

# IndyCar Media

## Conference

Saturday August 27, 2016

## James Hinchcliffe

## Mikhail Aleshin

### Press Conference



longer than Kim Kardashian's marriages and things like that.

THE MODERATOR: It's accurate.

JAMES HINCHCLIFFE: No, definitely. But just seeing the -- I think it was actually Texas Motor Speedway that put out the one picture of all the things that have happened in sport since this race started, which is quite a few things, obviously including the entire Olympic Games. But the one that I actually like the best is Gabby Chaves, who said that he started the Texas race at 22 years old and he's going to end the Texas race at 23 years old, which I think is pretty funny.

MIKHAIL ALESHIN: Well, he's not 25, man.

JAMES HINCHCLIFFE: 29.

THE MODERATOR: Two older gentlemen joining us here in the press conference. And your teammate Mikhail Aleshin coming off of a very great performance at Pocono Raceway. You started the Firestone 600 in 16th, now up to third where you'll restart later on tonight. What do you recall from the race and being able to work your way up there, and what kind of confidence level do you have coming into tonight's race off of that great finish in Pocono?

MIKHAIL ALESHIN: Well, I think the reason for me being P3 before the red came out was the same reason that James had. We just had a good car, and I think tire deg at this time at this day just looked a little bit better than the other cars.

I struggled a bit in the beginning of the race, but then it all seemed to just come to me. Some drivers have to just -- their speed just started to -- they just started to fall off, and I started to move forward from there, and then we had this accident, obviously, and yeah. So that's how I became P3.

THE MODERATOR: With two cars of the same team so high up in the standings before we restart the race, what has Schmidt Peterson Motorsports done for the two of you to get you in such a great position heading into tonight's race?

MIKHAIL ALESHIN: Well, again, I think the most

THE MODERATOR: We'll get started with our Verizon IndyCar Series pre-race press conference. A little unusual for us here on a race day to have two of our drivers competing in the Firestone 600 tonight joining us today, one of them currently in the lead. James, you started 10th, I believe, in the June edition of the Firestone 600. What do you remember about working your way up to first, how you were able to accomplish that, and how did it set you up for success here today?

JAMES HINCHCLIFFE: I did it by passing all the other guys, Kate. That's how I did that. No, it was a bold strategy. We talked about it before the race and we executed, and that's what a good team does.

No, this track has always been about tire degradation since we came here in 2012 with the new car, and we've seen some incredible races as a result of that, a lot of ebb and flow, and if it comes -- a lot of races we talk about fuel strategy and things like that, but Texas is a tire strategy race through and through, and we got to the lead -- I think we got a couple guys in the first part of the first stint, and then what really got us to where we were was we had I think less degradation than any other car out there, which huge credit to Allen McDonald and the boys because that's the name of the game here at Texas, and we happened to be about to pit when the very unfortunate crash happened and the yellow came out. So we had like a lap on the field pretty much, because we hadn't pitted yet.

So that's where we're at, and obviously it might be 76 or something days later as I'm constantly reminded on Twitter, but Texas is still Texas, it's still going to be a tire conservation race, and hopefully that means that the car that we had then will still be able to do the same thing today.

THE MODERATOR: What's the best joke that you've seen on Twitter so far about how long you've been leading the race? I know there are many circulating around.

JAMES HINCHCLIFFE: Yeah, well, there's like the typical things like Hinch has been leading the race

important thing is as a team we work together, and the fact that we are pretty close, starting pretty close to each other this race, I mean, restarting, it also shows that we are working together because our cars just looked pretty similar during the long runs. I think that's the most important. I think what the team gave us. That's it, yeah.

**Q. Refresh my memory, I've slept about 75 times since the race finished. Are you still going to have to pit?**

JAMES HINCHCLIFFE: No, no. They opened pit lane while we were still driving through pit lane and cleaning up the accident. But either way, everybody is going to get a fresh set of tires and a full tank of fuel for the start of the race, but we had already pitted. I kind of wish we hadn't now because we'd be a lap ahead of everybody, but we'll take it.

**Q. For either of you, how much worse do you expect the tire degradation to be since the track has greened up a little bit since you last ran here?**

JAMES HINCHCLIFFE: Yeah, I think we're certainly anticipating a rough first stint, not having any Firestone rubber on the track, and had some pretty big storms here even last night. I've got no idea what has run here in the last 76 days, but it's kind of irrelevant after the weather yesterday.

The kind of good news is with the length of the race now, everyone starting on full tanks, it sort of opens windows a little bit. I don't think we have to go quite as far on a set of tires as we would have if you were trying to traditionally make it in as few stops as possible, the full distance. So that's going to make it better, but for sure I think you're going to see some pretty dramatic degradation on some cars, especially in that first stint.

**Q. Your little brother Conor is I'm told going to be a pit reporter tonight on TV. Does that concern you? Have you given any advice?**

JAMES HINCHCLIFFE: Concern for the general audience watching tonight, yes. I'm concerned for Conor. He's not going to know where the voices in his head are coming from. It's because he's wearing headphones. But it beats -- I guess it beats sitting at home watching. I've been in that position before in A1GP when the team folded, I got put into the broadcast side of things, so I get it. I think he'll have a blast.

Conor is quite a wordsmith I've got to say. He comes up with some sayings that most people would not think of because you shouldn't, but he does, and I hope he drops some gems on there. I hope he doesn't hold back because if he just is 100 percent Conor Daly, I can't wait to get home and watch the race.

