

# IndyCar Media Conference

Sunday September 3, 2017

## Alexander Rossi

## Scott Dixon

## Ryan Hunter-Reay

### Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: We are joined by the second- and third-place finishers of the IndyCar Grand Prix at The Glen, Scott Dixon and Ryan Hunter-Reay.

Ryan, I know that the team was bummed not to get into the Firestone Fast Six yesterday, just missing it by a very small margin. It seems like you were able to turn that into a really successful day.

RYAN HUNTER-REAY: Yeah, we had a pretty good racecar. I went to bed last night, woke up this morning, went all through warmup thinking this is going to be a wet race. You kind of get your mind ready for that.

We went with a hybrid setup of wet and dry, a little bit in between. Ultimately ended up taking away a little bit of front grip for us in the race.

All in all, the car was pretty good. Didn't have the pace for these two at the end. I was giving it everything it had at the end, but didn't quite have it. Compared to everybody else out there today, we were quite a bit quicker than them. I think the three of us were in kind of a class of our own.

It was nice to translate that into a result. The rain that was for sure to come never came, so... It ended up just rubbering in, the track changing. Strange how the yellows fell. Alex, Scott and I had to come through the field a couple times just because of how the off-strategy cars were. It made it so we really had to work for it, that's for sure.

In the end, just came up short. Big congrats to Alexander. He and the 98 team were on form all weekend.

THE MODERATOR: Scott, with everything going on around you in the race, you were able to start second and finish where you started. How were you able to maintain that consistency throughout the race?

SCOTT DIXON: Yeah, it was definitely pretty crazy. The start, we kind of got run wide there, dropped back to fourth. By the time we got to the bus stop, we were back in second.

Then first stop, I actually locked the rears, and it didn't downshift. I almost stalled the car, got in sideways. They couldn't fuel the car, that was interesting. Luckily the yellow came there to kind of even that out.

Then we had another fumble in the pits, lost about five spots, I think. Had to come back through. I think throughout the course of the day, we kind of missed the yellows where some of the others were able to catch some.

Car was fast. We passed a lot of people. I think at the end we were maybe as quick as Rossi, had we had clean air. Huge credit to those guys. They did a hell of a job. It's always fun to win here at Watkins Glen. I'm sure he's going to definitely enjoy that.

But for us, the points chase definitely closed the gap. I think down to three points now, which makes it pretty interesting. Have to bring our A game to Sonoma and see what we can take away.

THE MODERATOR: You entered the weekend 31 points behind, now it's down to three. How aware were you late in the race when Josef had the issue?

SCOTT DIXON: Only before we went green -- that was the yellow then. But, yeah, the last restart, I think Mike came on and said that the 2 car had (indiscernible). They said, Make sure you get to the end here and don't have any issues and we should be okay.

That's all I knew about it. Didn't go into detail. I knew there was something in the pits there.

THE MODERATOR: Questions.

**Q. Once they told you that Josef was out, did that enter into your thinking as to how hard you chased Rossi?**

SCOTT DIXON: We chased him pretty hard. It was kind of tough. We were in dirty air most of the day. Once we got kind of clear of that one pack, we could get up almost a second. Amazing how fast we could go through turn five and six, especially that last complex of eight and nine as well.

I don't know. It's funny. We had lots of little things going on. We couldn't use overtake for about the first four laps after a restart, it would go straight into an overboost. That was kind of odd as well. (Indiscernible) third gear than any other gear.

But, no, I was trying as hard as I could with what I had. I think he had almost double OT than I did for the end. Tried to stay with him as best I could to capitalize at the end.

**Q. Ryan, you said a couple minutes ago that you were thinking it should be a rain race.**

**Nevertheless, at the start some parts of the track seemed to be very damp. Was this an issue during the start or after the first two laps?**

RYAN HUNTER-REAY: There was a couple spots that were pretty damp, but it was brief. Just had to get through it. Seemed like everybody dived in right after the start, so...

