

NTT INDYCAR SERIES

News Conference

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Felix Rosenqvist

Scott Dixon

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: Felix Rosenqvist led a race-high 51 laps for Meyer Shank Racing. His first podium since Road America last year. Best career finish at Long Beach. His eighth career podium.

Scott Dixon also joins us. His first podium of the season. He now has 156 for his career, which extends the all-time record in INDYCAR SERIES history.

Felix, I know you were hoping for a win. Did not come up with it today. How proud are you of the team effort?

FELIX ROSENQVIST: It's definitely a mix. I think all in all we got to be happy as a weekend for us at Meyer Shank Racing. We had a win yesterday with Nick in IMSA. We had a pole there as well, then a pole here and a P2. We just fell short of a grand slam.

If you kind of take the perspective, it's been a very, very good weekend. Obviously you want to win when you have the opportunity.

Yeah, I'm proud of today. I think everything we were working on kind of paid off today. I've been in this position many times before, being on pole or at the front, then something kind of fell short.

I feel like today we just had really, really solid pace. Actually incredible pace on the reds, not as good as Alex on the blacks. I just kind of struggled a little bit on that last stint. It was going to be hard to pass him anyways.

Yeah, that last pit cycle was kind of the defining moment. I don't even think we had that bad of a stop. We had to come around the 14. I don't know if Alex had an open in. Details like that matter. It didn't seem like a super slow stop, but he probably nailed it or his crew.

Yeah, that happens. End of the day I'll gladly take a P2 today.

THE MODERATOR: Sounds like you needed a bounce-back to kick-start the rest of the season. Maybe you got that here today.

FELIX ROSENQVIST: For sure, yeah. Going into the weekend we were just trying to do something a little bit different, try to reload a little bit and get the confidence back.

I think it's important mentally, mainly for me, but everyone on the crew, to reset, show what we got, kind of remind us why we're here.

THE MODERATOR: Scott, another podium finish for you. Obviously a good pit stop there at the end for you. Talk about another podium here at Long Beach.

SCOTT DIXON: Yeah, huge weekend for the Ganassi cars. I think probably one of the best for qualifying between all us, which was really good. It was nice just to have a clean weekend, no major issues, no damage, no mess-ups or anything like that. That was a lot of fun.

The race itself for us was just a bit blah, to be honest. We kind of sat in the same position, tried to go long. Fuel mileage was really good, which Honda does a great job at. I think everybody is caught up a lot on figuring out what they need.

Unfortunately for me the balance had a lot of understeer, so it was very difficult to roll the corner and roll off throttle to get that mileage. Yeah, interesting day.

The last stop luckily for us we had an easy out. Looked like a lot of the people we were fighting had cars in front of them or behind them, which kind of paid off for us.

Great weekend. Hopefully something we can build on and keep rolling.

THE MODERATOR: You mentioned Honda. Noteworthy a Honda sweep on the podium. Big afternoon for those guys.

SCOTT DIXON: Yeah, they do a tremendous job. They're



forever working hard. Huge weekend for them here with the Acura Grand Prix, big day yesterday and the day before, as Felix touched on with the poles, race win, obviously today with a podium sweep. Pretty sweet.

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

Q. Felix, when the yellow came out, what was going through your head?

FELIX ROSENQVIST: I mean, I'm just happy it didn't screw up our race. Things like that can happen. You just end up ruining your whole day. Effectively we were in the same spot.

But the annoying thing for me was I had a bit of a cushion, I had like 2.3 seconds or something. I felt like even with a bad stop, we'll probably stay ahead. We also did well on fuel stints.

These things happen. I kind of knew it was going to be yellow at some point. There it came, so... Yeah, a little bit frustrating. End of the day Alex and his crew did a better job in that moment of pressure there. It's just something to learn from.

Q. Did you feel that urgency once you all pitted knowing you maybe would have had to get out there before Alex?

FELIX ROSENQVIST: I mean, we had a great stop. The first stop was really good. We managed to pretty much equalize the gap we had to Alex in the first cycle. I was pretty confident we could pull it off. Obviously it was going to be harder on a yellow.

Yeah, I'm really proud of the guys. They've been improving so much in the pits this winter. I think going into this weekend at least we were sitting P6, P7 in pit lane this year. I'm pretty sure we moved up a little bit this weekend. Incredible job. Very rare you can find gains like that.

It's really allowed us now when we have a weekend with pace to really fight for it. Big thanks to the whole Meyer Shank group. Just keep plugging away.

