

# Indianapolis Motor Speedway Media Conference

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**Chip Ganassi**

**Mike Hull**

**Mike O'Gara**

Press Conference



CHIP GANASSI: I just reflect on the past few weeks and the past few months of having these four or five guys around, working as one team. Everybody cheering their teammates on all the time. When someone on the team does something good, the other guys couldn't be happier, you know what I mean? That's what's so nice for me to have to deal with.

You saw today we had different times of the race different cars in the lead. We came here at the beginning of the month wanting to win the race. That's, in fact, what we did. Nobody's happier than all the other drivers for the team winning, Marcus of course.

I'm sure Mike told you, he's taken it upon himself to understand the resource in the team and understand how to use that. You just saw his career start to take off at the beginning of the last season once he understood what we were all about.

This is the culmination of that effort.

THE MODERATOR: Mike. Congratulations, from the pit stand, what did you think of this?

MIKE O'GARA: Just to echo what Chip and Mike said, this is the definition of teamwork, is what the past two weeks have been here. We work together to get the cars ready. We work together in qualifying. We work together in the race.

What matters is that one of Chip's cars won. We did that. For whatever reason the 8 car group, I guess they don't like to win the easy way. Our win in Nashville last year was a challenge, our win in Detroit was after a red flag. Today we have a pretty sizable lead. The racing gods decided to make it a little more challenging.

Marcus focused forward and got it done today.

THE MODERATOR: Questions, please.

**Q. Chip, this is a tremendous gift for the 40 years. To be able to tie it together like that, how special is this?**

CHIP GANASSI: Yeah, no question. I'm sure everybody remembers in 1982 when I got here, someone asked me if I ever wanted to be a car owner. I said, I couldn't imagine

THE MODERATOR: Congratulations to Chip Ganassi Racing. We are joined by Mike Hull, managing director of Chip Ganassi Racing. We'll start with Mike while we wait for the other two.

A lot to the digest with the team with five shots to win. First of all, how delighted are you to pick up another Indy 500? This is the fifth win for Chip Ganassi Racing in the 500.

MIKE HULL: I feel good to be the opening act before Chip gets here (smiling).

I don't know how other people look at this race or how they rationalize what you do. In my opinion, from the first time I walked in this place and started working on a race car, I never thought that anything but winning the race was what mattered.

You can rationalize double points, all the other things that go on. You can say we had a great run today, a great car. In reality what Marcus did today was fantastic. The team effort, all five drivers contributed very directly to the achievement that Marcus had today.

So proud of him and the team, the 160 people that work at Chip Ganassi Racing, you only see a few here at the Speedway, but it's an extraordinary effort. Really, really happy that his face is going to be on the trophy and we've won five times.

THE MODERATOR: Chip Ganassi joins us, as well, after win number five in the Indianapolis 500.

Congratulations, Chip. Mike O'Gara, the strategist for Marcus Ericsson as well.

Chip, number five for you. What do you reflect on on this day so far?



why anybody would want to own one of those things (smiling). I had a change of heart about that. Couldn't be happier. I seem to be a little better at this than I was driving.

**Q. What was it about Marcus, when he was with Arrow, he had a good second-place finish at Detroit, but he was with a team maybe not the caliber of your team. What did you see in him that made you think you wanted him on your team?**

CHIP GANASSI: What I look at is no baggage, no baggage, likes to go fast. Just need to get him a good car basically. Once he put his mind to that, he started to see the wins started to come, the consistency, the points started to come.

This type of experience where you're out there testing a lot, practicing a lot, really suits his style. I think Mike O'Gara said to me earlier that after the last pit stop, he didn't lift once, just held his foot to the floor. Steered, didn't have to make any changes to the car all day. They just put tires on it. Tires and fuel.

You always hear that about the cars that win the Indianapolis 500. It's a clean day. They don't touch the car. Sure enough, they win.

**Q. For either of the Mikes, the last restart, he pretty much gave a clinic on how you can keep the lead on a restart at the Indianapolis Motor Speedway. How brilliant was his restart to be able to break the draft?**

MIKE O'GARA: Yeah, I mean, he did a great job. I'd like to say he wasn't looking in his mirrors, but he was doing everything he could there. The spotters were helping him. T.K. was giving pressure from behind.

