

# IndyCar Media Conference

Friday September 1, 2017

## Scott Dixon

## Will Power

### Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: We'll get started with our Verizon IndyCar Series post practice press conference. Joined now by the driver of the No. 9 NTT Data Honda for Chip Ganassi Racing, Scott Dixon, a four-time winner here at Watkins Glen, also a pole winner here at Watkins Glen International.

Scott, take us through your day. Fastest overall in practice, and continuing your strong streak here at Watkins Glen.

SCOTT DIXON: Yeah, we had a good test here a couple weeks ago. We probably didn't have the speed at the test we were quite hoping for. Backed up on a few adjustments we made, kind of understood a little bit better where I think we went wrong.

First practice went good. We had a really strong car. We only ran one set of tires. On our quickest two laps we had a bit of traffic, didn't get to show the potential. Car was really good on blacks. We changed a couple things when we went to the reds. I think we missed the balance there. I was on a lap to equal our black time, but not as good as maybe some of the others on the reds. Little bit of work to do there for the weekend.

But all in all, I think Chip Ganassi Racing, they brought some strong cars here and some cars that hopefully come tomorrow, Sunday, can be in contention fighting for the win.

THE MODERATOR: I'm sure this is a difficult question to answer. But you're less than a 10th away from your current track record here. What is it that makes you so good here at Watkins Glen?

SCOTT DIXON: I think it's another combination. It's a track where the team has been very strong, too, similar to Mid-Ohio I guess up until this year where we had a few issues there. But, you know, these high-speed road courses. I would definitely say the Honda aero kit is probably not ideal for a track like this, much similar to what we had at Road America. But it doesn't hurt us as bad as maybe the high downforce at Mid-Ohio, some of those places.

Expect the competition to be tough tomorrow. But the tires are always changing. Everything is always evolving. The basic setup that the team brings here

works well with my driving style and definitely well with the track.

THE MODERATOR: In all seven of your starts here, you've started in the top five. Great qualifying position. But surprisingly in four wins only one pole. Is that something you look at? This can't be that difficult a place to pass if you've been able to make your way to the front.

SCOTT DIXON: Yeah, you know, I think it's a track that enables a lot of maybe some differences in strategy, too. It's a track you can save some fuel and maybe extend your window, jump someone in the pits. It's a track that if you can trim out to a pretty significant level, it can aid you in the race with being able to pass people on the straights.

But each year I find it changes. A little bit has changed that you have to catch up with, maybe make exception for. But I think our cars on the long runs here have always been strong. This weekend will be interesting, especially Sunday if we get bouts of weather, maybe a bit of rain.

You want to start at the front. You want to start on the front row, if possible. We haven't done that all the time, but last year was definitely much easier starting from the pole.

THE MODERATOR: Questions for Scott.

#### **Q. Snowsuit on with a coat over the top.**

SCOTT DIXON: It's a lightweight jacket (smiling). It's cold out, man.

#### **Q. The temperatures, are the tires being affected by that? Taking longer to get up to temp?**

SCOTT DIXON: Actually, surprisingly the tires come up really quickly. I was surprised going out this morning, and I know a couple of the teammates, too, were talking about it. But, yeah, it was surprisingly grippy right out of the box. I don't know whether it's just the natural grip that the new seal has. But, yeah, the tires come extremely quick. You're not far off in your first or second time. You're pretty close. So they come in real fast.

#### **Q. Are they falling off then?**

SCOTT DIXON: I think everybody is different. We've been overhitting the rears a little bit. It's different in practices where you're trying to get optimum pace the

whole time, trying to push the car further than it goes, than a race pace. I think that's quite normal for us.

It's still a funny situation where I don't think we're seeing that much difference from reds to blacks, or vice versa. A lot of the tracks, like Barber or Mid-Ohio, you can see almost up to a second, a good 6/10ths. At least with our cars, we haven't seen that. It's pretty tight.

**Q. What is the ideal delta there from reds to blacks, in your opinion?**

SCOTT DIXON: I think you want a second or more, and you want them to fall off a lot quicker. Some of the tracks we go to, the red is just preferable, you run it the whole time. Road America was like that. Then you go to a place like Detroit where you really want to get the reds off as soon as possible.

It's hard. You've got a tire, a manufacturer, that's trying to make a tire that's got so many different surfaces that they have to try and get out of very similar groups. But I think that makes for good racing when they fall off quicker, so...

**Q. You've won so much here, could you literally drive this track in your sleep?**

SCOTT DIXON: No. I don't know, just really enjoy it. It's a fun place, man. It's extremely fast. It's definitely some pretty high-risk situations. I think when you're looking at the bus stop, turn five, even going into turn six, the track is just surrounded.

For me, the tracks of current day are nothing like these. It's a lot of fun to come here. I think very fortunate for all IndyCar and the competitors to come back to a circuit like this.

**Q. Arguably prior to last Saturday night, the pass of the year was when you got Josef on that restart at Road America. Where here can you get a rise-up moment like that on a passing opportunity?**

SCOTT DIXON: Yeah, I think the restarts here are pretty tricky. Then you can have some pretty intense moments, side-by-side going into the bus stop. That's always a very tough part.

If you're going to have a car that's very good through turn 11, go run down into turn one. Same out of seven into eight. There's a lot of good passing opportunities here. I find that a lot of teams try vastly different aero configurations. You have guys that are good through the corners, slow on the straights. I think that mixes it up pretty good.