It was a little sporty there for a lap or two on cold sticker slick tires getting through those sections. But it seemed like everybody weathered it just fine and got through it.

It's always fun when you're dealing with a track that's changing conditions like that because you have to search around. You can get big advantages or you could lose a lot, big disadvantages. It makes it fun.

Yeah, it wasn't overcomplicated.

**Q. Tell me about the next two weeks heading into Sonoma. You won a couple championships, know what this is like. Pressure, three points up. What do you think Josef is going through knowing he just gave up a pretty good advantage?**

SCOTT DIXON: I've been in situations like that. I don't know, tonight I'll probably have a couple beers, chill out, take the kids to school tomorrow morning, then get in some training.

But yeah, I think you just got to treat next week as another race. I think you can't overcomplicate it. Obviously we want to win it. There's a lot on the line. But, you know, I think if you overthink things too much, then it ends up being a very bad thing.

I don't know. I've never raced Josef really in a championship like this. It's not just the two of us. I haven't seen the points clearly yet, but I imagine Helio is through, Pagenaud is still there as well. With double points, you can have a pretty hefty swing, as we found out last year. We had a really bad race (indiscernible).

I don't know. We'll take it as it comes. Try to get the most out of the test next week. I know Penske is testing there this week as well. Anything can happen, as we saw today.

**Q. After you all dashed in for slicks, Ryan, you went to blacks, as did Rossi, I think possibly Marco. Throughout the weekend, we've heard there wasn't a lot of difference between blacks and reds with most cars. Did that hand you an**

**advantage or disadvantage going to blacks when everyone else was on reds?**

RYAN HUNTER-REAY: I think the choice would have been to go to reds at that point. I was a little disappointed that we were on blacks actually. The reds just got up to speed. It took the guys on blacks another lap or two before they could get into it, whereas the guys on the reds were into it right away.

**Q. Scott, did you feel there was a big difference between reds and blacks? Throughout qualifying, you said there was not much.**

SCOTT DIXON: Yeah, I think with the cooler conditions today, it kind of being a little bit damp, I think the reds, especially in the slow-speed corners, eight, nine, even seven a little bit. I know when I was around Max Chilton, at one point he was on reds, he was getting racy on the slow-speed corners. I found that even in qualifying trim, it was the high speed I couldn't use the reds as much as the blacks, or it wouldn't hang in there as much.

But, yeah, same as Ryan. The red (indiscernible) couple laps.

**Q. Ryan, taking into account the résumés and the seasons of guys going for the championship with one left, who is going to win it?**

RYAN HUNTER-REAY: Yeah, this guy has been through it a lot, obviously. It's going to be tight. I've been there in the same position. I've been trailing by a few points, then winning the championship by a few points. It's going to be tough. It's going to be tight.

When you come down to a road course race like that, it's anybody's guess where the yellows are going to fall. A stressful weekend for all involved.

I wouldn't want to be going up against him on a tight lead like that, so... It's going to be an interesting weekend, for sure.

**Q. With your teammate winning today, he kept himself mathematically eligible in this championship. What advice can you give him in this situation to go into Sonoma?**

RYAN HUNTER-REAY: Who is that?

**Q. Rossi, by winning today.**

RYAN HUNTER-REAY: That is the mathematically eligible, if some of the guys score zero points?

**Q. He's 95 back.**

RYAN HUNTER-REAY: That's if you don't start. For him not to start, the guy would have to be -- some force of nature would have to occur, so he's out of the championship. An earthquake, which we've had there before. Falls into the crack, the race starts afterwards, yes, I'll give him good advice (laughter).

**Q. Given the performance today by Andretti**

**Autosport, how much are you looking forward to Sonoma?**

RYAN HUNTER-REAY: Yeah, we've been right there. This guy has given us a headache the last few times we've been there. We've been very strong at Sonoma in the past. We had a good test there. Hopefully we can go back and continue on this form, you know, try and get that first win of the season. That's the goal. Thought we might have had a shot at it today, but we'll have to wait till Sonoma to get another shot at it.

