

IndyCar Media Conference

Saturday June 2, 2018

Ryan Hunter-Reay Alexander Rossi

Press Conference

THE MODERATOR: Joined now by our second- and third-place finishers, Ryan Hunter-Reay and Alexander Rossi, who finished second and third respectively in today's race. Ryan, we'll start with you, driving in the No. 28 DHL Honda for Andretti Autosport. Started fifth and able to work your way up a few spots, trying to catch Scott Dixon there at the end. Did you feel like you had something for him in that final restart?

RYAN HUNTER-REAY: Yeah, we were pretty evenly matched, I think. I had a bit better run through Turn 1 and 2 on the restart, so I closed on him there. I really needed some overtake at that point, Push-to-Pass, but we're not allowed to use it at that point. That would have been the difference for me, I think, to have an run on him. But from there we evenly matched each other's laps. Just in his dirty air, I couldn't make the run through the higher speed corners to stay close enough. It's unfortunate. We came up close. I thought in the middle of the race we were logging fastest lap of the race after fastest lap of the race that we were going to come out in a pretty good position. I was hoping for better than we were. But it was close. We're going to have to go back and try and make our weaknesses a little bit stronger tomorrow and see where we can come out.

But all in all, a good day, second. Just want a win, so it's a feeling I'm coming up a bit short.

THE MODERATOR: I know it turned into a really beautiful day outside, but how physical were the conditions out there on the racetrack?

RYAN HUNTER-REAY: This place is physical because going through a regular corner on a road or street circuit you're making one turn and you're usually just making one motion with your hands, and here you're doing 15 in a corner. It's just really physical because you end up counter-steering so much and constantly catching the car. It's just violent out there, so it ends up being physical that way.

But as Alex was talking about coming in here, thank God it's about 90 degrees outside. We'll see what we have tomorrow. Maybe a little bit of wet weather early in the day and seems like it clears up later, but it's the same for everybody. Should be interesting.



THE MODERATOR: His teammate Alexander Rossi, driving the No. 27 Ruoff Home Mortgage for Andretti Autosport, a new best finish here Streets of Belle Isle, started fourth and finished third. Take us through that final restart. Seems like you really had your mind set on finishing on the podium today.

ALEXANDER ROSSI: Yeah, for sure. I think that I was stuck behind that car for most of the race, so we had the opportunity, we were quite a bit stronger in Turn 1 and 2, so I just kind of tried to maximize that as much as possible, and I was glad we were able to get it done. Great to be back on the podium.

You know, the whole NAPA Know-How team and the Ruoff Mortgage guys really deserve that after what's been a really long stretch of May and seemingly a long time since we've been on the podium. Hats off to them. They had great pit stops, we had a good car, and it also speaks to the strength of Andretti Autosport to be second, third and fourth and Honda to be in the top six, it's a good day for all our partners for sure.

THE MODERATOR: Scott Dixon, moving up to third on the all-time wins list with his win today. What does he mean to both of you as a racer and his impact on the sport?

ALEXANDER ROSSI: You know, I think that Scott Dixon is synonymous with a lot of us as we respect him as probably not only as one of the best drivers in IndyCar history but also in the world, and it's a pleasure to race against him, and any day that you can beat him is a good day. I think he definitely had the upper hand on us today, and he's been strong all weekend. We've got four very good cars that we can go analyze tonight and hopefully draw all the strengths together and come up with a package to beat him.

RYAN HUNTER-REAY: Yeah, Scott is one of the best. It's amazing, in this day and age in racing and how equally matched everything is, to be in that bracket of third overall. I mean, as long as they've been collecting these stats, there's many years where certain drivers would have streaks where they'd win 10 races in a season or something like that, so it's amazing that in this day and age that he's able to continue to rack them up and be in that list. That's definitely not the guy you want in front of you on a restart. It's a bummer that I couldn't catch him. But we were going to make a run for it, but congratulations to him on that third -- how many more does he have to do

to go to second?

THE MODERATOR: 10. Do you think he can do it?

ALEXANDER ROSSI: Did he pass Michael?

THE MODERATOR: He's tied with Michael.

ALEXANDER ROSSI: Ooh, that's not going to go down well.

THE MODERATOR: Would you guys like to see him move past Michael?

RYAN HUNTER-REAY: I'll plead the fifth on that.

ALEXANDER ROSSI: I mean, no. It's in our job description and contract to make sure he does not pass Michael.

RYAN HUNTER-REAY: That's our job now. That's what we're going to talk about every morning, not to let him pass Michael.

Q. This isn't the first time it's happened, but for some reason Honda seems to really do well at the Chevrolet race here. What is it about the package that suits the Hondas so well?