Q. Scott, as we head into May, how gratifying is it for you to get the best finish of the season to this point?

SCOTT DIXON: Yeah, it's definitely positive. The unfortunate part is you mostly think about the misses. That's what keeps you going.

But yeah, no, big for the team. Obviously Alex is off to a great start as well. With the problem he had at Phoenix,

otherwise a tremendous start to the year. All of us have to do a lot of work.

You want to peak at Indy. We're heading in that direction. I feel good for the team.

Q. Felix, did you feel like you were going to be strong enough on the primaries to hold off Alex? Are you happy or ticked off after something like this?

FELIX ROSENQVIST: I think considering he had primaries, as well, we would have been able. I talked to him. He kind of had the same struggles as me. He was able to go a bit faster. I was more worried about losing Scott, to be honest. He had reds. He was in my gearbox for three, four laps there initially. I was sweating a lot at that point.

Yeah, it can always be worse as well. You kind of have to, as I said, look at it with perspective, learn from it.

Yeah, to the second question, a bit of both. Honestly I had such a poor start to the year, so I was always going to take a podium. It's very rare that you have a race like that, pace like that. I don't honestly think I've ever had that. A little bit disappointing when you cannot wrap it up.

It was definitely a well more executed race than we probably had as a team. So we're just going to take that positive and hopefully we can get another shot here later this year.

Q. Scott, the start seemed a little wonky behind Felix. Did you have any issues with the way that played out?

SCOTT DIXON: Wonky?

Q. Felix was front, then it seemed like it was three-wide. Didn't look very clean.

SCOTT DIXON: I think it was very Long Beach-esque. It just always is. It's hard, especially fourth through eighth or tenth, if you catch the front two rows at the wrong spot, you have to brake, everybody behind you is accelerating. I think two years ago, Newgarden went from 10th or 12th to 4th because he caught a brake at the right point.

I think was somewhat of a fair stop. It always looks bad here because of the hairpin.

FELIX ROSENQVIST: What happened?

SCOTT DIXON: Just strung out.

FELIX ROSENQVIST: From my point of view, nothing

happened.

SCOTT DIXON: That's how you want it, man. Apparently it's wonky back there (laughter).

Q. Felix, can you recall having a car as good as yours only to have a bit of a heartbreak?

FELIX ROSENQVIST: I mean, maybe a few times in my career. I think as a team, we never had a shot like this. It's a good thing end of the day we were able to produce that with our engineers and teammates. It's rare.

You just got to kind of take the good bits from it and remember the feeling you had, what led you to certain choices on setup and stuff. Just try to do it again.

Unfortunately every track is very different and there's different tires and types of tracks. I don't really think it's going to translate that much to Indy GP, for example. The confidence boost is huge.

Q. What was your immediate emotion when you realized he was just a little bit ahead of you off pit lane?

FELIX ROSENQVIST: I was kind of kicking myself at that point. There's nothing you can do. You're sitting there on the pit limiter doing 50 miles an hour. There's nothing in the world that will get your position back. Yeah, it's heartbreaking.

Q. Was it a sinking feeling or more feeling of inevitability?

FELIX ROSENQVIST: Sorry?

Q. Was it a sinking feeling when you saw that or the feeling that it was inevitable?

FELIX ROSENQVIST: I mean, I try to not really look in the mirror too much. At that point you got to look forward, see if you can get him on a start.

Till that point in the race we probably had slightly better pace. We were pretty confident we could give him a go. He was just faster on the blacks in the end. Didn't have anything for him.

Just got to look forward.

Q. Felix, how did you manage to balance the defending position as P1, then kind of going back to defending off Mr. Dixon here, sticking to your adapted race strategy at that point?

FELIX ROSENQVIST: Sorry. I didn't really understand.

Q. How did you balance defending your position and sticking to your race strategy?

FELIX ROSENQVIST: I mean, it was pretty straightforward initially. I felt like Alex was sort of within the same range, 1.1 to 2 seconds. We were kind of able to respond if he got closer. We were kind of playing with the fuel.

It was very under control at that point. I think it was only after the safety car we really felt under pressure. Kind of have to switch up a little bit. Scott was in my gearbox having a couple of gos.

Yeah, that's INDYCAR. You never know what you're going to have. You're kind of doing a fuel save initially. Then in the end it was more of a sprint race. It just changes how the car behaves and how you drive. Yeah, just puts you in a different position. You just got to be awake always.

Q. Scott, what were the key moments that got you to P3 from P6?

SCOTT DIXON: Probably the caution (smiling). I don't know. We were struggling on the first set of reds. We put wing in, but the left front was kind of degrading. We were kind of holding on there.

