

IndyCar Media Conference

Friday April 20, 2018

Scott Dixon

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: Tell us about your experiences here at the track and what makes this place special.

SCOTT DIXON: Yeah, I think as everybody sees, it's a fantastic, world-class facility, and we all love coming here, even from the first test we did here, and there were thousands of people that turned up to watch an open-day test. But yeah, excited to be back here. It's been a good track for us. I think we've finished on the podium every year except for once, and hopefully we can continue that tradition. The only unfortunate side to that is that I've never won here. To try and make it to the top step is the goal for this weekend, but we'll have to see how that plays, but always excited to be back here. It's a hell of a ride in a Verizon IndyCar around this track with all the other -- the high-speed corners and the elevation changes. Hopefully the first practice goes well this morning.

THE MODERATOR: Normally when we come here, it's not quite this cool, and maybe we're even expecting cooler temperatures for the race itself. How does that play into your overall strategy and how you're able to use data from years past where it's been a lot warmer?

SCOTT DIXON: Well, the partial test that we had here was very cool. I think we've had mixed conditions here. I think even previous tests we've tested in about 40-degree weather. So you know, I think these conditions this weekend are definitely ideal for us. In the 60s, I think, is when the car performs very well. We'll have to look out for Sunday. It looks like there's chances of rain. We've also -- I think Firestone bring a great wet tire here. If we do have the opportunity to race here in the wet, I think it would be a very exciting one, a very good one to watch. But I'm sure everybody is hoping for a fun weekend.

But yeah, it's the same for everybody, so it's nothing that you can really like or dislike. It's Mother Nature, and you can't change it, you've just got to get on with it.

THE MODERATOR: We're three races into the 2018 season so far. Take us through the early part of your season and how you would rate it overall.

SCOTT DIXON: I think for us, the car has had great speed. We made a pretty hefty mistake in St. Pete qualifying, which then -- starting ninth, I made a mistake, and then we had a pit speed failure, which ended up putting us to the back of the field twice. We

had a drive-through penalty and still ended up with sixth, which was a good salvage, and then Phoenix we had an issue of qualifying, ended up qualifying 17th, and the team did a great job with strategy and pit stops to gather up a fourth there, and last weekend we just got caught out with a shift with the yellow, which should have been a for-sure podium, a second or third. Rossi was kind of on his own level that weekend, which was good for them, and congratulations to them for the win.

But yeah, I think as a whole our car has had great speed. Just we haven't been able to capitalize on the results that we would have liked.

THE MODERATOR: You have a new teammate this year, as well, in Ed Jones. He's seen some success, as well, obviously running well at Phoenix and finishing well at Long Beach. Your thoughts on his performance and his addition to the team?

SCOTT DIXON: Yeah, it's been an interesting off-season to say the least, down sizing from four cars to two, to having a very loud teammate like TK across the other side of the engineering table, to Ed, who's very quiet, pretty laid-back. If he was any more laid-back, I think he would fall over. It's definitely a different vibe. It's a change in environment. I think it's been good for him and myself to get up to speed with a new teammate, to have it on a one-on-one situation.

But I miss the group of four. I miss my teammates from last year. But Ed has been a great addition, and we've already seen some good results from him, and look forward to seeing some more come through to the end of the season.

THE MODERATOR: Moving off the racetrack for a little bit, you had a fun announcement yesterday in that you would be competing in this season of NBC's American Ninja Warrior, a first for you. Some of your fellow drivers have done that in the past. How did this come about? Why are you interested in it? It's coming up pretty soon, I think in a week or two.

SCOTT DIXON: Yeah, it's daunting, actually, and thanks probably to IndyCar for initiating it. I think two years ago we had three or four drivers contest. I think I'm the lonesome one this year, which will be interesting, too.

I think with something like this -- it's a show that I've always loved and enjoyed watching. My kids Poppy

and Tilly love it, too. I don't think I'm anywhere near a ninja, so that's going to make it very tough, and it's very different training. I think we've only known for a few weeks here the possibility for it, and it's one of those things that you see on TV, and you're like, yeah, I could do that, and then the first day I went and tried it, I'm like, wow, I really can't do that stuff.

It's been a learning process. It's more about having a go, getting out of your comfort zone. You know, it's going to be interesting. We'll see what they have, what the challenges are, but definitely looking forward to the process, meeting the people, and hopefully at least not failing on the first thing. We'll see where it goes.

But I'm super excited for it.

