

# IndyCar Media Conference

Sunday June 3, 2018

## Ryan Hunter-Reay

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: Joined now by our race winner, Ryan Hunter-Reay, driving the No. 28 DHL Honda for Andretti Autosport. It is Ryan's -- not everyone here might know, Ryan decided to take a little swim after his celebration in the very lovely fountain here on Belle Isle.

RYAN HUNTER-REAY: I bet there haven't been many people in there.

THE MODERATOR: Maybe not many sober people.

RYAN HUNTER-REAY: That's true. Yeah, good point.

THE MODERATOR: But probably nobody as happy as you. We'll go with that.

It is Ryan's last win since 2015, and Ryan, I know that you mentioned that yesterday when you came in. Happy with your finish yesterday, but certainly a little downtrodden that it couldn't be one place better. How rewarding is it to finish on top here after a little bit of a drought?

RYAN HUNTER-REAY: Yeah, so rewarding. I told you yesterday how bad I want it. But there have been a lot of circumstances that have kept this team out of Victory Lane. If you look at the past Indy 500s, the '17 and '16 ones, I think we could have won both of those. Lead the most laps in one of them, didn't get to finish the race. It's been heartbreaking stuff. Catching James Hinchcliffe at Long Beach in the last five laps or whatever it was, the electrical system shuts down. And leading in 2016 at Pocono and the same electrical problem shuts the car down. So there's been a lot of frustrating things like that that have kept us from potentially being in Victory Lane.

But today the car was awesome. I mean, it was -- we were at times lapping, I think, a second and a half faster than anybody on the track, and that car definitely ended the race where it should be, and that's in Victory Lane. So really proud of the 28 DHL Honda team. These guys have worked really hard, but they gave me a great race car, the engineering side. I'm just really proud of what they've done. My engineer Ray Gosselin, he wanted this race as bad as me. We've won a lot of races together. We've been working together since 2011 and we've won a lot together, so this recent dry spell has really had us both a little eager.

Today was great.

THE MODERATOR: It seemed like the story of the race weekend for you was being the hunter, trying to catch up to Scott Dixon yesterday on the final restart, and also coming out of the pits to catch your teammate Alexander Rossi it seemed. As the more time went on on your fresh tires, you kind of chipped away, and then all of a sudden it was a second and a half over a second on lap to lap. What was going through your head as you were trying to chase him down?

RYAN HUNTER-REAY: Yeah, my engineer, Ray, was telling me on the radio the whole time, we have to qualify the whole time, we have to be the fastest car on the racetrack. So that's what we did today.

Some of those stints in the middle, I'm on the opposite side of the racetrack but I'm going faster than the leaders at that point, but we're catching them, we're catching them. This is really going to work if you keep doing the 75 lap times or the minute-15 lap times. Just kept my head down, and then after the last stop, there was nobody in front of me, and they said, Alex is the leader. And Ray got on the radio and said, you're going to catch him by the end of the stint, just keep your head down. So I just went for it, just kept doing low 75s, and little did I know there was a car on the straightaway and then there was a car halfway down, and then it was -- and then we just closed the gap until I was right up his gearbox with 11 or 12 to go, and I think we were strong enough there to potentially expose a weakness.

**Q. Ryan, you did nine laps quicker than anybody else in the race; how taxing is that mentally?**

RYAN HUNTER-REAY: It is really taxing, especially with how -- doing a double here. The hardest part about this place is obviously the bumps, right, and the kick-back in the steering wheel. When you put on a new set of tires, those Firestones are so grippy that they'll literally rip the wheel out of your hand as you're going through the constant beating of the bumps. I had a few times where the wheel almost ripped out of my hand, white knuckling the wheel, but once I found a rhythm with the car, I'd say maybe two or three laps into a stint to the end, it was so consistent. The car was so consistent, I could place it consistently, and that was the key for me. I wasn't having to really worry about the rear on entry, which I did a little bit yesterday, so we were even faster than we were yesterday. It was

just an awesome car.