**Q. Compare the Chevy versus the Honda packages going into Sonoma. Where do you think there might be an advantage or disadvantage?**

RYAN HUNTER-REAY: I can't say Sonoma. I was shocked here it went the way it did because of the long straights and everything else.

SCOTT DIXON: Sonoma will be high downforce, so it would fall the other way. I think it's similar to Road America where you can get closer to the advantage that they have.

But I don't know. Sonoma can be interesting, too. I know Andretti guys have been extremely strong there in the past. I think mechanical grip is (indiscernible). Few hundred pounds of downforce.

**Q. There was a lot of passing today. I know somewhat that came about because people had mixed levels of downforce expecting the rain. Were you surprised what was happening, passing coming out of nine?**

RYAN HUNTER-REAY: It was definitely racy out there because of the different downforce levels. It was fun, though. We were on the right side of it with what we picked. It was a good time.

Some guys out there that were pretty heavy.

**Q. Scott, as a four-time champion, there's a saying in the NFL: If you're going to win the Super Bowl, you have to go through New England. Almost like in IndyCar, if someone is going to win a championship, they have to battle with Scott Dixon. How much pride do you take in that?**

SCOTT DIXON: I don't know. I don't really look at it that way. I look at we're grasping at straws and trying to get another championship. Competition is tough, man. I'm very fortunate to be with a great team. We've definitely had some good runs. But we haven't always capitalized on it.

Come Sunday night in two weeks, we'll be happy or not, I guess.

**Q. Scott, it looked like all weekend the Honda cars were a little faster than the Chevys, Team Penske, all that. I was wondering what you thought entering this race, also given the possibility there was going to be weather, what kind of preparation**

**did you have for this race?**

SCOTT DIXON: We had missed a couple of the tests I think. I was in Le Mans when it was going on. We were actually fortunate to come back a few weeks ago to do a test, make up one that we switched from Pocono.

I think these are one of the few tracks that we come where we can kind of get away with a pretty similar baseline setup. A lot of big changes coming in the winter moving back from one manufacturer back to Honda. Working out the aero kit has been demanding. A team like Ganassi, they definitely get to the bottom of that pretty quickly.

I think that's been most of the preparation, is just making sure we can kind of get the car as close to what we had it last year. The car was very dominant last year. But both cars act very different. I guess coming for the race, hadn't been testing, some of the other Chevys hadn't been testing here either. We didn't know where we were going to stand.

Same preparation for every race.

**Q. Ryan, this is a first win for Andretti Autosport on a road course since you won in Barber in 2014. Do you feel some pressure come off you and the team now that you've finally ended this long streak or are you kind of upset you didn't win?**

RYAN HUNTER-REAY: It's nice to see the turnaround the team has. Last year as a team here, we all qualified 16th or worse. We were the worst team in the paddock last year. Heck of a turnaround. Great job on that. Happy for the 98 team. Alex did a great job.

'14 since our last road course win, that's too long. No pressure relief at all. Got to get on it. Looking forward to the challenge of 2018 car coming up.

THE MODERATOR: Gentlemen, congratulations. Thank you very much.

SCOTT DIXON: Thank you.

RYAN HUNTER-REAY: Thank you.

THE MODERATOR: We'll continue with our post race press conference, joined now by the winner of the IndyCar Grand Prix at The Glen, Alexander Rossi.

Alexander, so many strange, strange parallels to your last win last year. You won a race, had a few fuel issues, here you are victorious at Watkins Glen International, another iconic IndyCar track. Take us through your race and ultimately what led to your victory today.

ALEXANDER ROSSI: Well, first of all, there are a lot of parallels, which is ironic or interesting. But I think the difference is today we had the dominant car, whereas I

guess in the 100th you could argue we didn't have a dominant car. We had a good car, but it wasn't the dominant car.

