

IndyCar Media Conference

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Ryan Hunter-Reay Marco Andretti Zach Veach Alexander Rossi

Press Conference

THE MODERATOR: Welcome, fellas. We'll get right to it. We'll start with the elder statesman, the veteran of the team, the still very young Ryan Hunter-Reay. How are things? What did you learn? Do you want to wait to see what happens at night?

RYAN HUNTER-REAY: We want to see what happens at night. It was nice to get behind the wheel of a car on an oval after everybody has been talking about it for so long. Got to get in there, get a feel for it myself. I liked it. It was good fun. Definitely lighter. A lot lighter than we were here last year.

I think everybody is just kind of getting what they need, their driving style, what they need from the car. It's still early. Track temp is way up. Race, it's going to be a lot less. Tonight is going to be more representative of what we're looking for.

All in all, it's pretty good. It's going to be very light in traffic, I'll tell you that much. So we'll see. We'll see. A lot of unknowns at the moment.

THE MODERATOR: Is that a good thing?

RYAN HUNTER-REAY: I don't know. I'm not sure. We'll see how it goes tonight. It could be for the race weekend that if it goes in a direction where you have tire degradation, the car is sliding around a lot, everybody is struggling, yes, you can get passing going because the cars that have that little bit of advantage, better balance, some guy's got a rhythm going, you're going to have more opportunity to pass.

THE MODERATOR: What did you think, Marco?

MARCO ANDRETTI: I prefer it. I like a lighter car. For me, I really struggled with the aero kit car. I felt it was very light, switchy grip. You're either slammed with downforce or it snaps like that. With this thing, it's on the edge the entire time. There's some predictability you get from it, you feel it more, but you're very on edge.



If I had to pick one, I would prefer this because I feel it more, I think. Ryan and I were just talking back to the old guys. No, I think it's back to the old style.

THE MODERATOR: Last night, Alex, we heard what sounded like a lot of lifting and shifting. Is that what you saw today?

ALEXANDER ROSSI: Oh, yeah, for sure. I don't know if that's good or bad yet. We'll have to wait and see. We haven't done much in terms of running behind cars, the main motivation for this new car. We'll have to see (indiscernible).

THE MODERATOR: Zach, anything you want to tell the veterans here?

ZACH VEACH: Slow down. That's been the key. I have three great guys to learn from every session out, so much that I'm just taking away. I think first for the rookie test, definitely helped a lot of us just to get up to speed. I think we're getting more comfortable, we're getting to the point we know what we like.

Like I was telling my engineer, confidence level is 60% right now. You go out here on a short oval, it's quite a bit faster than the Lights car. It honestly feels like the Lights car balance around Phoenix. It's, like, predictable in some ways. Still I don't know where that line is exactly of where it's going to step out to too much yet. We're taking our time working up to it.

These guys have been doing all of the work mainly. I'm just kind of giving feedback on the little things I can right now. Learn as much as I can, get laps. One thing that is going to help us before we get to St. Pete is seat time.

THE MODERATOR: Questions.

Q. (About spare parts being limited at this time):

ALEXANDER ROSSI: I just found this out 20 minutes ago, that there weren't parts. That was an eye opener for sure.

ZACH VEACH: They've been telling me that since day one.

ALEXANDER ROSSI: It's not a good thing at all. I mean, there's one set of part that isn't available till April. I don't know what that means.

RYAN HUNTER-REAY: Yeah, should be fine, should be fine.

ALEXANDER ROSSI: If driven correctly, it should be fine.

RYAN HUNTER-REAY: In order to test, you have to go.

Q. Your team is one that has the most drivers now, four drivers. You can try different things when you get to the track. From what I understand, you really didn't get to do any manufacturer test days where a couple of the Honda teams did. Are you able to catch up to where they are or do you think they have a head start? How do you be as competitive as they are?

MARCO ANDRETTI: I don't know. I mean, I feel like it's early enough days that, yes, we can catch up. When there is anything new, a new car, new aero kit, at-track days are huge. We can sim all these things we want. To really get out there and confirm what we're learning back at the shop is another thing.

Yeah, I don't think we should look at it like we're behind the eight ball. With a four-car team, that's where we can use it our benefits. So far so good.

RYAN HUNTER-REAY: Marco said it great. Any time you have a new car, to put it into perspective, we're on track three days on a road course before we get to Sebring -- I mean to St. Pete. That's a very short amount of time. It's obviously not ideal, but we're just going to lace up our boots and get on with it. That's all you can do.

Q. Marco watched most of the windscreen test yesterday. What did you take from that? What were your perspectives?

MARCO ANDRETTI: Well, it's hard to get a perspective. It's probably the same as you guys because I was on the wall.

Talking to Scott, I mean, it's quieter, which means there's less airflow, makes it hotter. When we go to places like Mid-Ohio and Barber, it's hot already, we definitely need to get cooling in there for the drivers.

THE MODERATOR: How did you think it looked?

MARCO ANDRETTI: Yeah, I'm all for it. I think anything that helps our head and keeps it an open cockpit car still, I think that's all good things. I'm definitely proud of the direction IndyCar is going in more ways than one.

Q. Zach, because this is a new aero kit for everybody, was this a great time for you to have your rookie season because you don't have anything necessarily to confuse yourself with?

ZACH VEACH: Yeah, for sure. I mean, I think this is a great time for rookies to be coming in. Even if you had a rookie season last year, I think it would have been a

little harder to get up to speed.

You're still taking away a lot of knowledge. Any time you're coming in, no matter what generation car, you're starting a little behind the eight ball.