ALEXANDER ROSSI: I can't tell you that. They beat us at the Honda Grand Prix of Alabama, didn't they? This is our revenge.

RYAN HUNTER-REAY: I don't know what it is to be honest with you. You know, it's just --

ALEXANDER ROSSI: What is it?

RYAN HUNTER-REAY: I don't know. You're going to be the one to spill the beans. I'm not taking that heat.

Q. But for some reason does the engine package really match this track?

RYAN HUNTER-REAY: It seems like it, absolutely. It's slick around here, so it looks like we're having a pretty good time putting the power down. Whether that's more torque or whether it's drivability, I'm not sure, but definitely had the stronger package today.

Q. You said today you might have an inkling of what you could look at for data tonight. Do you have anything that you drew from the ride today where you could maybe pull out a little bit more speed or are you just going to wait for what your crew and the engineers think?

ALEXANDER ROSSI: I think after every session there's things that you look at and can improve upon, and no Andretti Autosport car won the race today, so we definitely have to be better, and I think we have four very competitive cars, like I said before, and I think the results showed that. I don't think it's massive things, but we kind of need to compile the differences, and

that's one of the things this team does the best is kind of have open discussions and move forward as a group.

Q. Ryan, how key was you guys' strategy to come out perfectly every single time?

RYAN HUNTER-REAY: Well, we knew we had a fast race car, and when we weren't going fast, we thought, okay, let's pull the eject handle now and let's get on to something else, so we did that, and I was able to continue to put down the laps I needed to to close the gap to these guys, and then I'll have to look at the replay and how it all cycled out, but that was the difference maker was getting on our own side of the racetrack and able to just go fast. I ran into quite a bit of lap traffic. They were on the lead lap, and I was able to get through them quick, which was vital to how we finished. I didn't sit behind one car for a full lap. That was pretty good. That was key to being able to move through it and continue to put down those fast laps.

It's always a gamble here. You know, you go for a two-stopper and then the yellow comes out at the wrong time, you got for three-stopper, it goes green, and it's just tough around these places because you end up getting the yellow at the wrong time and you just try and make the most of it. Good job by Andretti Autosport today, like Alex said. We had four cars that were very competitive.

Q. Alex, three straight courses this year, three podiums. Coming from Europe, that's not something you did a whole lot of. What is it that you like about driving on the street courses?

ALEXANDER ROSSI: Well, I don't know that I necessarily agree with that. We have a couple street races over there for sure. I mean, obviously these are different. I don't really have an answer for you, to be honest. I don't think there's anything special that I'm doing differently than a road course on an oval, so sorry, I don't have an explanation for that.

Q. We saw Graham lightly hit a curb and lose it right into the wall. Have you guys noticed that curbs are more disruptive to this car now that you have less downforce, and does it affect the way you go through corners to try to avoid that?

ALEXANDER ROSSI: I mean, I don't even think we were hitting that curb last year. It's a very fine margin around a place like this, and you have to get as close as possible to the curb because that's where the grip is. It's easy to make a mistake. I brushed the wall in practice, too. Brushed a wall in the race, as well, so you're constantly kind of searching for that -- and then when you're pushing really hard, kind of like Ryan mentioned before, with how many corrections you're making, it's a very easy mistake to have happen.

Q. Alex, you're back in the points lead. You have a chance to gain more points tomorrow. How important is that as we head into the stretch run of

the season?

ALEXANDER ROSSI: You know, we're not quite at that point yet. I mean, we're still looking for race wins, and that's the main goal. Obviously with four laps to go, when I realized I wasn't going to catch Ryan and Scott, it was just about bringing the car home.

But I'd say for the first 55 laps of the race, we were pushing as hard as we could to try and get a win, and that's our main focus right now.

Q. Ryan, when you say Scott Dixon is one of the best, what does that mean to you? What is it about his style that just jumps out at you every time you watch it?

RYAN HUNTER-REAY: He's just always strong, no matter where you are. In this series to be a champion and to do what he's done, obviously you have to be very good at every different discipline, and he's that way, doesn't matter if you're on a street circuit, road course, short oval, superspeedway, Scott is going to be up front, and he's always a threat, and that's why he is where he is. But yeah, I've been racing him since, what, '07, so been sharing the track with him for a long time, and that's why I said it's amazing that he is in that company that he is in. He's in a different time altogether than the company that he holds. It's pretty unique. I think he deserves a lot more credit than he gets. Obviously you guys are giving it to him, but I'm sure 10 years after he retires, we'll all make a lot bigger deal of it than we are now.