

IndyCar Media Conference

Sunday April 23, 2017

Scott Dixon Simon Pagenaud

Press Conference

THE MODERATOR: We'll go ahead and get started with our Verizon IndyCar Series post-race press conference. Joined now by our second-place finisher, Scott Dixon.

Scott, I know it wasn't the finish you quite wanted, but you had a great battle with Josef towards the end. Take us through your race.

SCOTT DIXON: All in all, it was pretty decent today. We had good pace. We struggled off the first stint. Put new left fronts from qualifying. It got pretty loose pretty quickly, which then our pace started to fall off.

Josef did a hell of a job there on the blacks. Obviously had a clean start and really had some good longevity on that stint and was able to pit short and jump on reds.

I think, you know, I feel bad for Will obviously with the flat tire issue there, but then also left the door open a little bit in 16. Josef put his nose in there. Tried to turn down, but through that whole complex, 14, 15, 16, I was just so loose. If I turned more, would have spun out.

Credit to Josef. Drove a hell of a race. Team Penske, congratulations to them. Seventh podium here at Alabama without a win. Good in a lot of ways, but unfortunately we come here to win and we came up short.

THE MODERATOR: We went through the entire array of weather conditions throughout this race. How does that affect your race?

SCOTT DIXON: Yeah, I think it makes it pretty tough, you know, for the engineers and tire choice. You know, as we came to that last pit stop with the caution, it started to drizzle. I think the red tire option might have been the best one at that point if it had picked up and started raining a bit more.

Obviously, I think a black tire was the right choice. But condition-wise, it didn't change too much. I found our biggest struggle throughout the day was trying to pick the right tire and maintain the tire.

In the past the red tire has been very good here, but



the black just seemed to be a lot better. I wished we had saved a lot more black tires, you know, throughout the weekend from practice and qualifying. I think if we had run three of those, it would have been a better race for us.

The Verizon IndyCar Series, you know, is the toughest competition in the world right now. If you give an inch, someone's going to take it, you're going to come up short.

THE MODERATOR: Joined also by our third-place finisher, Simon Pagenaud.

Simon, a wonderful performance for Team Penske, a win for the team, also your third-place finish. How strong was your car coming into this race?

SIMON PAGENAUD: It's been a good weekend. We unfortunately carried a penalty from Long Beach. So starting every qualifying session, practice at the back of the pack puts you in a bad rhythm. So I'm very happy we were able to transform that into good qualifying results, and also a good result in the end of the race.

It was pretty eventful. At the start of the race, I feel like we were a little too aggressive with the racecar. We adjusted. At the end, I was really good. I saved quite a bit of fuel at the end to make it.

It was frustrating, I got to say. I just wanted to go. Were you saving fuel at the end?

SCOTT DIXON: No.

SIMON PAGENAUD: No? Geez, I got to figure that out.

SCOTT DIXON: You need a Honda, mate.

SIMON PAGENAUD: I couldn't go (laughter).

Probably a strategy that we had a short field. Anyway, it was the right strategy. We finished third. I wish I could have gone for it because I had some pace in the car, but just couldn't use it.

Overall a great weekend for Team Penske. A win. I feel sorry for Will. It was definitely his race to win. The 2 team did a tremendous job, it's great for them.

THE MODERATOR: Questions for Simon or Scott.

SIMON PAGENAUD: Where is Fernando? He's not here. I thought he would interview us, too (laughter).

Q. (Question regarding move Josef made.)

SCOTT DIXON: I don't want to talk about it, man (laughter).

No, I saw him come. I was so loose at that point, I tried turning down. The car was so loose. I thought he was going to give me a little bit more room on the edge, but he did a hell of a job. Yeah, it was just bad placement on my behalf. You know, I'll be thinking about that one for a little while.

Q. Along the same lines about that pass, was that coming up over the hill? Is that where the pass was, up on the hill?

SCOTT DIXON: Well, on the flat just by pit entry.

Q. Close to the front straightaway?

SCOTT DIXON: Well, I typically hold a fairly tight line there. But, yeah, he dove it in there, with some speed. He couldn't make the corner at the appropriate time, so we kind of both ran wide there. But, you know, it was a great move.