Yeah, I mean, that's the thing, this has been the best time. I think it is the closest to a Lights car we're going to get. For us, guys like Matheus and I coming in, it's great timing. We have to make sure, as Ryan was saying, three days before you go to St. Pete, it's a lot of time to just sit at home and go over those three days. Try to take away as much you can. This is the way we look at it. This is a buildup to Indy. We're trying to get as many laps, as much seat time as possible. Just trying to learn as much as I can from these guys until we're on top of things.

Q. Talk about the tires a little bit first. Looks like everybody took it easy because you don't want to tear up a set.

RYAN HUNTER-REAY: Yes, I think that's the situation. We have a session in the middle of the day. There's nothing that we're going to take away from that for the race weekend. It's a matter of saving tires for the time of day that is most relevant.

So I think qualifying is at 5:00. We'll probably do some qualifying stuff later on and tomorrow.

Q. Another question on the windscreen. The in-car camera, the helmet cam stuff, I'm picturing at Texas where you are looking up more than forward. Is that line a concern?

RYAN HUNTER-REAY: I don't know. I thought it looked great. I think it comes up high enough to where it shouldn't be. I mean, we're not literally looking up. I think it should be okay. We just need to get that cooling done, because, yeah, it looked like it would be pretty hot.

Q. Marco, you're sitting in front of the logo that honors Mario's final victory of his career. When you come back here in April, how big a deal is that to you to know he's going to be honored for that race, the driving motivation for you to honor him with a victory?

MARCO ANDRETTI: Yeah, I mean, there's potential we have something up our sleeve as a team which we can't announce yet. But that would be pretty cool. Yeah, to win here, commemorating that win, would be awesome.

He's the type of guy where I can go to a lot of racetracks and he's honored. But still it's definitely pretty cool. He won at an old age, impressive as well. I don't think he'd like that word (laughter). But yeah, man, all good.

Q. Alex, Marco or Ryan, how much easier is it to diagnose this car compared to the old package?

ALEXANDER ROSSI: I don't necessarily think 'easier to diagnose' is the right phrase. I think it's easier to feel the car. It's still a big challenge. There's a lot of really good teams here. It's a big challenge to get the car in the right window, to find the balance for each individual driver under different circumstances, qualifying, race, temperatures, tire wear, et cetera. I don't think that part is any easier.

It definitely is more of a natural driving style, I feel like, than the other car. From that standpoint it's a positive. In terms of the engineering aspect, I'd say it's the exact same. It's a big challenge to get it right, as all motorsports is. That's how it should be. Hopefully the best teams and drivers come to the top.

Q. I've heard from some of the testing that's been done, I would assume you've done some road course testing already, that the car is really great on the road courses, but it's going to be a lot harder to figure out the best setup for the oval tracks. Would you say that's true? How have you progressed when you have done the road course testing?

MARCO ANDRETTI: I'd say it's early days for our team at both. We have two days at a Sebring with a new kit. We're still learning, for sure. Everybody is still learning.

We're definitely thrown into it a bit late. But, you know, it's still a racecar. I like how it's lighter. I like how the feel comes more into the driver, I think. For me, I find it easier to drive it to the limit because it's a more established grip limit, rather than 'hoping it sticks' type thing, which is what my problem was last year.

So far so good on the road course. We haven't really been up against the best of the best yet as far as on the track the same day. I don't think our team has been out of the top three so far, so that's good.

Q. Have any of your drivers looked through the windscreen?

MARCO ANDRETTI: No. I thought about asking Ganassi to get in the car last night, but I didn't want to overstep.

THE MODERATOR: Probably a good decision. Anybody critiquing Alex's performance on television?

RYAN HUNTER-REAY: I told him that would have been my worst nightmares, to get up there on stage like that, sing awkwardly in some other language. He did a great job. He did a great job of getting up there.

You put everything aside, went for it. That was good, yeah. I felt awkward watching it (laughter).

Q. Zach, can I get a little bit more of your feelings coming into the season, how you're fitting into the team. You've been around these guys before, but what is so much different about it now?

ZACH VEACH: I don't think anything is really too much different, obviously other than the car. I've known Hunter-Reay and Marco for about eight years now, and Alex for a couple. Nothing was too new there.

Just getting to work with them, understanding their knowledge on the car, how exceptional it is, it's good to know that. But just getting implemented has been the big thing.

Andretti has always been big on having that relationship among drivers. I think that's one of the things that make them so strong. It's all been a welcome. So, you know, for me it's like being the young guy on the team, but it's just coming in and trying to learn as much as I can, like I said before, and providing value, becoming an asset for these guys.

We all lean on each other. I'm doing a little more leaning on them than anything right now. But that's going to slowly change as we get throughout the season.

Q. Ryan and Marco, we've come to some of these open tests before the season starts. There might be 18 or 19 cars, some of them might be white with a number on them, black with a number on them. We have 23 cars and they're all sponsored. What does that say to you as a driver in this series in 2018?

RYAN HUNTER-REAY: It's great to see. It's obviously trending in the right direction. That's always good news. When you're reading about all these sponsors and driver lineups being locked up a month or two months before the first race, there's no seats left, that's definitely a different landscape in open-wheel racing than we've seen for quite some time.

Like I said, trending in the right direction is great. It's great to see these teams locking up corporate sponsors. We're doing the same, so it's good times, absolutely. You just want to think positive and be a part of it.

MARCO ANDRETTI: Yeah, he nailed it. I mean, every car looks really good. I was talking to Bryan about this. Wonder if we're thinking it's looks good before there's livery on it. This year obviously there's a big step forward in the look of the car.

Yeah, it's great to have that feeling, especially on our side we have the (inaudible). Did a great job for them last year. Then obviously U.S. Concrete. Getting new partners involved is so huge for everybody. It's not just our team. There's a lot of others, so it's great.

THE MODERATOR: Thanks, guys.