

IndyCar Media Conference

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Max Chilton

Press Conference

THE MODERATOR: Welcome, everyone, to today's IndyCar media teleconference. Earlier today Chip Ganassi Racing announced that Max Chilton will return to the team and will again race the No. 8 IndyCar with sponsorship from Arthur J. Gallagher.

We're happy to be joined this afternoon by Max. Welcome to the call.

MAX CHILTON: Hello, everybody. Thank you for coming and taking a listen.

THE MODERATOR: Congratulations on today's news about returning to Chip Ganassi Racing for a second season in the Verizon IndyCar Series. As a still relatively young driver, how important is it to you to have the continuity of staying within the same organization?

MAX CHILTON: Yeah, it's hugely important to have that continuity. I know from my experience of being in single (indiscernible) now for over a decade, it really does help. To at least have the same team engineer, the engineer is the one you work most closely with, so it's nice if you get on with him to keep that relationship going, and ideally try to keep the crew the same. Sometimes you have to tweak it here and there. It's hugely important.

When everyone knows how to work with each other, you keep that going. That's why time and time again, you see an ex-champion, he's a multiple champion, has been with the same team for many years. You don't have to spend that time learning each other. You just know what each other want sometimes without having to say too much.

I'm looking forward to going into my second year with the No. 8 crew.

THE MODERATOR: As part of the second year with the No. 8 team and Chip Ganassi Racing, you'll have the same teammates you had as a rookie. What lessons did you learn from Scott Dixon, Tony Kanaan and Charlie Kimball that you can take into the 2018 season?

MAX CHILTON: Last year was probably one of my



biggest years in motorsport. Even though the speeds are similar to F1 and the cars aren't hugely different, it's the American way of racing. The racetracks were all very new to me, the street circuits incredibly bumpy and tight, the oval racing is incredibly fast and close.

With my teammates, as you said, even Charlie, the least experienced, he's got six years. You can really see that makes a difference. Then you have Tony and Scott. I think they're going into their 15th or 16th year of IndyCar. It just pays so well to have that experience in your team.

I'm looking forward to sort of hopefully doing better myself next year, and they can learn from me as well. There was a time last year where the speed of our No. 8 car was actually really good, especially toward the end of the year. It started off strong in Phoenix actually, qualified eighth, but finished seven. We go-to into the Fast Six at Watkins Glen.

We're going to hopefully keep that momentum of the speed going into next year and hopefully we can learn off each other just as much.

It's a big change next year for us obviously going to the Honda. I have yet to drive the Honda car, so I'm looking forward to driving it at Sebring on Friday. Ganassi engineering-wise are one of the best teams out there, if not the best. They're going to try and get a grip on the new package as quickly as we can.

Testing is obviously limited this year, so we're going to have to maximize what we have before the first race in St. Pete.

THE MODERATOR: You mentioned the first test at Sebring on Friday. How important will that be to you to adapting to the new powerplant and Honda aero kit?

MAX CHILTON: It's going to be hugely important. The reason we test, the weather is (indiscernible), even though I rocked up yesterday and it was absolutely some of the worst rain I've ever driven in driving in Miami. Hopefully the weather is better.

The track is bumpy and fairly tight, so it replicates the first race at St. Pete. It's hard on brakes. Obviously we're switching to Performance Friction, which I was

hugely glad Tony picked those when we were testing at Elkhart Lake. To me they make the best brakes on the planet. Whenever I've tested brakes before, I've always picked them. That's a real big help having them onboard this year. Looking forward to driving them for the first time, and just getting back behind the wheel.

The schedule last year, especially for me as a rookie, I got so many test days, I was in the car every week for 24 weeks straight. I think I was only in 32 weeks, I was out of the car four weeks. Going from mentally busy to having nine weeks out of the car, it's going to be a bit of a shock getting into the car on Friday, but I'm really looking forward to it.

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

Q. What have you learnt from 2016 that you can bring forward to next year?

MAX CHILTON: The thing I learnt most was I think the racing aspect, sort of the experience. It's so different racing on ovals, especially in IndyCar. The Indy Lights Series, the cars are a lot smaller. I didn't do many oval races. Also the cars are usually very spread out. With IndyCar, there's cars everywhere. You're sometimes four-wide with another three behind you.

Race craft plays a huge part in the oval racing. Actually there's a lot of oval races throughout the season. That's why I felt like I learnt a lot, but I've still got plenty more to learn.

Dario is my mentor. He said it took him three or four years to master the craft of oval racing. I feel like I'm going to take in more experience with that.