THE MODERATOR: A lot of people think, you're an athlete, they're athletes, this must be so transferrable, must be just so easy. But from what I understand the training that you've been going through is quite different than training that you would do on a normal basis, just training for an IndyCar season. What are some of those differences that you've noticed so far?

SCOTT DIXON: Yeah, I think to do it properly, I probably would have liked -- I should have maybe thought about it about six months ago. But I think if I could drop 15 to 20 pounds, it would definitely help, which is crazy in its own right.

But I think a lot of rock climbing, it's a lot of just even the fingertips to how your body is able to twist in different ways. I think from my instances of knowing many drivers, we're definitely not a very flexible bunch of people, which I think that plays a lot into it, especially with shoulders. We do a lot of things facing this way and not behind us or arms behind us, so there's a lot of movements that have been quite interesting and painful to go through.

But yeah, we'll see where it takes -- I'm just taking it as an experience, and excited for the opportunity, and just hope I don't make a fool of myself.

Q. And also, this event, this experience for you is happening in Indianapolis, your home for, I believe, 20 years or so. Does that make it extra special for you? Does that add to your wanting to give it a shot?

SCOTT DIXON: Yeah, I think it's really cool. I think it's going to be in Monument Circle again, which is going to be a great location. I went and watched two years ago when Helio, TK and Josef and I think Conor did it, as well. So yeah, I think family and friends -- if anybody wants to come, you might get a couple of laughs out of it. But you know, it was cool to see it, just how they transformed that downtown part of Indianapolis and the people that come out, and it runs at really strange hours. Right, it's got to be dark, so they run from 8:00 or 9:00 at night all the way until 6:00 in the morning, so

it's some pretty interesting times.

Actually that week, too, we have two test days at the Indianapolis Motor Speedway on the 30th and the 2nd, so it's going to be a busy week for sure.

Q. 18 years ago when you started, you were fast, fierce, determined and quiet. Those are the same qualities as the guy that drives the 27. Do you kind of see a little bit of you in him?

SCOTT DIXON: I don't know. You know, I think it's hard for me to comment on. I just get on and do what I do. You know, I think it's hard to critique -- I can look at drivers and have my two cents, but I think for me to comment on myself is a little bit difficult. But I think Rossi, they've definitely hit a stride right now with the team. I think Hunter-Reay has had great speed, as well, but has not capitalized on it or has been a little bit unlucky.

Right now, I think they're a team to watch, and that combination is definitely very strong. He's making the most of it, man. It's good for the sport. It's great to see. It's great for their sponsors, and it's definitely making it exciting right now.

Q. With the weather forecast, two dry days and then a wet day. How do you prepare? Is it just a matter of changing the wing and springs? What does a team do on a weekend like this?

SCOTT DIXON: Well, it means you can use all your dry tires in the first two days. No, weather, I think it's probably the only job that you can have be wrong every day and still keep it. We'll see where that takes us. I've seen forecasts like that. I think if we look at the Indianapolis 500 last year, it was the same forecast, and we got in the race with no problem, and it was a beautiful day. We'll see. We can't change anything, so we'll continue on with our normal progress throughout the weekend, try and be fast in every session, use the tires as we're going to need them in the race, and see what Sunday brings.

Q. With only having Ed for three races, what's he been able to bring from a discussion standpoint? Have you been able to help him on setup? Has he been providing good feedback, or what's that dynamic been like?

SCOTT DIXON: The first part of the season is always a little bit tough. You're trying to find patterns. I think the best home for our team, at least for the pattern side of it, was Dario and myself through the late -- well, through the mid-2000s to late 2000s. You know, and then you were able to form a pattern. I'd say right now we're kind of on the early stages. Ed is coming from a team that had very different setups, and he's trying to work through that himself.

But no, I think he's had good feedback. But yeah, just very early stages.

Q. What's been the biggest advantage and disadvantage to moving from four cars to two cars this year?

SCOTT DIXON: That's a tough one. I think as I mentioned, it's very quiet in the engineering office now, so I would see that as a positive. But I also miss the noises of TK and the faces and him taking the mickey out of everybody the whole time. But the environment is definitely different.

I don't know, I think there's pros and cons on both sides. I think the information flows a little bit quicker, but there's only two cars. The disadvantage is I really enjoyed looking through three other car sets of information throughout a weekend. There was a lot of stuff to consume, and every driver does -- whether good or bad or a weekend, they do something a little bit different that you can try and hone in on, which I think helps.

I don't know, there's so many pros and cons to it, but you know, ideally it's Chip's decision, it's what he wants to do, and I'm happy doing what I do.