

IndyCar Media Conference

Saturday June 3, 2017

Graham Rahal

Scott Dixon

James Hinchcliffe

Press Conference



We kind of in the prerace meeting were like, Oh, we're not going to run very long on the reds. We ran all the way till the end of the reds. I was a little surprised for that.

Obviously some of the other cars switched up that strategy. Even if you look at Hinch, it was a nice rebound for him, spinning at the start, getting the caution, then able to run that black tire all the way through, jumping us on that second-to-last pit stop.

It was an interesting day. It always is here. Tomorrow I think if we get some weather, it's going to be even more interesting. Kind of got to be in the right place at the right time and not get collected.

I'm happy we came out of today unscathed, got the points lead, which is huge for us. When we're not 100%, these are the days that definitely help championships, where you've got to strive to get the most out of it. I definitely think we did a good job of that today.

THE MODERATOR: Questions for Scott.

Q. Obviously winning would be the best medicine, but is this pretty good medicine?

SCOTT DIXON: Well, yeah, as you said, it's not winning, but it's close. I think, all things considered, everybody is pretty happy. I haven't seen the team yet. But I think with the effort that's gone on this week, I think that's above expectations. To be honest, our expectation is to go to every race weekend and win.

We came close. We had a good racecar in the long run. We started to close that gap by the end. We were down by three or four seconds.

Qualifying is going to be important tomorrow. Let's try to get the most out of that. It was important. Hinch proved that it really wasn't, but we'll see what happens tomorrow.

THE MODERATOR: We'll welcome in James Hinchcliffe, who finished third in today's Chevrolet Detroit Grand Prix presented by Lear.

James, a long race, a lot of different strategies playing out. It seems like things ended up well with you and the Arrow SPM crew.

JAMES HINCHCLIFFE: Yeah, it's all about thinking on

THE MODERATOR: We'll go ahead and get started with our Verizon IndyCar Series post race press conference. Pleased to be joined by our second place finisher, Scott Dixon, driving the No. 9 Camping World Honda for Chip Ganassi Racing.

Scott, obviously a very physical track out there. We know you are on the mend, but obviously a great finish for you. Talk about the challenges of that race, especially with you maybe not being 100%.

SCOTT DIXON: Yeah, it's definitely -- all in all, it's been good to be back in a car. Huge credit to the Camping World crew. They've had a rough week obviously having to build a new car. Everybody at Chip Ganassi for pitching in.

It's tough coming off a month of Indianapolis with the road course and oval, all the long hours, then having to basically start from scratch. So I thank those guys and girls a lot for putting in the effort.

You know, the foot's not great, but it's working. So it's just hard to get the last sort of part out of the car and the performance out of it. Very lucky that everybody in the Chip Ganassi side and the Camping World crew have given me a good car for today.

Kudos to Honda obviously for sweeping the podium in Motor City is obviously nice. And congrats to Graham. Did a nice job. Those guys had a rough start to the season, so it's good to see him, Bobby and Mr. Lanigan with a smile on their face.

We'll come back tomorrow. I wish that was it today. We'll try and come back, get some rest tonight, come back for qualifying in the morning and see what the weather brings.

THE MODERATOR: As is usual for here in Detroit, a lot of strategies showing in the race. What approach did you and the team take, and how did it work out for you in the long run?

SCOTT DIXON: I didn't think it was the right one to start with. We went very long on the reds. I'd been struggling on the reds. I was pretty vocal on the radio.

your feet in the Verizon IndyCar Series. We had to do that. There are kind of two main strategies coming into it. One was going to be kind of reserved for the top half of the grid. The other for the back.

We started the race (indiscernible), and by turn one, we switched to the other. Kind of inadvertently, but it worked out well. We got off the reds, had a really strong car on blacks. Caught a yellow flag at just the right time to close the field up and put us running with the guys that really we should have been running with all day.

Managed to jump ahead of Rossi and Takuma there. Couldn't quite keep Dixon behind us, that's no surprise. Congrats to Graham. Honda 1-2-3 in Detroit is a pretty good result.