He just got it done. Marcus understands race craft. This is his third year with us. He gets it. When we're on the radio, I don't have to explain why we're staying out or why we're pitting or saving fuel or pushing. He gets it.

I think between him and Brad Goldberg, his engineer, myself, we just click. He understands what to do at different stages of the race. Obviously got shuffled back a little bit today. He just stayed with it. We had amazing pit stops, got him to the front. The rest was all him.

**Q. For the two Mikes, we know the 9 and the 10 cars. We don't necessarily as the world know the 8 car. Can you talk about what the 8 car means.**

MIKE HULL: What happens at Chip Ganassi Racing is resource. Resource is all the people that work together.

Chip said it best a minute ago. If you look at all the drivers we have, and have had over the years, they all have two or three things in common: no baggage is one thing, but the desire to win, be a teammate and be unselfish. That's Marcus Ericsson.

Looking at his background, it's similar to Alex Palou's. They're a little different age-wise. Formula 3, Formula 3 championship, went to Japan, came back and did Formula 1. He had big car experience and he won races. That's what we look for.

It's really difficult to teach somebody to win. There's a lot of race drivers that say if this, if that. This guy doesn't say 'if'. He said, Let's work together and make it happen.

Now with the resource we have, he's very comfortable inside that resource. That's really the big difference. That's what we've seen.

I'll hand it over to Mike because he's with him more than I am, frankly.

MIKE O'GARA: It's kind of a new-ish group, the 8 car group is. It was kind of formed when our Ford program went away. It's changed a bit in the last couple years.

Brad has been one constant there. I've known Brad since he was in college 19, 20 years old. It was cool to see him grow as an engineer. He's one of the strongest guys we got upstairs in the engineering room.

He and Marcus spend a lot of time together at the shop, away from the shop, at the simulator. They're always talking, always thinking. I think Brad has helped teach Marcus race craft, and they've taught each other.

The 8 car group is sort of the new group, the new car to the group, but with all the resource, like Mike said, the teamwork, obviously we're right up there with the other two.

**Q. Chip, for the 8 car to now get its first Indy 500 win, in addition to the 9 and 10 in the past, what does that mean for you?**

CHIP GANASSI: If I could just add to the beginning of your first question, too.

I think you say Marcus doesn't quite get the attention. That's not true at all. He gets all the attention, the same attention everybody else gets. What you don't see is his sponsor is not in the U.S. here a lot, so he doesn't have that push from his sponsors in terms of public relations and so forth. You don't see that push behind him that the other drivers get, whether it's NTT, PNC, Carvana, American

Legion. These are all companies that are either here in Indianapolis or in the U.S. Huski Chocolate is not. You don't get that sponsor push.

Like I say, it's one team. Everybody gets everything in our team, and they all know it. So it means a lot. It means a lot. The team came in here. We set out goals every year: win the Indianapolis 500, win the championship. We did the first one, now we got to do the second one.

THE MODERATOR: There's a couple women involved in the team. Nicole Rotondo is the Honda engineer. Angela Ashmore is part of the team. It's a team effort. For those two ladies to be a part of an Indy 500-winning team, how important and how cool is that?

MIKE O'GARA: It's massive. We have two females on the 8 car. We don't discriminate. We look for talent, and it doesn't matter. Danielle Shepherd was on Alex's 10 car last year. She's lead engineer on one of our sports cars. That team won Sebring with her running the show there.

We look for talent. Doesn't matter where we can find it.

**Q. Chip, how special is it for you, given obviously that the No. 8 team is quite new, they're used to the sports car program, have gotten into the swing of things with INDYCAR, got up to speed really quickly over the last two years?**

CHIP GANASSI: Well, that's easy to say they were the sports car team that came over. But before they were the sports car team, they were the INDYCAR team. They did sports cars for a while and came back to INDYCAR. A lot of INDYCAR talent on that team that was in sports cars.

**Q. How does this rank for you in terms of your wins?**

CHIP GANASSI: Good question. I haven't really given it that much thought. It's currently my favorite one as of right now, I can tell you that (laughter).

**Q. On the strategy, Mike, could you run us after the last stop, how that played out.**

MIKE O'GARA: I mean, he was running good laps there, especially when the other traffic ahead of him peeled off and pitted before we did. We were able to turn up the fuel. The car was good enough that he could go quick when there weren't a lot of guys in front of him.