Today I was finally able to prove what I've been talking about the past month, two months, in terms of the step forward Andretti Autosports has taken. We have the package in the car and the people to be at the front. Just had things go wrong and we weren't able to execute fully.

But today was that day. Despite the fuel issue, like you said, which was pretty unlucky, it came around. It came to us by getting that yellow flag to get our track position back. From there it was a straight-out fight between Scott and I. The NAPA Auto Parts Andretti Honda was on the same level as him all weekend. It was just about making sure I did my job at that last restart and was able to hold him off.

THE MODERATOR: Take us through that fuel issue. You came into the pits, there was something wrong with the hose?

ALEXANDER ROSSI: I don't know exactly what happened. I just know they didn't get all the fuel in the car, so we only did six, seven laps instead of the full stint, which would have really hurt us, but then we got that yellow a couple laps later. It all equaled out in the end.

THE MODERATOR: Questions for Alexander.

**Q. Last year when you won the Indy 500, you didn't know what to do in Victory Lane. Did you have that problem today?**

ALEXANDER ROSSI: It's different, but yeah (laughter). It was the same thing when I got pole yesterday. Like it was just weird, right? But we've ticked the boxes now. The next time I win the 500, I know what to do. Next time I get pole, I know what to do. The next time I win a race that's not the 500, I know what to do. I feel like we're good.

I feel like the learning curve should be over, unless -- I guess if it all works out that I win a championship one day, that will be another experience. But I'll pay attention to the winner this year and mimic.

**Q. Last year you formed a deep bond with Bryan Herta. This year Bryan Herta moved over to Marco's pits. Rob Edwards took over race strategy. Jeremy Milless was your engineer. To have your first victory with the two of them, how important is that for the future?**

ALEXANDER ROSSI: It's critical for the future. It's getting another monkey off our back. Toronto was getting that podium kind of out of the way. We were able to get the pole out of the way and the race win as well. The confidence of the whole 98 team is at an all time high. It's important to come at this time of the

year. Obviously we have one race left, but as we start to look and prepare and look for 2018, to be able to end the season on such a high note is pretty special going into the off-season.

**Q. After you all dashed into the pits at the end of lap one, Ryan was saying he was disappointed to discover himself on blacks. Did you feel the same way, especially when Helio was able to get around you? Did you know you had the car to catch him again once the blacks came in?**

ALEXANDER ROSSI: I was a little disappointed. But there was obviously a global greater picture that the team was looking at. I guess 'disappointed' is not the right word. It was really hard on the out lap because it was still pretty damp at the time. Helio got up to speed quite a bit quicker than I did.

I think I was the only car really that was able to hang with him and Scott on reds with the primary blacks. That was confidence building. I was staying in touch with him, the reds had a massive advantage over the blacks, which we hadn't seen over the course of the weekend. I knew when I put on the reds, it was going to be game time. Unfortunately I didn't get the full stint.

**Q. Since you are in IndyCar, you had also experience on oval, Indy 500 win, et cetera. Your background with F1, race experience in Europe, do you think your road experience was helpful for this win here?**

ALEXANDER ROSSI: Yeah, 100%. I mean, this wasn't anything where throughout the race I was kind of second guessing what I was doing. It was truly just a natural 60 laps-ish, whatever it was, 60 laps, and it wasn't something where I was white knuckling like I sometimes am on short ovals. Speedways I'm pretty confident. The short ovals I think are still my weakness if I had to be self-critical.

Yeah, I think this track really suited my driving style. As I said before, it's fast, it's smooth, you can get into a good rhythm. That was really just a second nature thing for me. When I was able to get in clean air, race people, do starts, restarts, it was all stuff that I've been doing for quite some time.

**Q. Tell us what it's like to cross the finish line, take a checkered flag at full throttle, not having to clutch and coast, but actually accelerate to get a win.**

ALEXANDER ROSSI: Even on overtake crossing the line, it was just cool. It was different. Obviously winning the 500 is enormous on so many levels. But to be able to do this today, to have a 12-lap shootout against Scott, in the same equipment, starting 1-2 on a restart and being able to go and prove that I can beat him is pretty cool as well.