Huge credit to the boys. They were great in the pits. The car was awesome. We didn't have the best car yesterday. So to come back with a podium yesterday, pretty special, and Mikhail P6, so a good day overall.

THE MODERATOR: Questions.

Q. Scott, this is always a tough week to prepare for anyway in the best of times physically with two races. Naturally this is a different week for you. How did the preparation from a physical standpoint change coming into this weekend to make sure you're as good to go as possible?

SCOTT DIXON: Yeah, I don't know. I think you kind of favor things in the car differently, you know, when you have maybe an injury. I felt pretty worn out. I was actually glad the race was over when it was.

But, you know, I think as preparation, you try to do as much as you can. The month of May is always grueling anyway. It's always hard to get in the training you need. This is probably the most physical track we come to, outside of being a doubleheader, just with how bumpy it is. You don't get too much time to rest. Straights are not very long and not very straight.

JAMES HINCHCLIFFE: Not very straight.

SCOTT DIXON: It is what it is. Yeah, it would have been nice for a shorter race. But, hey.

Q. Hinch, seems to me in racing, you got your mind on the start, then you spun, then you're waiting to get pushed. Do you do an alt-control-reset when it comes time to go back racing? How do you switch back into full race mode?

JAMES HINCHCLIFFE: You know, I've been around this series long enough now to know an incident in turn one doesn't necessarily have to ruin your day. We've seen it a lot of times. We saw Bourdais win from starting last.

I kind of sat in my car and thought, Well, Sebastien did

it in St. Pete, why can't we do the same thing. Knowing there was a strategy that kind of favored guys getting off reds who were at the back early. I immediately, as soon as we were back, knew we were going to be switching to that. We kind of had a backup plan in that sense.

I was just lucky that the car was good enough and we were able to make some passes on track, make some spaces up in pit lane.

Yeah, I mean, these races are so long, they ebb and flow a lot. Just because you're last in one phase doesn't necessarily mean you're out of the game.

Q. Scott, is there any way of telling why some guys get more out of the reds than others and why you got more out of the reds?

SCOTT DIXON: That's a good question. We definitely need to know that. I struggled on the reds. We were making ground and definitely pressuring Rossi a lot. Then I don't know if it was because I was running quite close behind him. I burnt mine off. He was able to stretch off a good three or four seconds.

Yeah, that was not in our strategy whatsoever to run long on reds. We ran until the car ran out of fuel. Yeah, I don't know. I really am not sure. Even in qualifying we've been struggling getting the performance out of the reds. We're kind of there, but we're missing a little bit. The longevity of those are not great every year. But, you know, I think we did the best that we could with the scenario that we ended up having.

Q. Could you both speak to the parity here in the series. Seven races, seven winners. What is it like to be a part of that?

SCOTT DIXON: I wouldn't know (laughter). I'm still working on that.

JAMES HINCHCLIFFE: Coming from, what, the fourth all-time winner. Relax, bro, it's coming.

I mean, I think it's awesome. It's funny hearing criticism about the depth of our field from someone who has to race three other cars when we have seven winners in the first seven races. It shows how competitive this series is, the parity between the manufacturers, between teams. Just how difficult it is to win one of those races.

You really have to have everything go your way, pit stops have to be perfect, flags have to fall in your favor, and oh, yeah, you have to be pretty good behind the wheel of a good car.

For me, I think it's the greatest racing on four wheels on the planet. We're all very privileged to be able to race in such a deep field, such a high class of driver here.

Q. Scott, after this past week, did you help Emma get her nursing degree?

SCOTT DIXON: She got a nursing degree?

No, she's very hands-on. I learned how bad I was, apparently. I need to work on that a lot. Not very attentive, apparently.

Yeah, no, she was amazing. Definitely helped a lot. You know, she's telling me he to use my crutch, all that stuff. I don't think it's cool, so I'm not using it.

JAMES HINCHCLIFFE: Yeah, man, that's the spirit.

