

IndyCar Media Conference

Friday March 10, 2017

Scott Dixon Will Power

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: We'll get started with today's Verizon IndyCar Series post practice press conference. We are joined now by the fastest Verizon IndyCar Series driver of the day, Scott Dixon. Scott is driving the No. 9 GE LED Lighting Honda. His best start here in St. Petersburg is second. Also finished second three times here at the Firestone Grand Prix of St. Pete.

What is it going to take to stop being the bridesmaid and be the winner here at St. Pete?

SCOTT DIXON: That's been the goal since 2005.

I think it started generally well. This weekend, the car, we've done some good homework in the off-season for ourselves, how the competition racks up. I think tomorrow will be interesting once the other competitors turn it up. We'll have to see where it goes.

Generally comfortable, in a different rhythm from what I've had here previously with the car, just with some fundamental changes we made in the winter.

It's Friday. It doesn't pay anything, doesn't mean anything. Hopefully what we learnt today, we can continue on and help improve the car come tomorrow, and more importantly for the race on Sunday.

THE MODERATOR: A few adjustments to the track overnight as well. Did you notice those on track today, the difference that it made throughout the practice session?

SCOTT DIXON: Yeah, definitely a big difference in turn three. It's typically a flat corner. I don't think they tried to achieve what happened, to be honest. I think, to be honest, I don't think it would really have affected us. I think it's more for the cars with very light downforce, the GT cars.

In hindsight, if we would have run, I don't think it would have been an issue for us. You have to compromise, do the best you can with the track. I think with the hours they spent last night changing the course, doing what they could with everybody here from St. Pete, the promoters, they did a fantastic job in a short period of time.

It definitely made that corner very tricky. It's something

that I think can easily maybe catch you out, yeah, at any moment.

THE MODERATOR: This is the seventh consecutive year that the Verizon IndyCar Series has opened on the streets of St. Petersburg. What does the city bring to a season opener?

SCOTT DIXON: To me, this is the perfect place. Living in Indianapolis, you have a lot of cold weather. This year hasn't been so bad. But typically it's a nice change of pace to come down here. We spent a lot of time in St. Pete previously.

As far as an event goes, the city, as we all know, really embraces this race. For the past and present, they really love this race, which I think is important.

You have to have the willingness of the locals here, they surely do. I think with the combination of where it is, where it's located, I think it's probably one of the best street courses we go to as far as the spectators and being able to pass and put on a good race.

All in all, I think it's well-received. You couldn't think of a much better place to kick off the season.

THE MODERATOR: Joined also by Will Power, driver of the No. 12 Verizon Team Penske Chevrolet. A six-time pole winner here on the streets of St. Pete. Also a two-time race winner.

Will, how great is it for you to be back on track after a long off-season, but also to recover and be second fastest in the afternoon practice, after a small incident in the morning practice?

WILL POWER: Yeah, it was about the same lap I did it last year. I couldn't believe it. Got in the wall again. Yeah, it's a good session. Definitely made some progress on the car.

Great to be here. Great to start the season off. A pretty long off-season not driving anything.

Yeah, the grid looks pretty nicely mixed up there with Honda and Chevy, which is great for competition. Makes for a really good, competitive year.

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

Q. Did either of you experience any issues with

brakes getting hot? Also, how does the pavement feel? Michael Andretti said his drivers were saying the new pavement is very fast, then back onto the old pavement, the car gets squirrely.

WILL POWER: Yeah, it's tough. The first session was really difficult. The car was on top of the road. It didn't feel like there was that much grip. Definitely nice and smooth. Yeah, really nicely done street course. Kind of setting the standard of how street courses should be.

Yeah, but no braking issues. Everything is pretty good there right now.

SCOTT DIXON: Yeah, I think, apart from what happened with three, I think they've done a fantastic job. I know next year they're actually planning on to finish resurfacing the whole track.

I think it's going to be better for racing, too. It seems like it's very smooth across both sides of the track, into four and into one, which is a bit challenging sometimes.

Q. Will, can you touch on what Scott said? What about the race come Sunday?

WILL POWER: It's hard to say. I mean, like Scott said, definitely have a lot of lanes to pass on, it's so smooth, especially into one and into ten there.

Yeah, we'll have to see. I think with this body kit, definitely made the racing tougher. It will be close. But what I see is these tires do degrade very quickly. I think it will be a good race.

Q. With the change in the rules, you have the option to run the alternate tires in practice.

SCOTT DIXON: My problem was on blacks. I didn't get a clear lap on my reds. Had traffic every lap coming out of the pits.

We left it too late. But, yeah, I spoke earlier, I think especially for newcomers maybe to the Verizon IndyCar Series, or rookies in general, I think it's a nice session to feel how those tires come in, the difference you can get from them.

I know Max, my teammate last year, was complaining about that a lot. It is a big difference. I think for the veterans, I don't think it's as much of an issue. It is nice. Maybe if the session were a little longer we could see how the falloff is. That's what I've noticed the most, is how short sessions are now. If you have a yellow out there or an incident, it's pretty much gone. I think we did three runs, maybe four runs. We'll have to see how that goes.

It is nice to have that option, for sure.

Q. In terms of the new brakes, you haven't actually run a full stint, but I'm just wondering if you have to go through any kind of effort, and how you feel in terms of what the race is going to be like?

WILL POWER: The brakes for me have been fine. It's not a really high-pressure track. I think it's when you go to places like Elkhart Lake, Indy road course, these places where you have massive brake pressure, and you notice the difference.

Here, you're not hitting the pressures you'd hit at other places. It's going to be interesting. With the new brakes, we haven't done a race with them. So far it's been fine.

Q. (Question about red tires now being used in practice)

WILL POWER: I would have voted against it, but, yeah, you get a bit of a read. We've adjusted our car for it. We know how they feel. I guess it's good for people who are not veterans.

Q. Earlier today Jay Frye and INDYCAR announced that all the manufacturers, Firestone, Honda, Chevrolet, Dallara, have all agreed to contract extensions. How big of news is that for the series, that now we know for the next several years moving forward it's going to be this group of people, and a possibility of an additional engine company coming in down the road?

WILL POWER: I think you could see the momentum with the continuity of drivers, teams, manufacturers, tire manufacturers, all that. It shows strength in the series. It really does. There was a time when there was a different set of drivers every year. Now it's the same group every year, same teams.

It's heading in a great direction, it really is.

SCOTT DIXON: Definitely a positive. Kudos to everybody I think in the Verizon IndyCar Series, and Jay, too. I know he's been working hard on these deals.

I think it shows that the manufacturers obviously know it's the right place to be. As we've all spoken about, if we could have the addition of another one or two, that would be ideal. Hopefully down the road with how the future looks, how they're paving the way for that to happen, I think it's all going in the right direction.

Yeah, I think it's exciting.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you for the support of our INDYCAR Nation Fan Club for coming in today, and we'll see you tomorrow.