**Q. Given the short amount of practice time that we're going to get today, what do you think is going to be the hardest thing to adjust to tonight?**

MIKHAIL ALESHIN: To adjust?

**Q. Yeah, to get into the race rhythm.**

MIKHAIL ALESHIN: Yeah, I think that's going to be the same for everyone, definitely. I mean, maybe it will be a bit more easier for the guys who have been doing this for years, but it's going to be difficult for everyone, again. The fact that at least we have 10 minutes practice session, so that's going to help someone like me who's doing this only for the second year. But we're all in the same boat, and it's going to be a little difficult, especially at the beginning of the race.

**Q. Can you talk about if you ever growing up had any other plan for your life? I know drivers start very young maybe doing go-karts, so chances are you think toward a racing career, but is there anything else you could see yourselves doing like maybe down the road, many miles down the road if you were to retire or when you were younger did you want to be a fireman or something like that?**

JAMES HINCHCLIFFE: I'm actually really curious on this one myself.

MIKHAIL ALESHIN: Well, I started doing this sport when I was like seven years old, so when you are seven years old and you see a go-kart in front of you, I mean, it's pretty obvious that you're going to like it a lot. And from the beginning, everything went pretty well. I was pretty fast, and it just get me into it like completely, and I wouldn't say that I had the time to think about something else really at this time.

Yeah, but I've been doing some sports besides racing, so I did like swimming, and I did more kickboxing at this time, for a long time actually. Yeah, that's it, but I wouldn't -- I would prefer, and I'm happy that I'm doing this kind of sport and not kickboxing or swimming really. Yeah, I'm really definitely enjoying what I'm doing.

JAMES HINCHCLIFFE: Basically that was an underhanded warning to all the other drivers that if you mess with Mikhail on track, he will beat you up. Don't pick a fight with Mikhail; he's better at it than you.

MIKHAIL ALESHIN: Come on, I think everyone here knows that I'm a really nice guy.

JAMES HINCHCLIFFE: You are a very nice guy, Mikhail.

Like Mikhail, I started young. I started at nine, but at

nine years old I knew that driving a race car wasn't a real job, and I lived for a bunch of years with no real aspirations of doing this professionally because I just didn't think it was realistic. And in that time, probably from about nine to about 14 years old, I wanted -- there's a bunch of different careers that I considered. None of them made any since in hindsight. None of them would have worked out, and it's great they didn't for a lot of people's sakes. Being a doctor would probably not have been great for anybody.

But then I hit 14 and said I wanted to try and make it as a driver, then I got to about 20, 21, and realized, well, this is still actually harder than I thought and it still might not work out. And I honestly wanted to get into journalism. I wanted to write for a racing magazine. I figured if I couldn't be behind the wheel, I wanted to at least be at the track, and I've loved this sport for as long as I can remember. I was going to find a way to be tagging along somehow.

**Q. James, this might be a reach, but hang with me for a second. As I understand it you were friends with Drew Storen, who used to be with the Toronto Blue Jays. You went to Blue Jays camp this spring, spent a day there in spring training. There is a real strong rivalry here between the Texas Rangers and the Blue Jays. There was a brawl in May. Has anyone even mentioned that to you since you've been here, your Canadian roots and the Blue Jays and the Rangers thing? Again, I know it's a reach.**

JAMES HINCHCLIFFE: Well, yes, it is a reach, but kind of. I actually did an appearance yesterday at Lincoln Tech, partner of our team, and there was one kid sitting in the audience with a Toronto Blue Jays hat, and I called him out, thanked him for his support, and at mention of the Blue Jays the rest of the room about this size, probably three times as full, was less impressed with him than I was. So there is certainly still some animosity floating around in the baseball world between you guys and us.

**Q. With only 10 minutes of practice, what can you really learn about the car? I'm hearing that the track will probably be a lot different than it was raced on in June because of the rain and the weather, maybe the temperatures would be similar on a dry track tonight, but what can you really accomplish in just 10 minutes?**

JAMES HINCHCLIFFE: Make sure the engine is running. That's about it. Because you have to remember, the race as it started was in the middle of the day. We didn't run on Saturday night. We got rained out until Sunday. Just being in the cool conditions we have almost no experience. We have very little idea what our cars are going to be like. We

set the car up for a race at noon. Now we're racing at 8:00, and there's certain things on the car that we're not allowed to change as per the rules.

Not only that, you've got to take your best swing at it, and we get 10 minutes on track, which you're going to want to do every lap of, you're not really going to want to come in for a change; you won't have time. So you're going to want to be out there the entire time, and then we only got 15 minutes to make any mechanical adjustments to the car. Aero can't be touched, but mechanical adjustments, in 15 minutes you can make a damper adjustment, a spring change, some ride height. That's about it. And you don't get to go out and test it to see if it's the right direction or not.

In 10 minutes we're not going to learn a whole lot. We're going to learn what we have kind of, but you're not getting to the point where degradation starts on a set of tires, so everyone's car is going to feel okay, and then 25, 30 laps into the race a lot of people's cars are going to start feeling a lot less than okay.

MIKHAIL ALESHIN: Yeah, and again, the race is going to start much later than the practice is going to be anyway, and the tire deg is going to be different then. But yeah, that's true, we're going to feel this kind of thing for 10 minutes for sure.

JAMES HINCHCLIFFE: You're going to know about as much about our cars as we will by the end of 10 minutes.

MIKHAIL ALESHIN: Well, that's true, yeah.