

IndyCar Media Conference

Saturday May 13, 2017

Will Power

Scott Dixon

Ryan Hunter-Reay

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: INDYCAR Grand Prix runner-up finisher Scott Dixon, Mark Robinson gave a few notes that were noteworthy. I was looking at this, Scott, and thought to myself: The fact that you're 35th career second-place finish moves you up the list, and I'm sure that that's a thrilling statistic for you; the 40 wins, you probably like a little bit better than your 275th start, but coming into this weekend with two races, standing on the podium, I think you have to be pretty happy with that.

SCOTT DIXON: It's been a strong start I think for everybody at Chip Ganassi Racing and with the NTT Data car, there's always a couple races that you think about maybe losing the win and the victory.

But I think today, we got the most out of it. The car was pretty strong. We had good pace, but we just couldn't hold on to the rears. I think the Honda was just too much for the Red tires for the most part, and we could close the gap. But then definitely the last sort of five laps, eight laps of the stint, we just couldn't put the power down and was very loose.

Obviously big congrats to Will. He drove a hell of a race. And it was nice to get some good points, you know, second in the championship and only ten out. So it's valuable points when we can take them, and hopefully we can get on a roll here soon and start getting some wins.

THE MODERATOR: There was a report right away that you knew you were loose almost from the beginning. Is that an accurate statement?

SCOTT DIXON: Yeah, pretty accurate. Just it was tough. The harder you push, you just ran into more degradation. But actually, I think that's fantastic. I think a good job by Firestone to have that. It makes it a lot harder to maintain the tires with degradation, and the difference between the Blacks and the Reds I think was perfect. So hopefully we can mirror that for some of the road courses down the road.

But yeah, the car was loose. We knew it was going to be loose this morning. And the things -- the adjustments we made, we just didn't really fix it too

much. It was a little bit better but first stop we had to take a bunch of front wing out, which helped a little bit. But the car was pretty good on the Reds right at the end, but yeah, just couldn't hold on to the Reds.

Q. Later in the race, 69 or 70, you overtook Castroneves. Can you give some details? Did he have troubles or a mistake?

SCOTT DIXON: No, I think it was just strategy. He used new Reds at the start. Everybody else was on used. And then I don't know how his tire plan went after that but I think he used Red, Red, Reds and then used Black at the end.

So it's just part of the strategy. We used it on our second stint and we dropped back a fair bit. So yeah, he was a bit of a sitting duck.

It's never fun I think being in the situation at the end when you're racing for a podium or even for a victory when the strategy just plays out that way. But it just depends how you play your cards, and obviously it was going to be extremely tough to hold on with the Black tires.

Q. Was the big upset of the race everybody getting through turn one on the first lap?

SCOTT DIXON: Yeah, that was good. I was expecting it to be a little bit worse but everybody seemed to keep it pretty clean. I don't know what happened back further. I think there was some debris maybe on the first lap, seven. So that was good. I think it's the first time we achieved that, so well done.

Q. The start of the season you're having, haven't won a race yet but you're off to a very good start. How invaluable is that going into the Indy 500?

SCOTT DIXON: It's valuable. I don't think it matters too much going into the 500. It matters for the championship for sure, but the 500 is definitely its own event, and you know, excited to start off the month I think with Honda. The Honda package will be a little more favored going in. Hopefully Chevy don't make a big gain here. We'll see how it plays out.

Q. And for Ryan, how much did your team need this result?

RYAN HUNTER-REAY: Yeah, we've had a pretty tricky beginning of the year I guess you could say. It's been one thing or another, really. Some misfortune, bad luck. Some we brought upon ourselves but it's been one thing or another.

So it's just nice to bank a result finally. We feel like hopefully we can start our season now, get off to a good start, and hopefully the next race is two spots better. But it's nice to have a good, solid result today finishing third.

THE MODERATOR: First podium of the year for you, so that's pointing you in the right direction.

RYAN HUNTER-REAY: Yeah, we're headed in the right direction. We need more weekends like this. It was an excellent race, though. We had some excellent battles there in the beginning, especially through the first half, I think Simon Pagenaud and I went back and forth four or five times in one lap.