SCOTT DIXON: Seems to push her buttons.

No, she's been, yeah, fantastic.

THE MODERATOR: Gentlemen, thank you very much. Good luck tomorrow.

JAMES HINCHCLIFFE: Thank you.

SCOTT DIXON: Thank you.

THE MODERATOR: We will continue with our post race press conference. Joined now by the winner of the Chevrolet Detroit Grand Prix presented by Lear here in Belle Isle Park.

Graham, amazing weekend for you so far. Max points in this race, the race win, the pole. Seems like everything is clicking for you and the team. Take us through your race and ultimately what went right to keep you ahead.

GRAHAM RAHAL: I mean, you know, first of all, I got to say thanks to my boys. The guys did a great job in the pits. You know, Eddie, Martin, Mike, Tom, all the engineers, Alex, all the guys that came up with this setup. As I said to you guys yesterday, you know, we rolled off the truck and it was right there. So definitely pleased with that 'cause we changed one thing this weekend. That doesn't normally happen. So I'm really excited about that.

But, yes, we were firing on all cylinders today. We were able to match whatever pace we needed to. We were able to run some blistering fast times while saving a ton of fuel. So thanks to Honda for that. I could certainly do the number that I needed to.

You know, it's just a routine day. As I said to you guys yesterday, and trust me, a lot of drivers didn't like my comment that I felt like I could dominate if I got out front, but I didn't lie. You know, I didn't say that in any other way other than I felt that confident in my car. It's not about anything else. I just knew if I could be out front in clean air, we could do what we did today.

I'm very fortunate for the team around me. The guys did a tremendous job. For United Rentals, Soldier Strong, Turns For Troops, raised a lot more money, hopefully we sold some T-shirts today. We're looking forward to tomorrow.

THE MODERATOR: Your dad won this race, albeit quite a while ago in 1992. Does that mean anything extra for you knowing that you won at a place that your family has a history at?

GRAHAM RAHAL: I was told the last American to win here, you guys will have to double-check this, was Michael in '96 or something. So, you know, that's pretty cool. This city is so Americana in so many ways. Motor City, obviously it's great to get a win here today.

As I said, it's a weird win because it's a win, but we can't exactly go have fun tonight. It's strange that we just have to look forward to tomorrow. But I'm really pleased for our guys. It's exciting to add to the family legacy here.

It's been a good place to me in the past. Today we were very fortunate, you know, that the yellows weren't poorly timed or anything like that. We were able to stay out front, to build the gap that we needed to, and obviously run hard.

You guys saw the gaps more than I did. I didn't even hear what they were. But the second stint was strong, and I could tell it was strong. I didn't know where anybody was, but definitely a good day.

THE MODERATOR: There is another race tomorrow. A lot of drivers, when they get that win, they can look forward to the next week. Do you feel like you could repeat tomorrow, as well?

GRAHAM RAHAL: Absolutely. There's a couple things we can do with the car overnight just to make it a little better.

I think the only guy that seemed to have our pace all day was maybe Dixie. I was saving some fuel there at the end just for trying to learn for tomorrow. You know, he seems to be close on pace. We'll have to see.

But for sure, it seems like we're in a pretty good spot going into tomorrow. You would think that's obvious after having just been on the front row and been on pole. Been on the front row no matter what, but winning the race. It's not as obvious as you think.

Tomorrow morning we'll go out there, I can guarantee, being cooler temperatures, the potential of rain, everything else, it's going to be a whole new day. Hopefully it's ours again.

THE MODERATOR: Questions for Graham.

Q. Graham, walk us through what you did with your tires in the race. Was there any surprise at all? Did it go the way you thought it would, like other stuff?

GRAHAM RAHAL: Yeah, for me it was very good. The reds were extremely consistent, you know. I went red, black, black, as I said after qualifying I was going to do. We stretched the reds the first stint. I know Helio said he couldn't make them live. I told you guys earlier I thought for whatever reason my driving style, I don't tend to use tires as hard. I don't know why that is. I really don't.

