

IndyCar Media Conference

Friday June 9, 2017

Scott Dixon Tristan Vautier

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: We'll get started with our post qualifying press conference. We're now joined by Scott Dixon, driver of the No. 9 Honda for Chip Ganassi Racing. This is the fifth time he has qualified on the front row here. Scott, a strong performance by Chip Ganassi Racing here in qualifying. Talk about your run and about being up front here and maybe that being an advantage.

SCOTT DIXON: I think it helps just keeping yourself out of trouble, but as we've seen in the past, I don't think -- if you've got a good car, you can come from the back here. It's definitely going to be about maintaining speed, probably for the last 20 laps of the stint. Even this year I think the tire maybe it's not that much degradation, but we have some blistering and the grip does fall off a bit. You know, we'll have to see how -- the second lane right now, the bottom lane is the lane of choice and right now has a lot of grip, so we'll have to see if another lane comes in to make racing a little bit better. Here it's always about the last 20 laps at least and making sure you can maintain the speed.

Q. How does the repave -- you touched on it a little bit, but the repave, reconfiguration change business here if it's not perfect, and what needs to be done to make it better?

SCOTT DIXON: You know, I don't know. I think it's easy to jump to conclusions. You know, I think it's definitely different from last year, but the track is a lot different. You know, I think 3 and 4 is going to be a little easier to run side by side. 1 and 2 right now, especially when you move up to the upper lanes is pretty slippery. I know at the test the second lane was quite useful. I think as we run more cars -- I'm not sure how they did the aging process, but it's definitely quite night and day from the dark patch where the rubber is as you get up a bit higher. I think they've done a great job. Obviously this track is going to be useful for many different formulas, not just us, so I think we have a package that is workable and something that will provide good racing.

Q. A lot of people have talked about IndyCar and the number of different winners you guys have had, but you're obviously first in points, Helio is second. Neither of you guys have won, but how close do you feel like you are and how weird is it or is it weird at all that you guys are 1 and 2 with no

wins?

SCOTT DIXON: Well, I felt close to a win right from St. Pete. We haven't made the right choices. I think there's definitely two or three races that we had good pace and track position. I think I would have won the race, but it didn't play out that way. You know, IndyCar I think is very diverse in many ways and also the way that the races are run as far as strategy. A lot of the times the fastest cars don't win. It is what it is. That's what makes it very challenging from a driving standpoint but also strategically, as well. I think the positive for us is that we've had very good speed throughout the season, and hopefully if you keep knocking on the door, one is going to open up at one point.

THE MODERATOR: We're also joined now by Tristan Vautier, driver of the No. 18 for Dale Coyne Racing, who qualified fifth for tomorrow night's rain guard water sealer 600. Obviously replacing Sebastien Bourdais. If you could talk about your qualifying performance and getting behind the wheel after such a substantial absence.

TRISTAN VAUTIER: Yeah, I was a bit nervous to be honest. I just didn't know how it was going to feel that first lap out. On the road course maybe not as much but here on the oval, it's a difficult place. I was just kind of anxious to get in the car and see what it would be, but after three or four laps it felt okay. Obviously everything was a bit faster than what you've done it all season, but I got back in it pretty quick, and the team made it easy because the car was so good from the start, to be honest. It's really good to work with these guys, Craig and Olivier and obviously the rest of the team, but just the car felt really nice from the start, so it's really helped me out.

The qualify was good. I think they nailed the downforce quite perfect. It's at a good level. And yeah, I've had some tougher quallies where I didn't qualify as well, so I have to give credit to the team, as well. Obviously the race is going to be much tougher for me, long, obviously very long, and I've been out for a while, but we'll have tonight to practice, and we'll see how it goes.

Q. Scott, kind of a follow-up on the seven different winners but yet you're not one of them, do you find it strange in a season where you haven't won a race you're leading the points in June?

SCOTT DIXON: I think us leading the points in June is quite odd anyway. You know, I don't know. I think it's a

positive. It's a positive situation for us to be in. I think we've -- as I alluded to, we've had really good speed, we just haven't made maximized on the result or converted when we should have. I think it shows good for the rest of the year. I think a lot of credit goes to the team and Honda have done an amazing job this year to close some of that gap.

You know, they're pushing hard, and we've seen that they've maybe been pushing a little bit too hard in some areas, but we'll keep digging and hopefully can win some races and open up that points gap.

Q. Tristan, Dale Coyne Racing has really upped the ante this year, a lot of good outings, but you last raced with them in 2015. I know it's a short time, but what's been maybe some of the different changes that you've been able to see on the improved adjustments they've done?

TRISTAN VAUTIER: I think the overall team has kept improving. Dale is really, really putting a lot of effort into making the team as good as it is now. I think a good thing this year is they've had -- unfortunately there's been the accident for Seb, but they've had two very strong drivers in the car and stability and two very strong engineering teams, as well, because even the rookie has been very strong, and I think that stability, and as I said, a wider engineering team with like Craig Hampson coming and Olivier, I think they've been able to share ideas with their experience from our teams on how the team has been running, and overall, yeah, the team is very strong. The way they work is very impressive, and we've seen it since the start of the year they've been strong, and now we're here this weekend, so yeah.

Q. Scott, it seems that the new track surface, and everybody has been running the low line and really haven't been able to go up higher, and even on the scanners the drivers were asking has anybody else tried the high line, and the spotters were saying no. During the race, it seems like the tires, like the right tires usually would maybe degrade, but because the track is so smooth, do you think that's not going to happen?

SCOTT DIXON: You're always going to get degradation. Sort of the first six laps of any tire is the best, and I think on our longer run today, I think we just did 20 laps, and you're starting to get some blistering on the right rear, which is quite normal for a new track surface, especially when the speeds are up and the loads are quite high. I think Firestone have done a tremendous job from the test until where we've come to right now. You're going to have to run the high line at some point and probably quite a lot during the race, so I think that will probably play out a little better. But you know, I still think that the last 20 laps of every stint, 50, 55 laps is going to be pretty interesting and maybe even earlier, especially in the earlier stints at the start of the race with the track temp up.

But yeah, I don't know, it's hard to really comment because I think there's a lot of unknowns. We haven't really run here a whole lot. The practice session was very short, and nobody got to run a lot of laps.