Obviously I think we would have gone a lap or two longer than the 5, and maybe Malukas. We were getting big fuel numbers on that stint.

Ultimately, I think having that clean pit stop, it looked like a few had kind of got bottled up, especially with the 27. Ultimately, again, just a bit of a blah day for us. The car had speed at moments. Even when I was behind Felix, I wanted to push hard, but I was worried about how the last 10 laps of that stint was going to be.

On the radio, We could try to go for second here, but ultimately we could ultimately end up fifth or sixth if we push the tire too much.

It was honestly a positive day. I think we got the most out of it. The disappointing part is the balance was not what I expected, especially for the race and the deg.

Q. Felix, you mentioned the car felt better than it has before. What was different about this particular race versus the other ones?

FELIX ROSENQVIST: I think first of all we were sort of

lucky that we rolled out well. That's always a huge advantage in INDYCAR, when you set out in FP1, you have pace in the car. Even if the balance isn't perfect, you know you have speed. From there it was kind of like dialing in it for qualifying.

But I think we kind of made the right decisions leading up to that. It's very difficult. It's very easy to do the wrong decisions in INDYCAR on setup, kind of going the wrong direction, getting cornered in, then just having a nah qualifying.

I feel like that's kind of the been the case for us. We sat down before the weekend and decided we wanted to follow our own path a little bit more, honestly just more what I need from the car. Yeah, it paid off.

But again, I don't think this is necessarily going to translate anywhere else. You will definitely have weekends when you roll out and you're P16 and you kind of have to scramble to get back. That's what's cool with INDYCAR: every weekend is a bit of a difference.

Q. Scott, Graham mentioned that maybe we should add 10 laps to this race to get some of the fuel save out of that. Do you think that would be the right decision?

SCOTT DIXON: Well, like last year, it didn't matter, because the tire degraded so quickly. Everybody was on a three-stopper.

Yeah, maybe if you did like an extra five, then it would be typically really hard for some, not for others. As I always say, I think the best strategy and the best INDYCAR races are when you have a two versus three, they're kind of combined in the end.

I don't know. Honestly, the tire change some years it's achievable and some it's not. Last year I think you struggled to get eight or 10 laps on the alternate. This year was a lot easier for everybody. It became a strict kind of two-stopper.

Q. Graham said he was thrilled to see the fans, obviously a ton showed up on Friday for that opening practice. What was your impression, the event that Long Beach has built over the last 51 years?

FELIX ROSENQVIST: I think it's one of the proper ones we go to, for sure. It just keeps growing. I think since I came to INDYCAR 2019, it seems like we're fitting more and more people in the paddock, even if it feels like you can't. There's more grandstands being built, which is great. More people out on the track. You could see that

on the lap around when you were waving to everyone. More people everywhere. That's amazing.

I feel like it's kind of been the trend in a lot of places we go to. The series is on the move upwards. It benefits all of us, the teams, the drivers, the fans. I feel like that moment we've been waiting for a little bit as a series, to finally get the traction I think we really truly deserve and we need, as well.

Q. Scott, there were only a few cars off strategy today. Did this mean that the alternate tires lasted the 30 laps for the stint?

SCOTT DIXON: Yeah, I think everybody was kind of waiting, at least from our point of view, for the top four to struggle a bit. I think there was only maybe eight total that started on the soft tire, then nobody really kind of degraded. It was a pretty big fuel save throughout, which was interesting. Everybody was kind of getting the number. From we were set, I expected a few others to kind of peel off beforehand, or at least some of them die a little bit.

The first stint can be a bit iffy because the track is not rubbered in. The alternates, or soft tires, seemed to be fine. I think from our standpoint, we hurt the left front quite a bit. It really only lost maybe half a second, which then still makes it pretty much impossible for anybody to pass, so...

Q. Felix?

FELIX ROSENQVIST: Yeah, I honestly don't really know. I asked on the radio. As Scott said, it wasn't a lot of drivers on reds. I had no idea how the blacks were going to be when I got on them because I hadn't seen any blacks around me.

Yeah, at least for me they held on really well, the alternates. I think we actually did our fastest lap on the final lap of the stint.

Honestly in warm-up we had no idea. We all thought they were going to go to pieces. I think that's why you had so many drivers on blacks. No one were a believer. Yeah, it worked out. We stuck with it, kind of played it through, had a little cushion behind me. Worked out.

THE MODERATOR: Guys, congratulations. We'll see you in a couple weeks at the Indy 500 open test.

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