We did a few extra laps. But when you're in the lead or at the front there, other people have already made their last stops, you're leaving yourself really exposed there.

Most every yellow today came around a pit stop sequence. We knew we were at risk staying out, but we were doing good laps. We were watching the cars that had already pitted. As long as we were doing laps as fast or faster than them, it was okay to stay out knowing we were risking a yellow coming out.

We did a couple laps that were quicker than what O'Ward and Felix did, so we decided to pit then. He pushed and pushed. Like I told Chip, once he clicked the pit speed limiter off, he held the throttle down and never left it. Nothing was going to keep him from winning today.

**Q. To bring Tony back again as the one-off, what is his experience and how does he add to the team that's so valuable?**

CHIP GANASSI: In his retirement we've made him the vice president of entertainment (smiling). And he can drive, too, yeah. He can still win this race. You saw today with his performance. Led a little bit.

Kanaan is a veteran. He's a wily veteran. He knows his way around this place, no question. So we're not throwing him out yet.

**Q. Is there still a future for him in this race?**

CHIP GANASSI: I said we're not throwing him out yet (smiling).

**Q. Chip, is there any additional satisfaction knowing one of your biggest rivals for the last many decades has been doing this owns the track and you stopped him from winning again here?**

CHIP GANASSI: If it wasn't for Roger Penske, I probably wouldn't even be racing, okay? You have to remember, take away what he's done in the last few years here at Indianapolis, but you have to realize INDYCAR racing I think exists today because of a lot that Roger did over the years, bringing corporate America into it, making it a real business for people like myself.

I said the other night at the Hall of Fame dinner, I don't own any racetracks, I don't own any car dealerships, I don't rent any trucks, I'm not flying around all over the world selling cars. I'm a kid from Pittsburgh that wants to race cars and wins. I'm able to do that because of guys like Roger.

**Q. Considering the roller coaster the second half of the day was, what were your thoughts when they threw the red flag, and do you like it?**

CHIP GANASSI: I'm sure it was harder on Marcus than it

was me.

**Q. When you have a thrill of victory and an agony of defeat kind of day, how does that one team, one goal philosophy help the guys that didn't have a good day?**

CHIP GANASSI: Yeah, like I said, they're all happy the team won the race. That's what's most important. They all put their personal -- sure, they all want to win the race. I hope they all want to win. But when the team wins, they know that's good for them.

**Q. Chip, I want to get inside your head because you have a guy that dominated the race in Scott Dixon, then he has that penalty. You're gutted. Then you have guys that are first and third. Another one of your cars is what brings out the red flag. Take me in your head and your range of emotions for the last 20, 30 laps.**

CHIP GANASSI: You have to be realistic when you have multiple cars. You can have a good day and a bad day in the same day. Sure, you just have to be realistic.

The good news is that the good outweighs the bad.

**Q. Was there ever a time when you doubted something?**

CHIP GANASSI: I don't doubt anything until the checkered flag falls, okay? Anything can happen.

**Q. You left out Alex Palou's deal. For you guys, Mike Hull especially, Chip, a football team, you're looking for the quarterback that can take it to the end zone in the last two minutes and win you a game. What does Marcus Ericsson get out of this? Obviously he's won before, but what did he prove to you today?**

MIKE HULL: Yeah, I don't know if he proved anything that he hasn't already proven to us. Maybe he validated how good he is as a race driver.

Let's face it, this is a globally significant event. If you're lucky enough to travel around the world and go to motorsports events, you realize that.

He won a globally significant motor race under a lot of pressure. If that doesn't demonstrate to the world how special this guy is, there's nothing we can do about it.

I don't know if that answers your question, but maybe it kind of sets direction for drivers. If you look at the Borg Warner Trophy, now they have the extension on the bottom of it, if you look at that thing up close and personal, how many faces on that trophy shouldn't be there? One,

two, maybe, from when this event began.

It's a good thing that his face is on that trophy because he's that kind of race driver.

**Q. Chip, your thoughts on Scott's incident at the end of the race, the rough go he's had the last few years?**

CHIP GANASSI: I mean, he came down pit lane and was speeding. He's as disappointed as anybody, I can tell you.

THE MODERATOR: We'll cut you loose for a night of celebration. Congratulations, Chip, Mike Hull and Michael O'Gara as well. Thank you.