

# IndyCar Media Conference

Sunday May 21, 2017

## Alexander Rossi Fernando Alonso

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: It's great to have the gentleman who won the 100th edition, Alexander Rossi, put up a great qualifying effort, and this guy has just been outstanding the whole time, Fernando Alonso. We've got a lot of work to do, we know you're on deadlines, so we're going to open it up to questions right now.

**Q. Fernando, two Formula 1 guys up here at the moment; how do you look at that in terms of what F1 racing means in this event and the progression that Alex has had coming over here?**

FERNANDO ALONSO: Well, I think it's good news for motorsport in general. I don't think that we need to separate too much F1 or IndyCar or rally or stock car. I mean, at the end of the day, it's just motorsports. You know, it's good to see Alex here, as well, and as I said, I think we all have that sense that motorsport is what we love in any series or in any conditions.

**Q. Alex, how well do you know Fernando when he came over?**

ALEXANDER ROSSI: Not so well, other than the fact that in my debut in Singapore he was the one of the only people that came up to me before the race and just said to enjoy the experience, and that meant a lot in a world where there's not a lot of communication across teams. It was pretty exciting news, I think, for everyone when it was announced he was coming over, and the fact that he was my teammate for this month and will continue to be is a pretty special experience for me. He's proving why he's one of the best in the world right now.

**Q. Fernando, of all the people you're talking to to get tips and advice, I would assume that Rossi would have to be as important as anybody because he made the journey you're trying to make.**

FERNANDO ALONSO: Yeah, absolutely. I've been listening to everybody. We are lucky, I am lucky that it's probably the best team for a rookie to come in with a lot of cars on the team and a lot of experience, coming from different series, and we have Takuma, also, that came from Formula 1, and Alexander. So yeah, from all the comments that arrived to me, the comments from them are very, very useful because they know how one car behaves and how the other car behaves and what they needed when they came here. Probably experienced more or less the same journey as them.

**Q. Alex, you were disappointed to miss the Fast Nine last year. Are you excited or disappointed that you're not two spots higher?**

ALEXANDER ROSSI: Yeah, I'm always disappointed if you're not in front, but I think it's a good effort from the team. Seeing Scott's speed is pretty impressive. I know we couldn't have done that. We've got to be content with the front row. It was something that really bothered me last year and for a year actually that we didn't make the Fast Nine, so yesterday was a pretty big relief, and today was just about trying to go as high up as possible. Front row is good. You can win this race from anywhere, so it's a good place to be, no dirty air, and we'll just get the race off to a strong start and see where it goes.

**Q. Fernando, you've got two teammates in front of you on the standings there. Is there any sort of benefit when it comes to race day to have two teammates in those early laps?**

FERNANDO ALONSO: Probably it wouldn't make a big difference. I think the biggest priority probably was yesterday, to secure the spot in the Fast Nine. Once you are in those Fast Nine, I think the positions obviously are important. If you're in pole position the rest is less important. But yeah, if I'm around on the race with my teammates, will be always a good thing because always you respect different your teammates compared to any other car, and that's probably a good thing for the start.

**Q. Fernando, how happy were you with the car and your driving on that run? Can you just talk through the problems and the positives? And also I heard you say that maybe you trimmed out a little bit too much in the end; is that correct?**

FERNANDO ALONSO: Well, yeah, the car was on the limit, but I don't know if it was possible to be on pole position, but definitely very close. I had an overboost problem in lap 2 out of the last corner, and it was like hitting the brakes. I went one gear down and started again picking up the speed, and I crossed the line and it was 30.7 or something like that. When I thought it was 225 or something, I nearly came to the pit lane because this qualifying run is over with this problem. Still running, still putting the laps together, and then I was happily surprised with the total time.

I think today the car performed better than yesterday already on the practice, it was very, very competitive, so yeah, probably we were close to pole position today.

**Q. Alex, how are you not just a year older but a year better, at least for this race?**

ALEXANDER ROSSI: In every way that's possible, I think. Every day that you drive a race car you get better, I think, and that's my impression and belief, so you've just got to take that forward and continue building on that and work on areas that you need to improve, and last year there was a lot of areas that needed to be better, and I think for qualifying specifically it was about lap 4 for me, and so this year we made sure that that wasn't an issue. In fact, this year it was actually lap 2, so I guess coming back in 2018 we'll need to make sure lap 2 is better.

