

# IndyCar Media

## Conference

Monday August 22, 2016

## Mikhail Aleshin

## Ryan Hunter-Reay

### Press Conference

THE MODERATOR: We'll get started with our post race press conference. We're joined by the runner-up from today's race, Mikhail Aleshin.

Quite a day out there. Looked pretty exciting. Take us through your day and how things went.

MIKHAIL ALESHIN: Well, day was definitely great. Could be greater if I would be standing on the top of the podium. But today I think, to be fair, Will deserved it more because he was just faster.

I caught him, but it was just impossible to overtake. I was like going sideways, almost lost my car couple of times. I just wanted this win so bad, but it wasn't the case this time.

But I want to say big thanks to my team, Schmidt Peterson Motorsports, to say that I really proud of this team. I mean, they did a great progress during last couple of races. We've been through many things this year. We didn't give up. We just became stronger, and you can see the results came straightaway.

So great job for the guys to bring SMP Racing car No. 7 up to the pole position two days ago and second place. So definitely I'm happy.

THE MODERATOR: We're also joined by our third-place finisher today, Ryan Hunter-Reay.

Ryan, you charged from last to first, then had the issue with the electronics, charged almost all the way back. I know you're frustrated, but you did have a tremendous car today.

RYAN HUNTER-REAY: Yeah, I can't help but feel like that 28 DHL Honda should have been in Victory Lane today. It was there when I needed it, there when I needed to bide my time. I did.

There's very few times in your career when you get a car that you're completely in line with and it's doing everything that you need it to. That's what I had today. It was like a 2014 Indy 500 car.



I just don't know what we need to do. The engine shuts off while we're leading. I could sit here and sound like a whiner about it, but it's frustrating. Can't be doing anything right.

MIKHAIL ALESHIN: It was a very dangerous moment. We almost crashed into you.

RYAN HUNTER-REAY: Wish it gave me some warning, trust me.

Finally when I was in pit lane, almost stopped, I thought, All right, let me clutch it one more time and try it. Cycled it again real quick almost to a stop, it fired. Are you kidding me? I rejoined the race a lap down, got the wave around on the yellow, started from the back, finished third. Real frustrating. Trying to smile about it, trying to be upbeat about it. To have a day like we did today, finally get that win in there, very disheartening.

Great race today. Had a lot of fun out there. Very typical, very good IndyCar racing.

THE MODERATOR: Let's open it up for questions at this time.

**Q. Ryan, as a non-technician, it seems to me a very unnormal situation when the engine shuts off. How can this happen? Secondly, was the car you raced today identical with the setup to your primary car?**

RYAN HUNTER-REAY: It was close to my setup. The issue with the accident, there was an oversight. There was a miss on something that we didn't see coming. The balance was too far forward.

We started the weekend with a qualifying simulation, which means you go 110% straight out of pit lane, trim level. There was no time to feel it out. Car turned, snapped, hit the wall.

The engine, I think what I heard so far is that something became disconnected, because they lost signal from it on the ECU. I don't know if it popped back in or what, if it was a bad connector. Something pretty freak happened.

**Q. It was electronic?**

RYAN HUNTER-REAY: Yes, it was. It had to do I think with the teeth on the connection.

THE MODERATOR: Like you say, typical of the way things have gone this season, something very unusual to happen.

RYAN HUNTER-REAY: Yes. Smile and move on.

**Q. The talk about this track is always trying to find the balance. Talk about how much the wind played a factor in the early parts when it was gusty, and in the afternoon when it died down.**

MIKHAIL ALESHIN: Obviously the track changed definitely. It was a bit green at the beginning, but also temperature changed. The wind was actually a factor.

I don't know about you, Ryan, it was affecting me a lot in turn three. Basically for these 200 laps, you don't know what your balance is in turn three. You're coming there, you expecting what happened like last year, you had some understeer, fine, we're going to live with this. You don't change anything. No weight jacker, nothing. You're coming there, everything is the same, then the wind started to blow more.

RYAN HUNTER-REAY: Our cars are so susceptible to the wind. It was a surprise every time you came to three. It was like a ride the whole time. Every time was a surprise. You didn't know if you were going to have big understeer or if you were going to get loose.

