

IndyCar Media Conference

Saturday March 10, 2018

Marco Andretti Ryan Hunter-Reay Alexander Rossi Zach Veatch

Press Conference



Amazing Grace, glad it's over. Glad I had the opportunity to do it. Hopefully everyone was happy with how Conor and I represented the series. Glad we made it on 11 out of 12 episodes. Think that was a success.

Off Track with Hinch and Rossi, it's exciting. Going to replace (indiscernible) on Air in a lot better way in terms of what we're doing with guests and getting really involved in things outside of motorsports and expanding to people who are professionals in their own field, whether it's sports, arts, entertainment. I think it will be a very cool thing. All of you need to subscribe on castbox.com or wherever you listen to podcasts.

THE MODERATOR: Also joined by Zach Veatch. We're hearing so much from several of the drivers, some of your fellow rookies, as well, it's a fantastic year to be a rookie in the series. Do you agree with that, especially after your first two practice sessions?

ZACH VEATCH: I'd say so. Any time being a rookie in IndyCar is a good thing, right? Trying to find my way. Obviously the team is doing a great job with the cars, working on the details for me as we get more time.

Loving the experience. I've always really enjoyed St. Petersburg. It's been good to me in the past. Hoping to find a little more speed today. We should have been a little higher up.

With 24 cars, it's funny, you go from Indy Lights having eight cars, finding a gap is pretty much the easiest thing in the world, to have 24 IndyCars, it gets pretty tough.

Hopefully we have a better run this morning, find some clean track on our own. See where we're at.

THE MODERATOR: We spoke with Ryan Hunter-Reay yesterday. We'll spare you taking us through your practice session, but specifically looking forward to qualifying, what are you expecting from the field and the session in general?

RYAN HUNTER-REAY: The four of us got together last night, coming up with some direction changes that we want to do with the setup. That's the great thing about having four cars at Andretti Autosport that work well together, we can hopefully move forward, continue to progress.

THE MODERATOR: Joined now by the Andretti Autosport drivers ready for the Firestone Grand Prix of St. Pete this weekend, and specifically qualifying today.

Marco, we'll start with you. You mentioned yesterday in your quote that you're fairly confident heading into qualifying that the times were similar to what you were looking for, but a red flag came out and you were happy with the lap times you were seeing before then. Take us through that practice and also what you're expecting from qualifying today.

MARCO ANDRETTI: Yeah, I mean, you want to be quickest. But I think we were on a lap to be sixth or seventh. We're trying not to overreact to the changes overnight, kind of look at it like we're sixth or seventh because we just had one turn left.

We're a change or two away. But I think we're happy with the progress and the start. Practice one was a bit of an eye opener for everybody with the really low grip. Even the guys that were happy, it was a handful for them. The grip is slowly coming up. We'll see what practice three brings.

THE MODERATOR: Alexander, I want to give you an opportunity to take us through your practice sessions yesterday and what you're expecting from qualifying, but obviously a lot of off-track storylines going on with you, Amazing Grace and announcing a podcast with James Hinchcliffe earlier this week.

ALEXANDER ROSSI: First of all, practice yesterday was pretty good for the whole team. Obviously the pace is in the car with Ryan. I think it's just about putting it together. I think a lot of people will make a big step forward overnight.

Yesterday was very surprising for all of us. It was kind of just finding our feet, seeing what we need from the car, what we need from ourselves, how to execute, getting the lap time out of it. Today will be interesting for sure. I look forward to seeing where it all stacks up in a couple hours here.

As these guys said, I don't think anybody was really that happy with the car yesterday. It's a handful. Everybody is out there wheeling it. We have a lot of work to do today, no doubt about it. It's going to be tough to find that gap.

That's probably the toughest challenge in qualifying is to find that gap, make sure you're unimpeded throughout the run. That can be a weekend changer.

It's new for all of us. We're learning every day. It kind of does feel like an extended test session in many ways. So we'll see.

THE MODERATOR: We'll open it up for questions.

Q. Alex, last year you clearly stepped up your game. Do you think you will be able to fight for the title this year? Do you think you have the tools?

ALEXANDER ROSSI: I think I have the tools, for sure. I think the team has made a very good step forward so far from what we've seen from 2017, which was a huge improvement on 2016. I think Honda has done an amazing job with their development this winter as well.

I think, yeah, everything is shaping up that way. But you can't just say that. There's a whole lot of work ahead of us. All four of us have great cars and a great team around us. It's really up to us to execute at this point.

Q. Zach, you're obviously a rookie in a team with three veteran drivers. Can you describe your learning curve going into this season.

ZACH VEACH: Well, always learning. There's something to take away from three different styles every time we come off the track. I think that's a big benefit, just so much information in front of you, you just got to process it. That's been the big thing.

Just hearing these guys talk, especially as Ryan was saying at the end of the day we always get together and have big group debriefs. Just hearing what they have to say about the car goes a long way.

As a rookie, you're dealing with some things. This can't be normal. It's the same thing they're dealing with. Hearing that kind of come back and forth just helps build your confidence that that is what this car is going to be like, what you have to do with it to make it a little bit better.

Q. How much of this is going to be an evolutionary process throughout the entire season learning this car, or do you feel at some point you're going to get comfortable enough with it you're going to be able to understand what it's going to do?

ZACH VEACH: For me it's going to be an all-year process. That's just from an experience standpoint. I'll let Ryan talk about car development.

RYAN HUNTER-REAY: I hate to keep saying the same answer over and over. We don't have an idea of what we have in front of us. We've had three days as a team at Sebring turning right, now we're at St. Pete. That's it. We don't know what we're going to have at Long Beach, what we're going to have when we get to a road course.

We're all thinking about Indy. We have zero idea what to expect there. We're waiting and seeing just like all of you, and we're taking it in stride as we go. It's a moving target. Don't know.

Q. Being that the universal aero kit is new this year, I'm still not clear on what the teams can put on, take off. Are there any options for a road course setup? Is everything the same on the front and rear wing? What can you do as a team?

ALEXANDER ROSSI: You can do little things. There are parts to move around and different builds. But there's not many. I think everyone pretty much finds the best one and ends up on the same thing.

There's little things you can do. At Phoenix. Possibly once we get to a road course, like a Road America. But we haven't been there. Like Ryan said, we've only done Sebring, Phoenix and here. We haven't touched on superspeedways or road courses yet, so we're probably not the team to ask. Ask the teams that have six more days.

THE MODERATOR: Gentlemen, thank you very much. Good luck this weekend.