I thought about halfway through, I said, this car is a winning car. It would be a shame if it doesn't win today, and I drove that way.

**Q. Kate mentioned how you were a hunter during the race. When Alexander ran off, did you feel like, yes, success, or darnit, that's not how I wanted to win again?**

RYAN HUNTER-REAY: Yeah, I don't know what happened with him. All I know is that I had a better run. I was much stronger than he was out of Turn 2, so I just kept getting that big run, get on the overtake button, close up to him, pressure him under the brake zone, little bit of brake loss. Next time, same thing, little bit more brake loss. Next time, same thing, little bit more brake loss, and then -- I mean, that's how you race cars.

**Q. Ryan, you've had an awful lot of close calls. Have they been top of mind this whole time for you and will they start to disappear?**

RYAN HUNTER-REAY: The Indy ones never go away. When you know you have a car that can win it and you don't get to shoot it out at the end for the win, those never go away because you never know how many times you're going to have a good car that can win at Indy. You know? Like this year, I think we had a strong car, but we definitely didn't have one to win. Those years are valuable, and the ones that kind of disappear in smoke, so to speak, it hurts, and you always remember them. Yeah, hopefully we can get some more Indy 500 wins, too. That's the goal.

**Q. Ryan, usually during a long dry spell, you think, oh -- you probably knew you were going to win again, but it had -- how many times did it eat at you saying, oh, am I going to win? When am I going to win? How many times did that go through your head?**

RYAN HUNTER-REAY: It did. It went through my head a lot. But I know I have the team behind me to do it. I know I can do it with the right car. I know I have the talent to win the races, and just have to think positive. I've got the best job on earth, so I come and show up in the morning and there's a yellow car there with my name on the side of it, and I go to work as an IndyCar car driver, and I absolutely knew we could get back in Victory Lane, it's just a matter of putting it all together. At times with the aero kit, the manufacturer aero kit, we might have struggled a little bit. Our team did, and we just weren't firing on all cylinders for some reason, but now again with a universal aero kit, we're right back on a level playing field again, just like we left off in '12, '13 and '14.

**Q. And then just talk about the domination that Honda had this weekend and Andretti Autosport.**

RYAN HUNTER-REAY: Honda has done a great job, absolutely. I don't know if it was down to drivability,

bottom-end torque, what it was, but Honda definitely had it covered here at Detroit, so hats off to them. They gave me everything I needed, I can tell you that. Hopefully we can go ahead and continue that throughout the rest of the season.

**Q. Ryan, you've had a lot of wins that have kind of kick-started seasons, whether it was Indy in '14 or the run in '12 that led to the championship. Do you think this is one that could do the same for your '18 season?**

RYAN HUNTER-REAY: I hope so. We've had a pretty good year. We finished second twice, fifth here and there, and we've been in the top 5 a lot, so we've been strong, and like I say, I think maybe with the universal aero kit, we have a better shot at contending for the championship like we did when it was a spec aero kit back in '12, '13, '14. Absolutely, I'm on that page, and I hope this is the first to a string of wins. You never know when it comes, you know, and 2012, what, we won Milwaukee, Iowa and Toronto back-to-back. Going into the Milwaukee race I didn't expect for that to happen, but you've got to be ready for it, and that's where we are. Hopefully we can keep that rolling.

**Q. Was your first goal to pressure Alex into making a mistake or just to flat-out pass him?**

RYAN HUNTER-REAY: My first goal was to have pace to catch him. I mean, he wasn't even on the same straightaway that I was when I first started that stint. I didn't even know there was anybody up there. Just kept my head down, and then all of a sudden there was a car off in the distance, down the end of the straightaway, and just kept my head down, and I could see I was closing him, so once I had that rabbit in front of me, I even went quicker, and I knew that if I can get to him with 15, 10 laps to go, I have a chance at it. I got to him I think with 11 laps to go, on his gearbox, and from there, I just started to see where am I catching him, what corners is he weaker, and I found that Turn 1 and 2 was the place that I was catching him quite a bit, so I just kept putting pressure on.

