

IndyCar Media Conference

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Scott Dixon

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: Now we'll turn it over and welcome Scott Dixon. Scott is second in the championship just three points behind Josef Newgarden. Scott is seeking his fifth title, which would leave him behind only AJ Foyt, who has seven, for the most championships in IndyCar history. Welcome, Scott.

SCOTT DIXON: Good afternoon.

THE MODERATOR: You've been saying for a number of weeks that you just wanted to be within striking distance heading into Sonoma, and now that deficit is just three points as we mentioned. It's right where you want to be. How do you feel heading out there next week?

SCOTT DIXON: Yeah, pretty good. I think you'd always prefer to be leading by a healthy margin. But I think with the ups and downs and misfortunes we've had throughout the season, I'm somewhat surprised that we're still within striking distance for the points race, especially with Texas, Indy, Long Beach and St. Pete where we could have had a ton of points through those four alone. Definitely it makes for an exciting championship last race, which is what everybody expects, I think, out of the Verizon IndyCar Series and how is always is. But yeah, it's pretty tight. I think especially for the four of us, and then also with Will, who still has a very good chance with the double points system.

Q. With you only being three points behind Josef as opposed to being 47 points behind Juan Pablo in 2015, do you feel like you're in a more relaxed mindset being that you don't have nearly as much of a point deficit to make up in the last race?

SCOTT DIXON: No. Well, no, I definitely don't feel relaxed. I don't feel relaxed going into any race. I think the goal is still the same every time. It's to win the race first, and ideally if that happens, it takes care of the rest, especially with how tight the points are between Josef and I.

But you know, it still shows that obviously that's when it's possible, and that makes it very eligible for four of us that can have that swing.

I wouldn't say that it makes me feel any more relaxed or any more confident. There's still a lot on the line, and it takes a lot to beat the competition that we have

in the Verizon IndyCar Series. It's a better position than what we were in 2015, but that guarantees you pretty much nothing. It's good to be in the hunt and have a tight gap right there, but we're still going to have to do our best to beat four of the closest competitors right there.

Q. Scott, the general consensus from most drivers at Watkins Glen is that track was made for IndyCars. So what's the consensus about Sonoma? Is it more technical or Mickey Mouse? How do you go about attacking that place?

SCOTT DIXON: Yeah, Sonoma is definitely a difficult place. It's quite low grip. The tires, last year at least in qualifying, you pretty much had a one-lap window, maybe two if you're lucky, so it's hard to get the front tires in for the first lap. By the time the fronts come in, the rears are kind of on their way out. It's got some pretty interesting low-speed corners, especially Turn 7. It's very easy to lose a ton of lap time in 7, also in 9A and B. So yeah, it's a track that, you know, requires a fair bit of compromise because you have some pretty high-speed, high-loading corners, especially on the approach to 2, going through 6 at the carousel.

But yeah, I think it's a very worthy IndyCar circuit. I think it's a fantastic spot for a Verizon IndyCar Series championship finale, especially for spectators, too, because it's one of those circuits that from most vantage points you have a very good advantage of being able to see the whole circuit.

Yeah, for me it's probably one of the toughest circuits to get right, to be honest, and it requires a lot of different thinking, I think, on the approach to setup at what we would typically do at a lot of other tracks.

Q. Winning a fifth championship, what does that mean to you? Do you ever think about those types of things, the history of IndyCar and your very prominent place in it?

SCOTT DIXON: It means that maybe Chip would hire me again, so that would be a good positive. Yeah, you know, I think as I've said before, I think with the stats and championships, you know, it's something to -- maybe when you exit, I think you can look back on and hopefully you're proud of what you've achieved with the team I've been lucky to be assigned with 16 years plus now.

You know, I don't know. Five sounds great. Sounds better than four, so I'd absolutely love to get a fifth

championship. But there's a lot of people we have to go through to make that possible. But yeah, when you start to look at those lists and how we're approaching the top parts of those lists, you know, it feels great. But my focus is definitely trying to win the race, and hopefully we can look at those later in life.

