

IndyCar Media Conference

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Tony Kanaan

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: We are joined now by Tony Kanaan. Finished second fastest in today's practice session.

Tony, you've been pretty quick all week so far throughout the practices. Take us through how your car has been performing, what you've been noticing out there in practice so far.

TONY KANAAN: It's been a good week for us. We unloaded pretty quick since the test. Now it's just the track playing some mind games with you. Some days are better, some days are worse. It's more of trying to figure out what you're going to need in 10 days from you. It's quite hard. You don't know what the weather is going to do.

We're trying to run in any type of weather right now, hot, cold, windy, recording everything on the books. Really have all that information to when it comes next week by Friday or Carb Day, you can try to predict what's going to happen on Sunday, then put whatever the setup you think it is.

It's more of a gathering information. Sometimes you have a good car, sometimes you have a bad car. Sometimes you get a good draft, sometimes you run alone. Saying all that, it's over. Tomorrow it's just Fast Friday and you worry about four laps. That's all you got to worry about. Then four laps the next day, and hopefully on Sunday.

From tomorrow on, it will just be making the car as fast as you can and the most consistent for qualifying.

THE MODERATOR: How do you feel the team as a whole, between you and your teammate, have been reacting to the week so far preparation for this week in qualifying?

TONY KANAAN: It's been pretty smooth. I mean, the team has been extremely busy. We are a small organization in comparison to the big boys. The guys have been working really hard. I mean, after the GP, they worked on Mother's Day until 2 in the morning, they worked Monday all day at the shop. A.J. gave us two brand-new cars for the Speedway, which is great, but at the same time gave the guys a lot of work.

Everybody has been a little tired, but I think that's the price you pay to win this race. We're working really

hard. Mateo has had his ups and downs as a rookie, as a 19-year-old. I told him on day one, opening day, I said, This track will play mind games with you. I think he figured out by now how tough it is. We're trying to keep him straight. Between A.J., Larry and I, I think we're doing an okay job. Hopefully we'll keep it that way.

It's funny to watch. Just I've been around for too long, I know what to expect. I still get nervous, don't take me wrong. But to see his eyes every time something different that he didn't expect happened, I think it's kind of funny.

THE MODERATOR: Can you relate at all? Can you remember your rookie experience?

TONY KANAAN: Yeah, I was much older. If I was 19, I think I would be change diapers, my diapers, underwear, every time I would go out there.

But, yeah, I remember. My first time here in 2002, it was crazy. Everything was new. The unknown was actually better at times because you don't have any expectations. But I had Morris Nunn. He had a lot of experience. He was my team owner at the time. He helped me a lot. You can definitely relate.

I told him, Every year you're going to think you come back because you have more experience, it gets better, it actually gets worse because you know more.

THE MODERATOR: Questions for Tony.

Q. Do you put the winner's ring after you got out of the car?

TONY KANAAN: This ring? Actually every year since 2013, I wear it in the month of May.

Q. Even when you're driving?

TONY KANAAN: Yeah. Stays with me, but just the month of May. Then I retire him for the year. He comes back every May. I'm not like Helio that wears every time, every interview, like, Yeah, three times.

Q. When you were hired, you said you wanted to race the Foyt name back up to where it belongs. Do you feel like you're doing that?

TONY KANAAN: Trying. I mean, you know, we haven't accomplished everything we wanted. But it's a long road. That's why we agreed it was going to take a little long, so we made a multi-year deal. I'm doing

everything I can, they doing everything they can. I think eventually it has to work.

It's not for a lack of working, not for a lack of effort. We are still have some pieces we have to put in place, but that happens everywhere.

We're here, right? Ann just told me on the elevator on the way up she hadn't been here in a while. I said, Get used to it. Hopefully I'll keep my promise to her. I've been here, but they haven't.

We're working on it, for sure. We have a long road ahead. We're not as consistent as we wanted to be. It's nice to see some people looking at us and saying, Hmm, they're going to make this work.

I can't thank all our partners to putting the trust. Chevy, at the end of the year when I went to them, I said, We need to do this again.

So anyway, yeah, it's working.

Q. Talk about the new car, what you did, what you're feeling, thinking going ahead.

TONY KANAAN: It's a whole different beast. In traffic it's a lot different. The behavior of the car, it's a lot more difficult to drive. In a way, it's just the characteristics. It's not like I like it or dislike it. It's what we have. It's the same for everybody.

I think if you see how much people did long runs this week, which I think is the most that we've done in a long time, I didn't worry about qualifying till tomorrow, it's because everybody is really concerned how these cars are going to race as far as downforce, how we're going to run in traffic. We lost a lot of downforce from the previous years, just with the new aero package. Everybody's trying to understand. The more that you run, the more that you understand.

It's different to drive. I'm not going to comment if it's better or worse until we really go racing. Running in a pack like this, it's not as representative as the race. I think sometimes you have people trying to back off and let you by. That doesn't happen in the race. But it is more difficult, for sure.

It's less difference than what we had in the past, because the full load, it's really light. It's not as big of a difference as it used to be.

Q. Coming from a five-car team in the past, to a two, how much are your younger teammates relying on you for help and experience? How much do you feel you and Eric are leading in the engineering room?

TONY KANAAN: That responsibility was there from day one when I signed with A.J. They definitely trying to rely on us a lot. They've been doing really well, too. Mateo found a couple things today, too, that I tried at

the end of the day and I liked it. It's working like we used to work, like I used to work.

Yeah, I mean, I do have more experience, so the tendency is always that they will come to me more than I go to them. But, yeah, it's a normal chemistry, like a three- or four-car team.

THE MODERATOR: I'm sorry to cut this short, but Tony is doubling as a reporter on live television in four minutes, so run down there.

TONY KANAAN: Thanks, guys.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you, Tony.