap from Pato in second to 22nd in the points right now. Have you ever sort of been in that situation in a championship battle, and what are you sort of --

CHIP GANASSI: I don't know that anybody has.

Q. How do you approach the rest of the season with -- you guys joked about it at the beginning, but a lot of people looking at this and saying this championship is going to be locked up sooner rather than later.

CHIP GANASSI: You hear all kind of things. When there's a superstar that comes along in any sport and starts to win, people say, well, maybe we should change the way the championship is done or something. Do they say that about Caitlin Clark when she shows up and starts changing the WNBA? Do they say, well, let's change the rules around her, then, or something?

I think they should embrace a champion like that. The guy is a great guy and he's a great champion, and he's a great ambassador to the sport. They should embrace it.



Q. You finished second with Dixon in 2021 and you also finished second with Alex in 2021 when Helio won his fourth --

CHIP GANASSI: I think it was when Helio came out of the pits and Hunter-Reay was in front of him.

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