

IndyCar Media Conference

Sunday August 19, 2018

Alexander Rossi

Will Power

Scott Dixon

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: We'll begin our post race press conference with the driver of the No. 9 PNC Bank Honda, Scott Dixon, finishing third today.

It's your best finish here at Pocono since you won the race here in 2013. Just talk a little bit about your day, please.

SCOTT DIXON: Yeah, I don't know. A bit of a strange one. Obviously didn't want to see what happened at the start of the race and definitely think of Robby and his family. I haven't really heard an update of how that's all going, just hope he's doing okay.

To the race, which was, I don't know, really difficult. Had lots of understeer. We added tons of front wing to the car. Just about every stop I think we added front wing. Made multiple changes to try to get the thing to turn. You can get it pretty lose by itself, but in traffic it's a massive washout. With the kink being as difficult as it was, you just couldn't pass.

Through the mid stint we tried to shift up on strategy, then got caught with Marco. Threw our whole pack into a 208, 210 situation. All the leaders took off, rest of us racing for third.

Somewhat of a frustrating day. Nice to get some points out of it. Obviously we took a bit of a hit there with Rossi. Congrats to him. Doing a stellar job right now. We definitely need to try and sort our act out, especially qualifying, just pace out of the car right now.

Yeah, I don't know, that was about it really. It was really tough to pass. You could get cars that were really bad, but cars that were sort of midway and halfway pace, you just really struggled. Marco was lifting big-time to get fuel mileage and just couldn't get a run on him. If we just didn't have the washout we did today, it would have been a lot easier to pass. It is what it is. Next year we need to come out with a revised aero kit.

THE MODERATOR: When you have a guy like Alex having a pretty good day over the entire field, can you talk about minimizing the damage. 29 points lead unofficially.

SCOTT DIXON: If you look at the last couple races, we've taken a bit of a hit. We haven't been horrible. We've been a bit blah. They've been excelling. Can't say anything else except good job to them, congrats to them.

We just got to do a better job. I think the rest of us in the points kind of area there have been sort of up and down a little bit and fairly close. Those guys have done a hell of a job. Yeah, obviously we'd like to be gaining points, but that wasn't the reality.

THE MODERATOR: Questions for Scott Dixon.

Q. Can you talk about trying to refocus after what happened in the early run. You had that bad crash at Indy last year, as well.

SCOTT DIXON: Some of these situations you can't do much about. It's unfortunate to see an accident like that at any time, but especially the first lap of a 500-mile race, too. It is very tough going through that kink. A lot less downforce this year, just the way the car functions is more difficult, too.

When you don't do any kind of warmup, it's tough to really understand where the car is, the balance of it. You are kind of rolling out after a big rain session throughout the night, in the afternoon it's hard to know what the track is like. Maybe at that point you should be a little bit cautious.

As I said, none of us ever want to see that. That's horrible to see. All we can hope for is that everybody is going to be okay, everyone is safe. A close-knit family here. See Robby actually every day at training. Just hope that he's going to be okay.

THE MODERATOR: Also joined by Will Power, the runner-up in today's race. Will's third straight podium here at Pocono. He won the last two races here at Pocono.

Will, sum up your day. Looked like you could kind of stay with Rossi but just had trouble keeping pace.

WILL POWER: Yeah, we got him in that one exchange. Just got a couple of bad runs out of one, to be honest. Kind of beside me going into two. Yeah, that was that. Then in the last pit stop, we had a great shot at getting him again. I caught Max Chilton at the worst possible spot in three, washed right up into the marbles, almost

got into the wall.

Got back into the pits. On the out lap got a mid shift in second. Lost a second in that whole exchange. That was our only shot to close the gap to him. If we didn't jump him in that exchange, it was going to be very difficult to get him. He was obviously very fast. Yeah, that was that.

It was just difficult to follow and get a run on people. Yeah, basically full green, no yellows or restarts.

THE MODERATOR: We'll continue with questions for Scott and Will.

Q. All year it's been kind of difficult to pass on the ovals. It looked like it was like that again today. Is that a result of the aero package or the green-flag runs or something else?

WILL POWER: Yeah, it's less downforce to start with. I think we haven't had enough time to understand the tire because Scott and I did a test at Indy and found the tire makes a big difference. This car has a different weight distribution, a lot further forward. Probably make the tire work a lot better, as well.

SCOTT DIXON: Yeah, as Will sort of alluded to, we had a pretty successful test at Indianapolis a week or two ago with some aero changes and some ideas to move forward. The tire was a big thing. The front wing, some of the underwing, as well. I think there's definitely some things in the works.

I think some of the areas we go to are a little less on downforce. It's a first go at it. It's tough. When you don't get to run at these places... Some tracks you can dial in really easily and really well. I think right now it's super tough to follow close and ultimately it makes it really hard to pass.