**Q. You also said a couple times this year that the potential was there. Silly things, misfortune, bad**

**luck, a lot of little things keeping you out of being where you are today. Tell me about getting past that barrier. Does it feel like the black cloud is behind?**

ALEXANDER ROSSI: It almost happened again. With the fuel issue, I thought we were pretty much done. We were fortunate, like I said, to have that yellow come out to where it negated those little things that had gone wrong.

I would never say there was a black cloud. I just would say that we weren't fully maximizing our potential. It wasn't necessarily human error, it was just circumstance. It's, again, another step internally and subconsciously proving to everyone on the team that we can do it and we have the capability. Will hopefully make the next wins and podiums (indiscernible).

**Q. If I'm not mistaken, you arrived the last one for the briefing, now finishing first. Is this a superstition from you?**

ALEXANDER ROSSI: No. My coffee machine broke, so I was trying to fix it before I came to the drivers meeting. I'm not a superstitious person, so... But thanks for noticing. It's like in the school roll call: Here.

**Q. Can you confirm that the monkey came off your shoulder after the Indy 500, the victory was out of the blue, too early or something like this. Now the monkey came off the shoulder. How do you feel, more confidence? Finally after Toronto, two podium, new a breakthrough, the first road circuit, what is the next goal for you?**

ALEXANDER ROSSI: Well, no, I think the month of May was our validation. I was very, very adamant that I wanted to be quick in qualifying at the Speedway to prove to the naysayers who said we won by a fluke. We're just trying to be competitive in every race and try to win.

In terms of what's next, it's only Sonoma. It's a double points race. It's valuable from a mathematical standpoint as the 500. We had a strong test there. We were very strong there last year. It's probably one of our strongest tracks outside of Indianapolis.

I have high expectations. We need to really make sure that, again, we tick all the boxes throughout the weekend. Hopefully we can climb a couple spots in the championship.

**Q. A lot of the passing today was put down to the fact there was so much variation in downforce levels. What did you go for? Was your team expecting rain?**

ALEXANDER ROSSI: We were expecting rain. I was still pretty quick. We were pretty light this morning. We had tested here last year in August. We were pretty light as well. This place has such a high surface grip, I wasn't of the mindset of downforce

(indiscernible).

**Q. Did Rob talk you down on the radio after the fuel issue? Kind of how different is he in a situation like this?**

ALEXANDER ROSSI: I really wasn't upset after the fuel issue. I was upset when the yellow came out and I couldn't get around Takuma because he was having an issue. That I was frustrated about because I was concerned that I wasn't going to catch the back of the pack.

The actual fuel issue, it's not the first time that something has gone a bit sideways in the race. I knew there was a lot of time left, and I wasn't letting myself get frustrated.

In terms of how Rob is different than Bryan, he's just another calm voice on the radio, a voice of reason. Very supportive and encouraging, very similar to Bryan.

**Q. What happened on the third lap after you changed tires on the early pit stop where it looked like you kind of lost grip a little bit, then Helio got by you?**

ALEXANDER ROSSI: Well, at the time turn nine was still wet. I was on blacks and he was on reds. Just had a slide that carried on through the moisture there, and he was just able to get hooked up sooner than me. So it wasn't anything too dramatic, just the tires that came in probably two or three laps faster than mine.

**Q. How treacherous was it out there at the start where you had slick tires on a still drying track?**

ALEXANDER ROSSI: It was fine. I would say the only hard part was turn nine. Turn nine has been a pain in the ass all weekend, if I'm honest with you. The whole rest of the track (indiscernible) dry lines, you could build temperature in the slicks. But it wasn't too bad. You just had to tiptoe through nine a little bit.

THE MODERATOR: Alex, congratulations.

ALEXANDER ROSSI: Thank you.