**Q. Considering you had a different package here last year, how much of a setup baseline could you use from last year? How much would you need to change it up from last year by comparison?**

SCOTT DIXON: It's hard to really gauge that. I think your basic setup stays fairly similar. But, you know, the

tires change. Tows are pretty critical. Cambers are critical to the tire. Basic setup I would say is pretty similar, then you just kind of fine tune it.

The aero kit it obviously totally different for us. We're still trying to get through data to try to figure out the best combination. But there's still a pretty big diff in configuration for a track like this.

**Q. Last couple of weeks you've had a couple of teammates get called in early. Does that concern you some? With championship rivals out there for you, if they cannot finish the race, they can't take points away to help you?**

SCOTT DIXON: That's above my pay grade, man. Ask Chip.

**Q. You're racing against the Penskes. They have, frankly, the opportunity to do some things to take points from you, where they could help Josef. At what point does that become team orders and at what point is that still sporting?**

SCOTT DIXON: I don't know. I think we see it quite often these days, different formulas. It's not easy to achieve. I think it's quite difficult to pull off, you know, well.

Yeah, I don't know. I think it can go both ways. I've been in both situations where the team we're competing against, we've been taken out, or it's helped us. Typically, Roger and Cindric let those guys race. We'll have to see if that's how it plays out.

I think for us, the biggest thing we've got to do is just focus on our race, go out there, try and win. If we can win, that takes care of a lot of situations. Yeah, I can't control any of that, so there's no point really thinking about it.

THE MODERATOR: Scott, thank you. Good luck tomorrow.

SCOTT DIXON: Thanks, guys.

THE MODERATOR: We'll continue, joined now by Will Power, driver of the No. 12 Verizon Chevrolet for Team Penske. Finished second fastest overall in today's practice sessions. One win, one pole here in three starts at Watkins Glen.

Will, take us through practice today and some things you might have been working on to get ready for qualifying tomorrow.

WILL POWER: Yeah, we got a good taste of the reds to see how they were. Yeah, it's a tough call when you see Dixon go as fast on his blacks as he did on his reds. Maybe we didn't get a good read on the blacks.

Yeah, made some changes from the first session. Feel like definitely headed in the right direction. Yeah, we'll

see what happens tomorrow.

THE MODERATOR: Questions for Will.

**Q. What is it about this track that you seem to have taken a liking to?**

WILL POWER: Yeah, it's a very nice track, very high commitment in this car in particular because of the downforce. Can be scary around this joint because of the speed you got to carry in some of those corners, like the last corner, the carousel. The carousel is basically wide open.

Yeah, it's fun. Consistent grip. I don't know, I'm disappointed if I'm not quick at any track really, so yeah, feel all right.

**Q. Next year they're taking a little bit of that downforce away. Is that going to make this track less challenging or challenging in a different way?**

WILL POWER: Yeah, it will be challenging in a different way. You know, it won't be as high commitment. It will be a bit more, you know, understanding where to lift and all that sort of thing. Yeah, it will be I'm sure a nice compromise. I think low downforce puts it in the driver's hands.

**Q. Talk a little bit about your rivalry with Scott. Does it bother you at all that he just nicked you out a little bit? Do you feel that kind of friendly rivalry with him between Penske, Ganassi, Australia, New Zealand?**

WILL POWER: No, it's actually funny. I don't think I've really ever battled Dixon in a championship, although this year, yeah, the last race put me in a bad position. If he nicked me tomorrow by a little bit, yeah, I would be just disappointed because I'd want to be on pole.

Yeah, he's a great competitor. He's very clean to race. We've been racing against each other for the last 10 years. Have a lot of respect there.

**Q. When you see passes like what Josef did to Simon last week, what does that say about how you guys can race at Team Penske, being able to force the issue like that if the opportunity arises?**

WILL POWER: Yeah, there is no team orders there. The only thing the team asks is you don't take any teammates out. We're able to race, which is a great situation. You get four competitive cars. We learn a lot off each other, then we race hard out on the track.

**Q. You brought up that your championship hunt seemed to take a bit of a hit in Gateway. I know you're a believer in that anything can happen mentality. How are you approaching this weekend in general?**

WILL POWER: Yeah, when you think about it, if you won the last two races, it would be like winning three races. You'd be pretty close there. It obviously depends how it all plays out with other guys. But, you

know, if it's mathematically possible, it's possible. The best thing for me to do is what I'm focusing on doing and going to do my best, which is to win the last two races.

**Q. You've never raced here before in the wet. Have you tested before in the wet? How much passing is possible here in the wet? Does it increase your chances of pass by lengthening the braking zones?**

WILL POWER: Yeah, we did test here in the wet two years ago. But I think it's still very difficult to pass when it's wet around here. I think the best opportunity is when everyone first gets out there. Once everyone starting getting their braking zones and all that, it's still difficult.

Yeah, it will be tough around here in the wet with all the spray and everything. It's still fast, still very fast.

**Q. I mean this with all due respect, but there's been a few times after races when you've been pretty upset and have said things that maybe you wish you hadn't said. At any point did you listen to what Simon said last week at Gateway and go, I can't believe he said that?**

WILL POWER: Actually, I don't know what he said. I haven't read any of the stuff. Not sure what he said.

But, you know, Josef and Simon are both wanting to win races and the championship. So it's just a heated battle. That's how it goes, you know. There is no problem. I mean, they're good friends still. They'll still race hard, like no issues there at all.

THE MODERATOR: Will, thank you. Good luck tomorrow.

WILL POWER: Thank you.