MIKHAIL ALESHIN: Exactly.

Yeah, the track was changing, as well. I mean, it gripped up a bit in the end. But from the other side, it got a little bit warmer, as well. Kind of strange, strange situation. But we enjoyed it, definitely.

**Q. Mikhail, it looks like just watching the race, around lap 140 you lost speed. Was this the situation when the track changed or did you make any changes in the pit stop?**

MIKHAIL ALESHIN: Ryan knows. We tried something. It didn't work, obviously.

**Q. You cannot say what changes you did?**

MIKHAIL ALESHIN: Hmm (laughter). Next question.

Yeah, I mean, we did some changes, it didn't work. Just went back and it was better after that. So, yeah.

**Q. Ryan, you had a great start. Talk about how you jumped to the outside. What was your mentality for the start of the race?**

RYAN HUNTER-REAY: I knew I had to get going.

Once everybody settles into a rhythm, it's kind of hard to make those passes.

On the start, I thought, Hey, let's go for it again. Made up, like, eight spots on the start. It was a good start. Good way to settle into the rhythm.

You always take a big risk when you do that because you're not sure where the grip level is going to be. It's like jumping into the unknown. We've seen a lot of guys loose the rear of the car into turn one.

Took a leap of faith. It paid off. It's that fine hero and zero line, and you want to try to stay on the hero side. That's where I was trying to be.

**Q. Ryan, you seemed to own turn two today. Was that something you found in the test here when you were here a couple weeks ago?**

RYAN HUNTER-REAY: Yeah, I think it was really turn one. We seemed to be really good off of one, through one. Different guys were running different downforce levels. Some guys were harder to pass. It was changing the whole day.

That's where oval racing is at its best, that's when I enjoy it the most. The track is constantly changing, your competition is constantly changing. You're constantly on your toes. The complexion of the race is changing the entire time. It's not so obvious from the outside looking in. But from behind the wheel, it is always changing. Every turn is changing during the race, but your competition is also tuning their car, so they're becoming better, faster. You have to always kind of tweak yourself.

It was usually off of one, though, that I think that was happening. The pass would be completed going into three.

**Q. Ryan, after you had the electrical issue, what is your mindset? Obviously you're frustrated. How do you control your emotions in the car?**

RYAN HUNTER-REAY: After Mid-Ohio, running third, having the fuel issue where the fuel rig had a problem, you know, we gave that one away. Then Indy, running up front, then getting taken out in pit lane. There's been a lot of frustration building.

So when this one happened, it was almost just like I was drained. What else? What else can we do?

But anyway, I didn't think it was going to be possible to come through at the end because I thought everybody made their cars pretty good. It was more difficult than the beginning of the race when we came through the field. That was difficult.

But it was a lot of fun, a whole lot of fun. Even though we finished third, it was good fun at the end. I really enjoy racetracks like this where you're always thinking. It's a thinking driver's track. You have to have the big picture in mind. Turn three and turn one are so different, you always have to be on your toes.

**Q. Even a more condensed week as we go to Texas next weekend. What kind of momentum do you take from this to next weekend?**

MIKHAIL ALESHIN: I think Texas is a little bit more different. Maybe I'm wrong, but I think it's a completely different track, completely different story, completely different idea.

So the only thing what I can take and my team from this track is definitely the thing that we're getting better and better, you know, confidence, the progress that we have. We just need to keep this momentum into next race in Texas because we're starting third there.

RYAN HUNTER-REAY: Yeah, like Mikhail said, it's a completely different racetrack. The tires wear differently. The big picture objective is much different than it is here.

**Q. Ryan, just a speculation question. A couple laps more, do you think you could have won the race?**

RYAN HUNTER-REAY: Those guys were pretty quick. It was going to take a little bit to catch them. I spent a little bit too much time with Montoya, go figure. He was the hardest one to pass.

MIKHAIL ALESHIN: What a surprise (laughter).

RYAN HUNTER-REAY: He held me up for a few laps there that were pretty valuable. But that's his job. That's what he's supposed to do. That's racing. He was hard to get around.