Q. Scott, you said earlier it was a frustrating day.

SCOTT DIXON: Yesterday was frustrating, too, qualifying. So a frustrating weekend I should have said.

Yeah, I don't know. I think it was more frustrating in just the race itself for me. We got stuck behind Marco for I think it was three stints. It was just miserable. No fault of his. They were just trying to hit a fuel number. But I just couldn't do anything. I had no pressure from behind. It was the most bizarre thing where you're running four, five miles an hour slower than probably the pace of the race should be, and nobody was doing anything.

Yeah, I don't know. I think that sums it up. I think we did the best we could with what we had. I don't think our car was very good. We didn't test here. Penske didn't test here either. Fundamentally we didn't really roll off the truck very well.

I think we got the best out of what we had, but it was frustrating.

Q. Bourdais was saying he was not happy about the repair. Did he share his opinion?

SCOTT DIXON: I didn't see it. I didn't look at the repair. He must have gone out there or something, I have no idea.

Q. Will, close to half distance, lap 95 or 96, you were very fast, then you dropped (indiscernible)?

WILL POWER: Yeah, a bit of that. I probably caught traffic. Whenever I was clear, I was fast. Just kind of went to the pace of the guys in front, slowly picked them off. Just took a while to get by people.

Q. Scott, as far as the bumps were concerned, where you grounded out in qualifying yesterday, were you also limited by the fact that raindrops started to fall on your qualifying run?

SCOTT DIXON: Yeah, good point. I think so. I did see some of that. Man, I think it's raining, I should just pull off.

No, that was the least of our problems. I think we were the only one feeling the bump, too. Watching a lot of the in-car, people that also ran, we were maybe a little aggressive. Takes a toll for the shitty qualifying.

Q. Will, if you had been able to stay ahead of Rossi, looking at how he got through traffic compared to how you got through traffic, do you think you could have held him off or do you think he had enough for you?

WILL POWER: If I had him on the last stint there where we had all that clear track when we came out, yeah, I was very confident I could hold him off. That would be 216. Yes, losing a spot, then a very bad in and out lap, second in that exchange. That was our only shot to get him.

But, yeah, I think in the last stint if we had been ahead, if someone is running 215 in front of you, you're never going to get him.

Q. Scott, you're well familiar with the technical director over at Andretti. He was your engineer for years. I was asking him this great matchup of youth and aggressiveness against legendary experience. He basically said, Scott has been through this a time or two, so we know it's not going to be easy. How much do you feel at this point with the lead you got experience is going to be the X factor that decides the championship?

SCOTT DIXON: I think it can work for you and against you, to be honest. It's kind of like I think I said before, when you go to Indy for the first time, it's kind of nice not expecting anything. You don't know what's going to happen. You don't know that you're not going to enjoy that or this, or you're going to have this issue in the race, whatever.

I think everybody at this level right now, preparation is key, and everybody is at a very high level. Andretti have done a very good job. Rossi himself, I think even stepping up against his teammates, too, has put himself on a bit of an island there, too.

These championships are never easy to win. They never will be. We'll give it our best. Hopefully it's enough. If it's not, we have to get back to the drawing board. I know there's some areas that right now we're struggling with pretty big which makes it frustrating at times, too.

Not just Eric, but there's a ton of talent over there. It's a great team, it's a big team, a lot of information, run well, a lot of good people. That's why it's going to be very tough to try to beat them.

Q. Will, did you have any more HP available? Was it a fuel mileage race in terms of you having to back off more than Rossi did?

WILL POWER: Yeah, I mean, I spent a lot of time in fuel save. Pretty much as soon as we caught traffic, I was just in fuel save heavily for most of the race. To get a lap on him, that was our best shot to jump him. Yeah, that was what we had.

You're still driving hard. You're just in a very lean slot. Still driving real hard.

Q. Scott, looking at Gateway, you had a good run there last year. Alex has been doing well on ovals. How much harder are you going to have to work to extend your championship lead?

SCOTT DIXON: I think Andretti have tested at just about every track possible with the Indy Lights days. I know they tested there, we didn't test there. I don't know. I think in that situation, you just hope you roll off strong.

Right now with the oval format, you get an hour practice. It's pretty tough to get everything even race running and through it with a new car that we haven't really run at any of these places. That's all you hope for, is that when you hit the track, the car's good.

Hopefully what we learnt last year will help. Even then I imagine it's going to be pretty easy to make a mistake in the race. It's going to be maybe a little tough to pass, too. Have to see how that plays out.

Q. It seems the drivers in general have asked for a more difficult car to drive, the universal kit has less downforce. Seems to work great on the road courses. Sometimes on the superspeedways we don't see as much passing as we've been used to. What would you want to see them change, if anything? Is it just a matter of adding a little more downforce or something else that can be done?