But, you know, I was fine. I mean, on reds, my last lap on reds, was my fastest lap, on lap 24. So I was good. You know, the middle stint on blacks, the car was absolutely phenomenal. I was able to save a ton of fuel and still do, you know, 75.1s, which nobody at the time was anywhere near that.

The last stint, I just kind of cruised. I tried to manage my gaps. I didn't need to save much. I was saving just to learn for tomorrow. But, again, the tires were very, very consistent for me today.

Q. How did you know drivers took exception with your comment? Did they say things to your face?

GRAHAM RAHAL: Because Power liked my comment. So Power said to me today, he came to me today, Hey, mate, give Newgarden some shit.

You know, I was like, at the autograph session, I'm like, Hey, Newgarden, I'm going to dominate today. You watch.

He's like, Oh, come on, man, nobody dominates. He gets all bent out of shape.

Then Pag jumped on me. All the Penske guys, you know. They're used to kicking everybody's butt. When somebody challenges them, they don't like it so much.

Yeah, no, I mean, it's typical Will trying to get everybody spun up. It was fun. It was fun.

THE MODERATOR: In their own backyard, too.

Q. Speaking of pace, we could see the 'push to pass' numbers.

GRAHAM RAHAL: Didn't use it.

Q. I know. That's my question.

GRAHAM RAHAL: I used it the last couple laps just for fun. I'm serious. I used it because I wanted, again, to learn for tomorrow. I actually went to a richer fuel mixture just to learn for tomorrow because I wanted to know if it actually made time difference or not.

I really just -- I don't know. I used it to get by Gutierrez. He was going to let me by anyway. But, of course, when you hear Dixon is behind, it's a little different than most guys, right? So I was like, All right, I got to go. I

don't want the gap to close any more. So I'm going to go as hard as I can. So I pressed it a couple times just for kicks.

But, yeah, when they told me with, like, 10 to go, they said you have 100 seconds more than Dixon. I looked at my dash, I had 138 seconds. I didn't even touch it. You know, I mean, I knew -- even then I felt good if somebody closed up on me, they probably were not going to get by. I could hit it every straight and be fine.

Look, these days don't happen very often. I'm certainly going to enjoy this. I'm not going to take it for granted because, you know, I had this feeling last night that if I could qualify well, if I could get out front, I could do what I told you guys I could do, and manage this race, try not to put a wheel wrong, set the tone, set the pace. If I did that, I thought my pace could be better than most others.

Today it was. You know, I'm just fortunate that it worked out that way. As you guys know, it doesn't always happen that way. Today it did. Thank God for that.

Q. A lot of times when you go to a two-strategy race, you could be playing it perfectly and it can get foiled by an ill-timed caution. Was that the only thing in the back of your mind?

GRAHAM RAHAL: It was in the back of my mind. When they told me at warmup time my gap at one point was like 14 seconds or something, legitimately in my mind -- that was a three-stopper. I didn't want it to be 14, I wanted it to be 24. If I can get it to 24, I don't care if it's a three-stopper or not. I could pit, get out in front. That's all I was concerned about, was to increase my gap enough to not have to worry about it.

I didn't see the end of the race. How far did Dixon get ahead of everybody? A ways? Yeah, I mean, it seemed like nobody had the pace the two of us did. I hope that tomorrow is the exact same.

Q. Graham, you look at the wins that you've had in your career, St. Pete of course the first win, Fontana, Texas, Mid-Ohio. You haven't had a dominant win like this. How different does this win feel compared to ones you didn't even know if you had the win?

GRAHAM RAHAL: That's why I felt like I just didn't want to mess up today. Actually, I'll be honest, I didn't sleep great last night because I knew that I was good enough for the first time in a long time, that the car, myself, everything was good enough here to legitimately be on pole, and to set the tone here. That doesn't happen all the time. You know, for us, it doesn't happen that often.

In fact, I can be honest and say I don't know that I've ever felt that confident in my entire career going into a race day as we did today. I just felt like, you know, if

everything went well, that we were going to be very hard to beat. And that proved to be true today.