Also maximize getting up to speed quicker so that you're ready in SP3, and you treat that like qualifying, so when you go to qualifying you can absolutely nail it, instead of sometimes not getting it quite right and then your sort of weekend is (indiscernible) by not having a good qualifying. Just having the oval experience of knowing the tracks and knowing how to get up to speed quicker.

Q. When you look back at now having two years where you raced in the U.S., coming back and forth, have there ever been times where you felt the travel got to you at any point, where you wanted to be back in Europe? Have you ever felt like you want to be more entrenched in the U.S.?

MAX CHILTON: That's a good question. Some people sometimes look and think, Why would you do that?

To me, someone told me many years back, Wherever you travel in the world it takes a day. For example, for

Sebring, coming out for this test, I got myself to the airport within an hour. It was an eight-hour flight, then a couple hours drive.

My teammates from Indy, they still have the same drive to get to the airport, same wait to get on the plane, then they have a four-hour flight, and then they still got the same drive when they land. Realistically there's probably only four hours difference on that flight.

For the sake of being at home, your family, friends, people I've always trained with fitness-wise, same mind coaches, having all of that on your doorstep for the sake of an extra few hours here or there, sometimes it's more, and I get that, but for me it's important to have a good base. To me it's worth it.

It's not an overly long season. Sometimes I come out, especially for Texas, the Indy month of May, then Detroit, those races, I come out for seven weeks. I get that it's too busy to go back.

If there's a period of more than a week I will fly home. You're home in 12 hours. It means you can enjoy a whole week at home in your own bed, get the training done.

I understand sometimes why some people don't really understand it. Until you tried it, it's not that bad.

Q. On track-wise, would you like to see it where you could run the red tires in a session prior to qualifying?

MAX CHILTON: Yeah, I think that would hugely help for the rookies and also everyone. Now I'm not a rookie, I'm not going to push it as much. But I really think it really hurts the rookies going into qualifying, when they can actually have a good weekend. There were plenty of times this year where I felt like I got to grips to the track where it suited me, then you went into qualifying, it was all a bit manic.

You've got to learn the tire. You sometimes only got one run with the new tire. It wasn't enough. No matter how good you are, you're not going to maximize that tire in one run, even if you're the best driver in the world or won the championship many times. They'll admit your second run will always be better. It might not be quicker because the track might run slower, but you're not going to perfect on your first tire run.

I think to a rookie it's actually important they get a red tire run in SP3. Yeah, it's the way the sport is. I think it's something that the series could look potentially into changing. But as I said, I'm not going to push it too much now that I'm not a rookie.

Q. Have you spoken to Tony at all in relationship to

the new Honda power units? If so, what are you expecting in terms of differences between Chevrolet and Honda for next season?

MAX CHILTON: I've spoken to Tony, not actually on the phone. It doesn't take a huge amount of looking to know what the differences are with the packages. It's not a huge deal. I think it's more the way the manufacturers approach it. I think Honda very much go out there and do everything for the win regardless of what the circumstances may be, blowing engines, sort of having issues. They're very much the racing side.

Chevrolet, they are more the consistent side, but sometimes maybe not giving it everything. I think we've got more chances of succeeding as a team with Honda, which obviously the team agreed with that. They're the ones that made the decision.

But driving-wise, I think from what I saw last year being a Chevrolet driver, the drivability for the Honda, especially on traction, traction was definitely, definitely better. The oval racing, they seem to have more power. There's lots of debates going on whether they do or don't have more power. But they seem to have the edge on the oval racing, especially Indy. As we all know, Indy is basically like a championship in itself. People want to win that sometimes more than the championship.

I feel like the team's made a good decision. Hopefully it pays off.

Q. What kind of goals do you have for yourself for the 2017 season? How difficult do you think it will be to achieve them?

MAX CHILTON: So my goals, I need to get on the podium. I feel like last year we could have at times, especially in Detroit where I had kind of a (indiscernible) and Bourdais. They finished first and second. We had a mechanical fault. Other times we had things not go our way. I felt like we could have. Especially with IndyCar, the way the yellows work, you do need luck on your side. More often than not that went against us.

I feel like if we get the speed better, we're in the closer part of the field at the front, then you're going to have things come your way. I feel like as soon as we get a podium going, the rhythm will just keep flowing and hopefully we'll get a win.

I really, really do want to get a win next year. If we're doing that, we're sort of in contention for a good year in the championship.

Just to get a good start and keep the momentum going, that is my goal. I think that definitely is achievable. With a top team, I've now got a year's

experience under my belt.

THE MODERATOR: Seeing we have no further questions for you, we'll thank you for your time and wrap up today's media teleconference.

MAX CHILTON: Thank you.