WILL POWER: Yeah, I think the tire will help. It just

depends how far you want to go. You need to make it so close where you take the driver out. Obviously today there's a lot of driver in it. It probably needs to go a bit more towards being wide open in two, getting runs. Just need more grip. That's probably downforce and tire, yeah.

SCOTT DIXON: I agree. Some of it's just how the car functions right now. I think the front wing is pretty inefficient, especially when you have lock in it, then when you get close it washes out a lot more than the rear. Don't have an even balance of loss of downforce.

IndyCar is working hard. They do a really good job. They're very thorough. This year I've been really excited with how on it they've been, trying to understand what we need. They will get it right. It's hard first time at some of these tracks that none of us test at.

WILL POWER: It's the best group they've ever had at IndyCar as far as technical, the technical side. Bill, Tino Belli. These guys are very thorough. They've worked as engineers on teams. They are always making the right moves. They've made a car that looks awesome, it does race well on short ovals, road courses. Superspeedways, just temperature can make a difference. The wind direction today was just bad for racing, because you had a tailwind out of two. Where passing was last year, just impossible to get a run through there.

A lot of factors when you go on the speedway.

Q. Will, when you did get ahead of Rossi during that exchange, did you make any significant changes to your car to try to make a pass?

WILL POWER: No. Minor changes in the pit stops. Had the tools in the car. We just kept trying to get front wing in it to make it turn. Yeah, it was amazing, the stint before, when I got Rossi, I was loose. I went out, that next stint I had so much push out of one. Maybe a set of tires didn't work as well, I don't know.

Q. Will, you had a post race penalty from running over that tire hose. Do you feel it was the Andretti team's fault for pulling that hose back slow? What happened there?

WILL POWER: Yeah, I remember doing that, thinking, Man, I hope I don't get a drive-through. They don't do that...

Yeah, I think the fact that Rossi had left, there was still a hose out there, yeah, they were pulling it back. Just closer, one of those situations. I remember that. I was like, Damn it.

Q. Scott, in the accident with Wickens, you were dodging quite a bit of debris there. How close were you to hitting something?

SCOTT DIXON: Probably close for a lot of people. For

me, I think it was kind of I went low, but then I saw Robby coming across, spinning off. Must have just missed. I think it was very close to the side pod. Probably just missed the rear of our car.

Definitely when I saw it, I was going for that hole, I thought we were going to get collected. I guess lucky for us. Horrible to see that accident.

Q. Do you think it would have made any difference to the drivers and teams if they did have the hour practice? I don't know if you got to do any race setup in the morning, then qualifying. Do you think that would have changed anything for the race this afternoon if you had that time to set up your car for the race?

SCOTT DIXON: I don't know. I definitely wanted to practice. I was pushing pretty hard to get another practice session. It was obvious we needed it. You're going to have one side. They went and voted on it in the afternoon where it was kind of 50/50 of teams that wanted it and didn't want it. The teams that tested and were good didn't want it.

It is what it is. I think in retrospect, it's a 500-mile race, too. There's nothing good about it.

WILL POWER: Your question was if there was practice that crash wouldn't have happened?

Q. (No microphone.)

WILL POWER: For the race, yeah, I'm sure you would have seen how it would be in traffic. I didn't even know there was a vote. I would have voted for it. I wanted to get the car right.

SCOTT DIXON: You guys didn't vote.

WILL POWER: Oh, they never asked us (laughter).

SCOTT DIXON: Your fault.

WILL POWER: Just like that restart?

SCOTT DIXON: Wanker (laughter).

THE MODERATOR: Thank you for joining us. We'll see you in a few days at Gateway.

SCOTT DIXON: Thank you.

WILL POWER: Thank you.

THE MODERATOR: We are joined by the winner of today's ABC Supply 500, Alexander Rossi, driver of the No. 27 NAPA Auto Parts Honda. Today is the third win of the 2018 season for Alexander, first win for him on an oval since he won the 100th Indianapolis 500 in 2015.

Alex, led 180 laps today, pretty easy out there, Sunday

drive, right?

ALEXANDER ROSSI: Yeah, sure. I mean, I think the fact that we were able to do that is just a testament to the car I had from Andretti Autosport, really the work that my teammate Zach Veach put in at the test year last week. We were able to roll off instantly competitive and strong. Couldn't have done that without him.

It was a big team win from that standpoint, and a great day for the NAPA Auto Parts Andretti crew, great on pit stops, strategy, gave us the tools we needed to get it done today. We'll enjoy this one, but dark cloud metaphorically and literally with what happened at the start. Look forward to talking to Rob and James, giving them my best wishes and hope to see them very, very soon.

THE MODERATOR: Big picture-wise, the last two events you've cut into the lead that Scott had. You mentioned you just have to beat the 9 car for the rest of the season. 29-point deficit. Your thoughts on your place in the championship.