I lost a few laps there. It was one car per lap there for a while, until I got to him. But it was good fun. We just ran out of time. Those guys were checking out from Newgarden, Mikhail and Will. They were checking out from Newgarden. Once I got by Newgarden, it was a ways up to them. It was going to take me another five laps to get up to the back of them let alone attempting passes.

**Q. Ryan, how much did it mean to you to have Ed Carpenter, Michael, Marco, Josef come by in pit lane out there and tell you what a hell of a drive you had today?**

RYAN HUNTER-REAY: It's nice. It's nice to have a pat on the back. Then you turn around and you see all the

confetti going off. Somebody else is in Victory Lane. It's like, yeah, missed opportunity.

You know, it was a good day, good drive. We had the car to compete for a win. I'm not going to sit here and say we would have won, because that's not fair to anybody. We needed to be there in the fight to really prove that.

But the car shut off while we were leading. We drove through the field twice. It was a good day on that side of it. But a huge opportunity missed. I really wanted to win. After this whole season, there hasn't been one year where I had a full-time drive that I haven't won a race. Today was a good opportunity, for sure.

**Q. Three races left. Simon ahead by 20 points over Will. Who do you like?**

RYAN HUNTER-REAY: Yeah, it would be nice to be an IndyCar fan right now because it's going to be a good one.

When I saw the fluorescent bodywork into the wall today, I knew that things were getting interesting. It's going to be interesting to see how it plays out. Simon is a big picture thinker. He's a very calculated driver. And Will has the got the (indiscernible) between his teeth and hair on fire. It's going to be interesting.

**Q. So your answer is actually what?**

RYAN HUNTER-REAY: I don't have an answer. It's going to be interesting to see how it plays out. I just wish we were in the mix to compete for it.

MIKHAIL ALESHIN: We don't have any special sources to tell you the answer for that. But for sure probably the championship going to be, you know, decided in the end.

RYAN HUNTER-REAY: Yeah.

MIKHAIL ALESHIN: Like last race, the same as last year. It's going to be exciting, definitely.

**Q. Mikhail, most laps you ever led in a race. At what point this year did you figure out that ovals were more fun than daunting? Was there a particular track or lap anywhere that it clicked and you said, This is fun, I liked this. You said at Indy that it was kind of fun.**

MIKHAIL ALESHIN: Indy qualifying I definitely had a lot of fun. You know that.

But, yeah, I think definitely, you know, I don't know, I shouldn't say that because when you say you have a feeling for ovals, it bites you properly. But I just like it, let's say so. I like it, and I just think it's a proper racing.

I really enjoy it here in U.S. I never tried ovals before. It's just a great experience for me that I had this up here. That's proper racing.

RYAN HUNTER-REAY: Big credit to this guy, too. Anybody that can withstand an injury like that, recover, get back in it. Oval racing, anytime you're on the track, that wall is always kind of grinning at you. It's always kind of smiling at you, letting you know it's there. For him to come back from that is a big deal.

MIKHAIL ALESHIN: Thanks, man. But don't forget, I'm from Russia.

RYAN HUNTER-REAY: True. The assassin always comes back (laughter).

**Q. I presume you didn't see the incident that happened on pit road. Maybe you heard about it.**

RYAN HUNTER-REAY: No.

**Q. Rossi's car came down on Helio, right in the cockpit area.**

RYAN HUNTER-REAY: What happened?

**Q. It got up in the air.**

RYAN HUNTER-REAY: How did it get up in the air?

**Q. It collided with Kimball's car.**

RYAN HUNTER-REAY: Coming into pit lane?

**Q. He was exiting as Kimball was coming into his.**

RYAN HUNTER-REAY: Got you.

**Q. The left front tire came down into the cockpit area. Is that going to bring up anything about shields or bubbles or anything like that in the cockpit area?**

RYAN HUNTER-REAY: No. Open-wheel cars have been open-wheel cars. We know our heads are exposed. Maybe one day we'll come up with a good solution for that.

When it's right, it's right. It will come. It will come with a car that it's an intuitive part of the design, it works.

MIKHAIL ALESHIN: I agree with that, but it has to be smart decision, right, first of all. Definitely I think once upon a time it's going to come on all open wheels.

RYAN HUNTER-REAY: Thank you, guys.