Q. Did you touch?

SCOTT DIXON: Maybe just. I don't know. I think we had another moment earlier on, too, Josef and I, where we kind of ran out of track for a moment.

Q. Simon, what was it about Penske dominating Friday and Saturday? Did you really just have the better book at Barber than the other teams?

SIMON PAGENAUD: Yeah, I guess, you know, these guys have Watkins Glen, and we have this track.

I guess, you know, yeah, our car suits this track really well. Chevy has also made a lot of improvements themselves. They've been searching for speed, searching for every little bit they could get to, you know, compensate for the gain Honda had got this winter. Chevy's definitely on the up. So it's great to see.

I mean, our team is just, you know, all about damper package, making the damper as good as possible. Contact package is really good. The Chevy aero package works really well. Typically, we run pretty loose cars again. Around these long corners, I think it helps. I think those are the reasons.

He was right there, too. So, you know, yeah, I think it's a good track for us, for sure.

Q. Can you talk about how the weather conditions changed. It possibly could rain. I don't think wind was involved. But definitely was cool. I don't know if it made a difference in whether you chose red or black tires.

SIMON PAGENAUD: The rain was the biggest effect

last night. It really cleaned off the track. The first stint personally was very difficult for us, quite a bit of tire wear. Balance wasn't what we expected. Then the track got better toward the end, and the tires hung on better, I think.

Yeah, it was different to yesterday, for sure. A lot of less tire degradation. Last year felt like we had a lot more tire degradation, too.

SCOTT DIXON: Yeah, I was kind of shocked the reds weren't any better than what they were. The black tire was definitely the pick for today, which in the past I think it's kind of been the opposite. The red always does fall off, but generally just has a really good pace. But the black tire was strong. You could push on it. It really held up well.

But I think, you know, with the cooler conditions maybe helped us a little bit. The aero kit for the Chevy is quite strong in the configuration that it runs here. So we knew we were going to struggle with that coming to this track.

Q. (Question about Fernando Alonso)

SIMON PAGENAUD: Yeah, no, like we talked about, it's fantastic. It's fantastic news. Personally reminds me of Nigel Mansell coming to IndyCar. It's definitely an interesting era for IndyCar because he's the worldwide known driver with two World Championships. It's pretty cool to see him come. I wish we had (Lewis) Hamilton coming as well, it would be really cool. Maybe next year, who knows.

It's really cool to see his interest for the sport. It shows that it attracts even drivers from Formula One. So that's cool to see personally.

Q. (No microphone.)

SIMON PAGENAUD: Yeah, Indy doesn't need advertising. It's the best race in the world. It's the biggest spectacle in racing. I think, you know, he was attracted by that.

You know, I think it's going to be a great show, awesome for the fans, too.

SCOTT DIXON: Yeah, I think, you know, it's huge. You know, as Simon mentioned, it is as big if not bigger than what happened with Mansell.

I think the interest here for drivers is that you have equal equipment. Right now in Formula One, unless you're with one or two teams, you don't really have a shot. If you're a driver and come here, you have a great shot at winning. And the equipment is very equal.

I think it's fantastic. I think it's fantastic for IndyCar. I think it's fantastic for the motor racing worldwide because it also opens up these ideas to team owners, to allow this to happen because, you know, most of the

time that's the biggest penalty. A lot of kudos to Zak, as well, for somewhat engineering this idea, I think a few months back. It's just great to see it finally come true. Obviously, a huge help from Honda and McLaren to make this possible.

Yes, it's a big deal. Very cool to see a driver of his caliber and world championship come try out the Indy 500.

Q. Of all the permanent road courses that the series races on, is this the most high contact? Really seems like you don't see this kind of contact at Road America or even Watkins Glen.

SIMON PAGENAUD: Contact like bumping? Yes, there are a lot of contacts, indeed (laughter).

I think it depends on who gives you room or not.

SCOTT DIXON: I think, you know, it's quite a confined space here, so you got to make that happen. I think maybe Watkins Glen or Road America, you set up the move a little bit from the back. You just do it differently.

Yeah, this place is fantastic. You know, Mr. Barber and the facility they have here is world class. We're very lucky to be here.

THE MODERATOR: Gentlemen, congratulations. Thank you very much.