You know, I just didn't want to mess up. I tried the entire race, Just give yourself a gap. I never pushed a single lap to 100% on purpose. I just wanted to keep my margins, you know, just hit my marks. The first, you know, 55 laps went quick. The last 15 seemed to take a decade. But, you know, it was a lot of fun out there.

As I said, obviously we've seen Power dominate races like this, others. But this just doesn't happen that often. So it's a pretty special day.

Q. Did having the second car during this race weekend help you guys get off the trailer and figure out any quicker?

GRAHAM RAHAL: I mean, I love having Oriol here. I'll have to debrief with him after this and see what he felt today.

You know, like I said, we haven't really changed anything. The base setup we started with is kind of close to what we had in Long Beach. I can't say there's been a lot of value added from the standpoint we haven't really done much. We're pretty close.

We'll talk to Oriol and see. They can certainly add. If Oriol says, Hey, you know, for the rear-end, I had this issue, and we tried springs or tried this or that, and it was the right direction or wrong, I can trust his opinion. I don't need to go and test that item. I mean, I can believe what he's saying.

So there's a lot of value added from that perspective.

Q. How is your wife doing? Did you see that live or just on replay? What is that like?

GRAHAM RAHAL: Yeah, I mean, contrary to what a lot of people or fans or whatever want to think, it's not cool. You know, it's nerve-wracking because I see those cars firsthand each and every weekend. There's a lot to be nervous about. There's goods and bads there.

That's not a very comforting thing because I've seen that scenario before on others. I've never seen that with her. I guess, you know, you probably a lot of times take those things for granted, that it's not going to happen to you, or that the safety has really been improved, when it's really the same as it has been and everything else.

You know, particularly when it's your wife, it hits home. If it's a guy, it's like, All right, he'll be fine. When it's her, I feel a little different.

But she was okay. I told her we've had enough action for the year, that she needs to just stop now. But I just hope she has a good safe race day. I haven't talked to

her yet today, so I'm not sure how her day went today.

I don't care how many races she wins or whatever. To me, as long as she comes home safe, that's all that matters. Those things are exactly what you saw yesterday in a lot of cases. It's a bomb waiting to go off. Unfortunately it did. Hopefully it will never happen again.

But she seems to be okay. Thanks to IndyCar, we got accelerometers put in her car this year for the first time. The staff here at IndyCar made those for her. So hopefully she can look at that and study it and learn from it and improve going forward. But she seems to be fine, which is the most important thing.

Q. (Question regarding the possibility of anybody winning in IndyCar racing.)

GRAHAM RAHAL: It is possible. It is possible. Look, man, when I saw Lewis Hamilton's comment, you guys know me, it took me everything I had in my body not to say something. Legitimately, in Formula One, over his entire career, it's been a two-car race, four max, max. Here you have, like, Hinch who spins on lap one. You're going, He's done. No, he had the pace. He had a great strategy. He made some moves. I think he went through a three-stopper, ran blacks, ran hard, had the speed to get through, next thing you know he's in third.

IndyCar racing, this is the seventh race, seventh different winner. That doesn't happen in other motorsports, period. So no matter what anybody wants to say, it's a great form of motorsports. I think Esteban will tell you, I just talked to him briefly, he said this is the most fun car he's ever driven in his life. It's man and machine. It's as simple as that. It's a lot of fun.

When you win here, like a day like today, you truly feel like you really accomplished something, you know, great. As a driver, as a team, as an engineer, all across the board. So today is extremely, extremely rewarding.

I can't imagine the feeling of going to each and every race weekend and knowing that all I got to do is beat my teammate and I'm going to win. But that doesn't happen here. So it was rewarding to have a day like today.

And, look, truth, I put Scott Dixon in a Mercedes all day long, and Lewis is going to have more than he really wants to deal with. I can guarantee you that. Maybe not me, but Scott Dixon.

THE MODERATOR: On that note, Graham, congratulations.

GRAHAM RAHAL: Thank you.