So there was a lot of back-and-forth, and looked like a lot of good, hard wheel-to-wheel racing. In the end, I just smoked in a little bit too hot into the pits and delayed my stop, which gave up some time to those guys. But it seemed like Will and Scott Were checking out pretty well.

Q. Were you surprised everyone has been talking about the drag induced by the Honda aero kit on this track; were you surprised you were able to legitimately beat Team Penske cars?

RYAN HUNTER-REAY: I was a little bit surprised. Like Scott mentioned, Helio's strategy, I think it was a good try, but it didn't end up working out for him in the end because he was on primaries at the end; kind of a sitting duck for us that had pace on Red.

Yeah, I think the pace for us was encouraging. You know, straight-up just drove away from Pagenaud, so that was good.

THE MODERATOR: We welcome INDYCAR Grand Prix winner, Will Power. We shared some statistics, you may have heard them: Your 30th career victory and I think the most interesting thing is you go tie with guys you know, Helio Castroneves and Rick Mears. So congratulations on that milestone.

WILL POWER: I'm tied with them?

THE MODERATOR: You broke it.

WILL POWER: Because Helio and I were on 29 for awhile and we've been fighting on pole numbers and wins, and he was going for it today.

THE MODERATOR: You got it.

WILL POWER: I did. I was thinking it's going to be tough to beat him, but we got him.

THE MODERATOR: One question came up right away, or comment, it's a common thing for a broadcaster to say when a driver is out front and seemingly cruising

that they are thinking what can go wrong, and in your case, given the year you've had, did you think to yourself at some point, oh, my gosh, what can go wrong here?

WILL POWER: I was just focusing on the job, you know, because it wasn't that easy. Weren't cruising out front. Like the tires would degrade, so you had to push. You had to push without leaning on it too much. Like in the first stint, I pushed way too hard early and Helio was just all on me, I pulled a gap and struggled the end of the stint and he end up jumping me.

So you know, it was good. The Firestone brought a really good tire for racing. Had a lot of grip in qualifying, and the grip slowly went away over the race, which created some good strategies and racing.

So yeah, they are very good -- so good to have tires like Firestone tires, because you never worried about failures or any of that type of thing. They are very, very good.

Q. Your first win with Myron. How important was that for you and the team and mostly for him?

WILL POWER: Yeah, he did a really good job all weekend. He had a straight strategy in qualifying to not sit around and wait till the last minute. He said: Why don't we just -- as soon as we're done on Black, just go straight out and we have a clear track for qualifying every time. He called a really good race. Yeah, getting real used to having him on the radio.

Q. Based on the way things have gone this year for you, especially with that last race at Barber, were you hearing things in your head in those last ten laps? What was going on there from an anxious standpoint?

WILL POWER: No, just very conscious of the gap that Dixon was closing. I was thinking, like he's going to burn his tires off. Like the way he's closing, I reckon his tires should go off, but he kept going, and then suddenly, boom, started to go the other way. I was like, all right, we're in good shape here. That was the case.

Q. (How much momentum does this give you)?

WILL POWER: It's funny, momentum, once your whole team and crew believes that you have a shot at winning races, which we have had all year, but when you execute it, it definitely gives them confidence. It's just good, get a win, and very, very good for everyone.

Q. When you do have a weekend like this where you lead every session and get the pole, lead the majority of the laps, how special is that because of how rare it is in modern day Indy car where it's so competitive and you have so many potential different winners?

WILL POWER: Yeah, you don't even think it's funny how that happens. You don't even think about. It you don't even remember that you were quickest in every

session. Just happens to be.

I think I remember thinking after warm up, I was thinking, wow, I've actually been quickest in every session. Yeah, it would be amazing to win the race.

But then to go on and be quickest in every session during the month; now that would be something. That's impossible. You'd have to have something special there. But to be quickest in qualifying and win the 500 would be something. That would be great. We're definitely focusing on that.

Q. They were saying on TV, the broadcasters were, that in the past if you had experienced some of the issues that you had the last few weeks, that there would be a lot of anxiety and anger, and they felt like things have changed a little bit with you since the birth of your son. Do you think that that's true?