Q. Looking at how Penske qualified one, two, three, four last year at Sonoma and also the fact that they have testing this week and then you all get an open test next week, would you say that the fact that three of them are actually going to be squabbling over the title themselves and one of them just wants to win the race, would you say that that actually serves as an advantage for you because -- I'm not saying that they're going to take each other out, but it could get fairly desperate there, and that may help compensate for the fact that they are traditionally very strong there?

SCOTT DIXON: Yeah, it's definitely a factor that it's a circuit that they're very good at. Yeah, that would be ideal if they could take care of each other. But you can't rely on that again. We're going to have to definitely bring our A game. I know when we won it in '15 we had a mishap in qualifying and ended up ninth and were able to still storm through the field, and we actually picked up a couple in pit lane, but our car was very strong.

Qualifying is important. It doesn't mean everything, especially with how some of these road courses, strategies can play out, you know, as we've seen every year and this year, as well.

Sometimes being the leader and being out front can -- you know, you kind of put yourself in harm's way with how strategy plays. But yeah, I don't know. I think when you look back at a race after a championship battle like that, you can praise somebody for doing the right thing, but that necessarily isn't always in their hands.

I don't know. That's the tough part, I think, with our sport sometimes is that you can have the fastest car and you can have a dominant race and it can be swept away pretty quickly. But it is what it is, and I find through the course of a full season, it typically evens its way out, and I know in this scenario, you definitely hope you're not on the bad side of receiving something like that.

Yeah, I don't know. I wish I could tell you that we were going to go there, get pole, lead every lap and win the championship and win the race, but you know, that's our aim, that's our goal. But reality might be a little bit different.

Q. One thing that strikes me is in your most recent championship battles, it's almost like the rest of your competitors, you're already in their head to a degree because of how successful you are in

winning championships. Do you feel that is sort of the case this way because it seemed like the other drivers talked as much about Scott Dixon after the Watkins Glen race as you did.

SCOTT DIXON: I don't know. If it's true, that's good. But you know, it's -- you know, I think it's a team effort. It's a team result. I think Ganassi are very strong at these high-pressure, coming-down-to-the-wire situations, and not just for myself but other championships they've won through the years. I remember being right there for many of Dario's, too, that worked out in similar fashion.

But yeah, it's nice to hear that, and you know, for us -- yeah, I don't know. I think it's not necessarily a situation we thrive on. We would clearly like to be many points ahead and not having to worry about the last race, and you can go into a final just having to start or something like that. But yeah, I don't know. I don't really speak to my competitors on that front or hear what they have to say or read up on it. But for us, we'll just go out there and try and get the job done and treat it as an ordinary race, even though there is a lot on the line.

Q. Seeing how this season has kind of played out, you've only got the one win, but 15 top 10s, how important was qualifying at Indy to get that pole, knowing that with double points you finished 32nd, but here you are three points out? How much did earning the pole back in May actually affect to where you are today?

SCOTT DIXON: Well, I think every kind of race has its -- obviously has its play on how the season works out. You know, you can easily say it was double points -- I think we should have had at least a top 5 or top 10 at Indy, which would have been a lot more points. Texas would have been -- we were either going to be first or second there. Other places where we could have had some victories and some other races, too, where we got crashed out. So it's -- I don't know. You know, it's what makes a championship, right. It's the highs, the lows, the ups and downs and things that you should have done and shouldn't have done that play out to where you are, and you can't rely on saying, well, if we'd done this and that, it would have been totally different. It's just we're a strong team. I think we came up short on many races throughout the season, but it's still nice to be in this situation and to know that we're in a situation to try and win the championship, and that's -- we set two goals every year. First one is the Indy 500, second one is to win the championship. We definitely didn't do the first one, and now we're in the hunt for the second, and that's what we're going to try to do. But I wouldn't single out Indy pole as -- it is what it is. I've been hurt on that side before, and many others have, too.