

IndyCar Media Conference

Sunday May 28, 2017

Fernando Alonso

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: Fernando, on behalf of, I think, fans, media, officials, we want to thank you for being incredibly open and accommodating. You've gone out of your way to be available, which has meant a lot to people here.

Obviously you had a great day, but some disappointment in the end. Tell us about it.

FERNANDO ALONSO: Thank you, first of all.

Yeah, obviously disappointed not to finish the race because obviously every race you compete, you want to be at the checkered flag. Today was not possible. Anyway, was a great experience, the last two weeks. I came here basically to prove myself, to challenge myself. I know that I can be as quick as anyone in an F1 car. I didn't know if I can be as quick as anyone in an IndyCar.

It was nice to have this competitive feeling, even leading the Indy 500, you know. One lap you put on the lead there, it was already a nice feeling. I was passing, watching the tower, saw the 29 on top of it. I was thinking at that moment if Zak or someone from the team was taking a picture, because I want that picture at home.

Thanks to IndyCar, amazing experience. Thanks to Indianapolis. Thanks to the fans. I felt at home. I'm not American, but I felt really proud to race here.

Yeah, congratulations to Sato San, to Andretti. We have been sharing the last two weeks all the meetings in the morning, the meetings in the afternoon. Takuma was a lot of help, coming from F1. The last two laps I was on my knees really pushing Sato. Extremely happy for the final result.

THE MODERATOR: For the folks here, tell us who joins us on the podium, their role on the team.

FERNANDO ALONSO: My physiotherapist, Zak (laughter). I think McLaren as a company, the success in IndyCar in the past, the success in Formula One, and now the road cars, the level they reach, we need to feel very proud as racing fans, as drivers, as journalists, to have McLaren here. I think it's a very good news for the sport. This is only thanks to Zak.

THE MODERATOR: Those of us here were aware of

the role you played in making this happen. I would think it met your expectations and far more?

ZAK BROWN: If we put aside the last 20 laps, which is a massive disappointment, if we reflect back on the past month, it was outstanding. Fernando didn't put a wheel wrong. Showed what a world class world champion he is today.

Andretti, congratulations to Michael for winning. He did an outstanding job, as did everyone at McLaren. Just very disappointed for Fernando and everyone at McLaren to see him driving down the front straight with smoke coming out of the back of the car. Just stunned, but this is racing. It's 500 miles.

I think we'll look back on the month and feel very happy with what we achieved.

THE MODERATOR: We'll take a few questions.

Q. Most of the race you looked comfortable. The one place where you seemed to struggle compared to an experienced driver is when Helio went forward at the restart, you had to battle a bit. Did that feel like a difficult phase of the race or was it just circumstances? Otherwise, were you very comfortable with the way everything was playing out?

FERNANDO ALONSO: I mean, obviously there were some better moments than others on the race, but I felt competitive all through the race.

I think Helio and some of the guys, they've been very lucky with the yellow flag. I think with a trouble-free race, Ryan, Rossi, myself, we would be half a lap in front of everyone. That is the nature of this race. You need to be lucky in some moments.

Even with some unlucky moments of the yellow flags, we were in the group, in the mix.

So, no, I mean, it felt okay. Obviously when you are eighth, the seventh, you know the last 20 laps were intense, but I was taking care a bit of the front tires in the first couple laps of that stint because I knew the race would be decided in the last six or seven laps.

I think I had a little bit on the pocket before the engine blew up.

Q. Zak, when you discussed this project with

Fernando coming to Indianapolis, what was your realistic expectations? Looking back to the history of the car, the real McLaren car, when there's ever the possibility, is McLaren maybe considered to build again a real IndyCar and come again with a real car, its own car?

ZAK BROWN: When Fernando and I first spoke about the Indianapolis 500, I wasn't sure what Fernando's response would be because I think not many racecar drivers in this world are brave enough to do what Fernando just did. Not just from a physical standpoint, but the whole world was watching Fernando race today. He put himself out there and exposed himself, delivered the goods, which isn't a surprise to anyone that has watched Fernando race.

So I was pleased, very pleased, that competing at the Indy 500 was his dream, it's been part of McLaren's history, and a dream to win Indy 500s in the future.

As far as building chassis, we historically have not been a manufacturer of multiple chassis. Obviously the current rules are for a single spec. I believe the new rules will be introduced in three, four, five years' time. We'll take a view then. But it's not something we have historically done in the past.

Q. Fernando, you said you tested yourself, proved to yourself. I know you can't make a superstition for the future, but is this a positive experience that leaves you hungry for more to come back again someday?

FERNANDO ALONSO: Definitely yes. Obviously if I come back here, at least I know how it is everything. It will not be the first time I do restarts, pit stops, all these kind of things. So will be an easier, let's say, adaptation. Let's see what happen in the following years. Yeah, I need to keep pursuing this challenge because winning the Indy 500 is not completed. It holds a new challenge if I can find a car that slow me down somehow.

Q. Fernando, we all watched a pretty dull Grand Prix this morning, a difficult race for McLaren. I'm assuming you're happy to be here today, not there. How do you pick yourself up and go back to Formula One now?

FERNANDO ALONSO: I'm never happy when McLaren is not finishing the race. I mean, is true that before coming here some of the questions were how you can trade Monaco race for Indy 500. This is the best opportunity for the team, this is the best opportunity to score points. I won two times there, I won two world championships. To drive around Monaco for a sixth place, seventh place, even a fifth place...

To be here is not possible to compare that thing. I think for motorsport in general, people that watched the race this morning in Monaco, the people that watch the race this afternoon here, I think they could not sit down for

three hours this afternoon.

I didn't miss Monaco in terms of result, you know. So for the future, Canada, obviously we will try to keep improving. I think the car seems to be performing better and better. In Barcelona we were seventh in qualifying. In Monaco both cars were Q3. I think the second half of the season will be much more competitive and we will enjoy much more.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you very much for coming in, gentlemen.

FERNANDO ALONSO: Last thing. Thank you for all media. I didn't won, but I will drink a little bit of milk (laughter). You follow me for two weeks every single minute, but I really enjoy. Thanks for the welcoming. See you in Austin.