I thought that the gap and the interval that I closed on him, that at some point that weakness would be exposed, so I was going to take my chances when it came to -- for me to see where it was, and I found out that was out of Turn 2. So it hadn't got to the point where I was going to lunge on him but it was getting there because I kept getting that little bit of front lock from him. So that kind of started to open the door. Then it opened.

**Q. The fact that he's a teammate, at what time does another driver go from being the teammate to being the guy that I've got to pass?**

RYAN HUNTER-REAY: It's a teammate. You can't take a teammate out. You've got to be very careful how you race him. Alex has done a great job, no doubt a future series champion. My job is to make sure it's not this year. He's definitely done an amazing job, and he's

been great to work with. We work really well together. Yeah, I'm just happy we got the win today, and hopefully we can challenge him for a championship this year. Hopefully it comes down to the wire, 28 DHL team on top at the end.

**Q. Now that you reach the winner's circle, it must give you a little bit of extra spring in your step. You're about 20 points behind, but does that give you a new outlook that you can go ahead and catch the leaders and maybe walk away with the 2018 crown?**

RYAN HUNTER-REAY: Yeah, I just have to keep chipping away at it. I'm sure I'm more than 20 points behind, but I have to just keep chipping away, chipping away. If you keep finishing in the top 3, top 5, top 3, top 5, wins, that's how you challenge for a championship, so that's what we're focused on doing.

It's so easy to make a mistake like that. Today the braking, I almost did that same thing twice. I don't know what happened with him, so I'll have to go back and figure it out.

**Q. Were you provoked to jump in or did you just think of it on your own?**

RYAN HUNTER-REAY: Yesterday when I had an interview for second, when I was second with the local news, they said, so if you win this thing tomorrow, are you going to jump in? I'm like, yes, I'll jump in, I want to win that bad. Of course first thing I got out of the car were those two guys that I said, yes, I'd jump in the frigging fountain. I got right in no problem.

**Q. We've all seen you win several times, obviously. Was this as good a drive as you've ever put together just from a relentless standpoint, et cetera? Where does this one sort of rank?**

RYAN HUNTER-REAY: Definitely pace-wise I think so. Yeah, I think it was -- to be that much faster than the rest of the field, yeah. It's got to be one of my top races. I mean, I'll always put 2014 Indy 500 as my top one because going back every lap with Helio like that, it's a different type of race. This one was based on pure speed, not making any mistakes and going fast and jumping in the fountain.

**Q. The delay before the race started with the pace car crash, kind of a weird situation there. What did you see on that, and how much did it affect you as a driver?**

RYAN HUNTER-REAY: It didn't affect me at all. Race hadn't started yet, so we just rolled out, no issue at all there. I think that's a testament to the Corvette ZR1. I know that thing is 750 horsepower. I've driven one before, and you do not want to jump on the gas in that thing, and for sure it's a fast car. So no, it's something that can happen and the race hadn't started. No big deal.

**Q. This morning you go out and qualify, I know it's**

**in the wet, you have a couple spins, kind of a difficult qualifying session, and then you come back in the race and pretty much do hot laps through the whole race. Is it hard after a morning like that to kind of wire yourself to go back out there and deliver that kind of performance?**

RYAN HUNTER-REAY: Yeah, I knew I had a good race car in the dry. I had a really hard time in the wet. I usually like the wet, usually go pretty fast in the rain. But just had a hard time with it, couldn't make the car turn, couldn't make it brake, couldn't really make it accelerate very well. I knew I just had to wait until the afternoon until the race came with a dry track, and I knew what I had yesterday. Had to take advantage of that, and knowing that ahead of time, how quick our car was in race trim, I kind of was pretty eager to get the race started.