

IndyCar Media Conference

Sunday July 9, 2017

Ryan Hunter-Reay Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: We'll go ahead and begin with our Iowa Corn 300 Verizon IndyCar Series post-race press conference. Joined now by Ryan Hunter-Reay, who finished third in this afternoon's race, his fifth podium finish in 10 starts at Iowa Speedway, also the 37th podium of Ryan's career. I know it's hot outside. You're probably a bit tired, but take us through your race and working up to the front throughout the afternoon.

RYAN HUNTER-REAY: Yeah, it was busy. But when we showed up here this weekend, like last year, we had a really ill-handling car. Felt like it just always wanted to turn around, get into the wall. Within an hour and a half of the practice time that we had, we made some good changes to it, especially in the warmup. And we made the right changes going into the race. So credit to the engineering team of the 28 car. We definitely got a good setup on it.

We spent the whole race catching up on front wing. Had too little front wing in it, which is kind of a byproduct of searching around for setups to land on. These cars are so sensitive here. You can dial the car out so easily. You can miss the setup by just a little bit and be way off the pace. I was very thankful, especially after last year where I was a fish out of water at a track that I absolutely love. This was nice to be back in the rhythm and going from 15th to third.

Hats off to the 28 DHL crew. They did great stops today, put us where we needed to, and I had fun. Definitely it was nice to finish a race without some other variable interfering.

THE MODERATOR: I know it's not a win, but another podium finish here at Iowa Speedway where you've been very successful, including a win during your championship-winning season in 2012. When you're coming into Iowa Speedway, do you think to yourself, I feel like I'm going to have a good weekend because I have that track record there? Does it give you more confidence heading into a racetrack like this?

RYAN HUNTER-REAY: It did, yeah, until last year when we got here and we were just absolutely terrible. But I love this place and I know what I need from the car. That's one thing. I'm very certain what I need from it. I can describe exactly to the engineers what we need, and I know where the target is, and that's where I need to be.

And then once we get into a racing situation, if I can have a car where I can put it in different lanes, this is one of my favorite racetracks. We just didn't have the speed today for the competition, straight-line speed. I had some great runs on even J.R. there the last few laps, and I just couldn't do anything with it. But I think third is a really good result today coming from 15th and knowing the weekend that we had last year.

Q. I wanted to know if you had stopped even earlier kind of near the time where J.R. stopped, do you think you might have had enough to beat Helio for the win?

RYAN HUNTER-REAY: It's tough to say. They seemed like they had too much straight-line speed. I was flat out and he was driving away from me. So I don't think so. I think it was their race this weekend.

The problem with stopping earlier is the degradation is so big, right; like J.R. stopped earlier and he was another three or four laps, I was going to be giving him a really hard time. That's the kind of gamble you play. You can come in and get the reward up front of going quick, but you're going to have to pay for it at the end of the stint, and that's what we were kind of contemplating.

But it was good to get by Will there on the strategy. We pitted when Helio did, a lap earlier than Will, I think, and ended up getting by him. It was tough out there. With the track temp as high as it is being a day race, once you get to about lap 30 or 35 on tires, it's like running on an ice skate rink with sneakers on. You want your own piece of real estate, and it's very -- it becomes very difficult, especially at the end. You feel like you've taken off your wings and are just sliding all around.

Q. You mentioned the setup; the car was much better in racing trim?

RYAN HUNTER-REAY: Yeah, the car was actually good in qualifying, too. We had a little bit of a speed issue we needed to sort out, but I was at or near the same trim level as the teammates and flat out and didn't go anywhere. Need to figure that out, but we made the changes in warmup, and that's where it started to actually become comfortable, for the first time in a year and a half started to become comfortable here. The test we had here was knife edge, so it was nice to get a car that I could start really hustling.

Q. How was it trying to keep it on the track?

RYAN HUNTER-REAY: You know, when you're on newer tires, maybe lap 1 to 20, it was manageable. You could put the car wherever you wanted. You could come up on a car that was a half second slower to three quarters of a second slower than you on older tires, and it was very difficult to get by, and you were very susceptible to the washout. If he comes across your bow, I know that happened with J.R., but if you come up on a car, you can't really figure out what lane they're going to pick, so then you commit for a lane and he goes for it, and then it's a huge penalty because you're just sliding around. The downforce is, I think -- it was fun out there today, but these races used to be a lot better, I think. The downforce is a bit light for how hot it was. It was light.

I mean, you got halfway into a tire stint and even the fast cars couldn't go anywhere. Am I right? We saw Helio, Will, even you were stuck behind cars that were much slower. I'd love to come back here at night. I think I've said that about 35 times.

Q. You've come here before where you had the best car in the field and you've come here before where it was like driving with a boat anchor. How self-satisfying is this for you to be able to, no matter what the conditions, come out of here and be able to manhandle the car around this track and still get a podium?

RYAN HUNTER-REAY: It is nice. It's rewarding, especially after the season -- all the misfortune we've had. It's been one of those seasons where we just can't seem to get a break or -- like I've been saying, I just want -- I don't need good luck, I don't need bad luck, I just want none at all. I just want no variables to come into play that are outside of our control, and that's what we had today, so it was nice to finish on the podium, and appreciate the remark. It's nice to be on the podium here after such a hard year last year.

THE MODERATOR: Ryan, congratulations.