**Q. Fernando, I know you had the engine issues in morning practice. Was there anything from morning practice you took that helped you with those engine issues?**

FERNANDO ALONSO: Well, as I said, the practice felt good on the car, and then we spotted some issues with the engine. At one point in the morning we didn't know if we were able to run in qualifying because we had to change the whole engine. But the team was amazing. They were guys from all six teams working on car 29 just to make it possible, so thanks to all that teamwork, I was able to go for qualifying. And yeah, I don't know, nothing really to say about the engine. It's difficult to compare anything, but everything felt normal, good for qualify, apart from this little issue, or big issue in 4.

**Q. Fernando, I have a follow-up with the engine issue. Was this engine already used you have now in your car, or was it brand new and never raced before?**

FERNANDO ALONSO: I think it was a new one.

**Q. Will you use it for the race or change it out?**

FERNANDO ALONSO: I have no idea.

**Q. Fernando, at any point during the engine change, were you beginning to get a little nervous? It seemed like talking with your crew --**

FERNANDO ALONSO: I'm just glad that they changed engines before qualifying and the race, so I'm not nervous.

**Q. They were supergluing parts of your rear pod while you were still in the tech line. What does that say about the crew that you've got?**

FERNANDO ALONSO: Amazing. As I said before, I think my crew -- but not only them, the whole team, you know, as soon as we decided to change the engine, I saw like 20 people around my car changing parts. That was a truly good thing to experience today, how the teamwork plays here. I was extremely proud and happy of them.

When we get to qualifying, I wanted to put a good run for them, because it's been a very busy day for them, and big, big thanks.

**Q. Explain the experiences you've already found between American racing and Formula 1 racing since you've been here.**

FERNANDO ALONSO: I mean, there are -- you know, I think at the end of the day, the big thing which is just the race itself and the competition remains very similar. You know, we are all here to race hard and to compete and try to be faster than any other guy out there.

But there are differences. You know, the way the whole event -- I think it's not possible to fit in Europe a two-week event. Also the close contact with the fans here is good. It's fun, and you enjoy them. I think if you do that in Formula 1, you know, with the level of technology, sophistication, you know, all the hard work that is there in terms of making small differences on the cars, et cetera, would never work, and probably that formula that we have in Formula 1 would never work here because it's just too short and too complex to understand all the technology that is around and sophistication around the cars, but probably the fans out here, they don't care about what we have inside the engine cover.

It's different formats. One is working there, one is working here. It's fantastic.

**Q. Today Scott Dixon, this is the fastest qualifying since 1996. Where did the speed come from today, and what's your general takeaway on what Dixon accomplished today?**

ALEXANDER ROSSI: Great question. We knew from this morning it was pretty quick. Speed was coming relatively easily without executing perfect laps. When you put together a perfect lap and the car is with you, you see a 232 average.

I don't really know what it was today. I think the lower humidity was helping the engines. The wind direction was favorable for lap time because it was a true crosswind. There was no penalty on either of the straights, and that makes the corners difficult, but if you can get through the corners, then it was a much more favorable wind for lap time today than yesterday, so I think those two things combined are probably the biggest differences, and yeah, like I said, they had to get it right, and they clearly did.

FERNANDO ALONSO: I agree. I've never been here.

**Q. Going back to last year's race, before it started, did you have any feeling about how it would unfold? And then secondly, going into your second, is there any way to prepare for the unpredictability of it?**

ALEXANDER ROSSI: No, not at all. I think this is the one race you go into where you actually don't have a plan, you kind of just roll with it, and that's what we did last year because we had to because my pit stops took about a minute and a half -- I'm kidding, but close. So

we had to adjust on the fly.

I mean, this race because of the yellows, because of the length of it, and because how many times you can kind of move forward and backwards in positions, there's not really a set strategy. It's just about taking it one lap at a time and executing each of those laps. And then your plan kind of comes into play in the last 20, 25 laps if you're in the front, and then you start to have a process that you go through. But yeah, I'm more relaxed I think than I was last year just because I know what to expect, and I'm really looking forward to Sunday. Sunday was probably even before the end result was my favorite day of the year. I'm really looking forward to watching Fernando go through that because I think from 6:00 a.m. to noon before the race even starts --

FERNANDO ALONSO: 6:00?

ALEXANDER ROSSI: Yeah. Is probably the coolest six hours of your life. He'll really enjoy it.