WILL POWER: Yeah, I think that, and experience. Just experience. Not just on the track but off the track, as well.

You know, last year definitely had a few health issues to deal with, and you know, you just -- you know, I think that's just how life is. You have good and bad times. You know, the bad doesn't last forever and neither does the good. So you've got to kind of weather it and not get too down in the bad times and too up in the good times.

It's the same in racing. You're going to have your bad runs. You can't just continually have good runs and everything fall your way. But on those bad days, it's how you win a championship is, you know, hanging on to a reasonable result.

Q. But I watched the celebration, and this is -- you couldn't seem to get the sunglasses on the boy there. What's the deal there?

WILL POWER: It's like when you've got a baby, if the baby doesn't want something on him, you ain't going to get it on. You don't argue. Don't do that (chuckles).

Q. Helio was saying that this is like a perfect track for you, and I wonder if you think that is also true?

WILL POWER: Yeah, it's a good track for me. I mean, I think every track is now. I mean, I don't feel like I can win on every track, every track. I can't say that I go to a race ever thinking that I can't win, ever. Doesn't matter, oval, road course. My oval results over the last year and into this year have been better than my road course almost. I mean, just been top twos and threes and wins.

So I mean, I feel like everywhere I go, I have a shot.

Q. Does that surprise you, when you look at those results and say, how about that? Are you surprised that that's equalized in that way?

WILL POWER: No, just, you know, have a lot of

experience now. I just know the game so well in so many ways. Even if I feel bad, I know I can do a very good job, like just through experience. I just know the car, know the tires, know the series. Just you know it so well.

You can just see why it takes a young guy so long to get it all together, because you know, all these guys have -- it's not like there's new people in every year. It's the same people every year. It's tough if you want to come into this series and win.

THE MODERATOR: 175th start, by the way, for Will.

Q. When you came here 12 years ago, did you think that this quickly you would be in the ranks where you have more wins than Rick Mears and Helio Castroneves, who at that time didn't have that many wins.

WILL POWER: Yeah, I have to say, in 2008, I remember looking at -- when I first started there, at a bit of envy at the guys who drove a Penske. Ryan Briscoe, who is an Australian, as well: I was like, man, how nice would it be to be able to wear that suit, be in that situation; not this desperate situation that I was in with basically a one-year deal and kind of shaky all the time, not knowing. That's tough, tough for a driver to get through that period of every Christmas, I'm not sure if I've got a ride the next year.

If you can get past that and gain the experience you need, then you know, like I would never have dreamed that I would have got that ride in 2009 as a part-time with Penske, never. Never would have -- actually I had an argument with my wife. Because I signed a deal with A1 GP and she said, "You're crazy. What if Ganassi or Penske call?"

I said, "That's never going to happen." Sure enough, Helio has an issue and there's a chance there. Just shows you, women are always right. You've got to listen (Laughter). I made a mistake (laughs).

Q. Do you have to kind of flip a switch between now and Monday when you go from road course, this stuff, what y'all have been doing to the grind, I guess, whatever you call it, of getting ready for qualifying?

WILL POWER: Yeah, yeah, it's definitely a different deal, different animal to drive. But you get in the groove -- you've got plenty of time to get in the groove and you get into it pretty quick. You've done so many miles around this place; you know it so well, but you should never feel too comfortable.

Q. Auto racing is different from all other sports where when you go on to the field, you become enemies in a way, the drivers. What is it like when you're out there battling with a teammate, and how do you react when you pass him or he passes you and taking the lead or the win away from him?

What's it like after that?

WILL POWER: You know, the end of the day, on our team, you actually -- the teammates you're fighting are probably the guys you're fighting for the championship and race against often. It's just part of the deal.

I don't think -- you know, it's not -- if you ever have a shot at a win, it doesn't matter if it's your mate or someone else and you don't get it, it's always disappointing if you thought that you made a mistake. But I find it a pretty good environment amongst the teammates at Penske. We've all been around a long time, and have a lot of experience.

Yeah, you know, I think everyone's generally happy when the team wins, and that's how it should be.

THE MODERATOR: Will, thank you very much and congratulations.