ALEXANDER ROSSI: We're trying. We're doing everything we can. We had a stretch that if the pace was there, we just weren't executing on the Sundays. Been able to do that two weekends in a row now, kind of get back to the place we were at the beginning of the year.

The momentum and the confidence of the whole team is really high right now. We just got to keep qualifying well and having good Sundays, hopefully we can get it done. It's going to be no easy feat by any means. We led most of a 500-mile race and still finished third.

THE MODERATOR: Does it mean more to you to win this race than the home race for the Andretti family?

ALEXANDER ROSSI: Absolutely. I mean, it means a lot to win any race for Andretti Autosport. They have such a legacy in the sport, to be able to add to that in a very small way is a huge honor of mine. Hopefully I'll have the opportunity to do that a couple more times this year and we'll be able to close it out with a championship.

At the moment all of our focus is on St. Louis next week, putting together the best racecar and best package that we can. Hopefully go out and do the same thing.

THE MODERATOR: Questions for Alexander.

Q. I know you and Robby have a lot of history together, a long career, call yourselves friends. When you came around and saw the fence and the debris field, what went through your mind when you found out it was Robby?

ALEXANDER ROSSI: The first thing I asked was if he

was okay. I saw that Ryan was out of his car. That was a relief. Yeah, I mean, it's Rob, it's anyone, doesn't matter who it is. Obviously you have your friends out there with you. Those ones hit a bit closer to home. At the end of the day, all 22 of us, 33 of us, whatever it may be, are a family. We try our best to look after each other out there. You don't want to see that happen to anyone.

We'll continue to think of him and pray for him, his family, his fiancée, all that they have to deal with. I hope to talk to him soon, like I said, give him my regards.

Q. You led 180 laps. Was there any moment during the race a concern you had trouble with fuel consumption?

ALEXANDER ROSSI: No, fuel was never a worry. We were able to hit a fuel target while leading. That's a huge testament to Honda and the gains they've made in that department.

The only real times I was concerned was in traffic. It was really hard to get around people. I could do 214s by myself without a lot of issue, but I'd fall off to 207, 209 when I was behind other cars. Sometimes it worked to my advantage, sometimes it worked to my disadvantage.

The one big thing that made a huge difference in the race was my teammates Zach and Marco didn't put up a big fight and let me get by, which gave me a buffer to Will. That was a huge moment in the race. I owe them a lot, probably dinners and beers and all that sort of thing. I look forward to seeing them as soon as possible.

Q. How much of the inability to overtake today was based on the aero package?

ALEXANDER ROSSI: It was challenging for all of us. I think the fact that we didn't have a practice yesterday in the afternoon where we focus on race running for sure put everyone on the back foot. I think things were a little bit more dramatic than they would have been. It's just we all went into the race guessing on a setup based on what we had done in qualifying, which is really hard to do.

Usually you have a pretty big shift in the car setup from qualifying to the race, especially object these superspeedways. If you look at Indianapolis, probably have like 37 hours of practice to prepare for a 500-mile race. Today we had an hour, so...

I think that was really the main reason. That's part of the weather, part of dealing with things. It was the same for everyone. We were all in the same boat of guessing overnight, hopefully landing on something that was halfway decent.

Q. You cut the championship deficit down by 17

points. Do you feel like momentum is on your side in the final stretch?

ALEXANDER ROSSI: For sure. I mean, it's a long way to go still. Scott doesn't finish bad ever, so you got to keep your foot down and your mental focus there, keep trying to repeat performances like this every single weekend.

In the stretch of three weeks, three races, we're one down and two to go, so the next few weeks are very, very important for the entire year as a whole. We'll enjoy this tonight and immediately start focusing on getting ready tomorrow morning.

Q. Did you test at Gateway recently?

ALEXANDER ROSSI: Yes.

Q. Do you feel that's going to help you in that race in terms of being able to pass in traffic?

ALEXANDER ROSSI: Well, I mean, whether we tested, it was just a team test, it was just four of us. We didn't get a whole lot of traffic running in. I don't really know how to answer that question. It's a completely different aero kit than this. I think all the short oval races this year have been really good, so I think we can expect something similar to what we saw at Phoenix, Iowa.

But, yeah, it's impossible to tell until you get there. The Firestone tires and tracks are so sensitive to temperature, rubber that's been down from other cars. Testing is great, gives you a direction, but rarely is it identical to the conditions you have on race day and over the race weekend. You're always trying to kind of adapt. For sure, having time there is definitely a good thing. I don't think Ganassi has been there, so...

Q. What do you think IndyCar can continue to do to fix or minimize the dirty air issue on superspeedways?

ALEXANDER ROSSI: I have no idea. Those are smarter people than me. They look at squiggly lines, pretty colors, make a decision.

Q. Did you have any difficulty trying to focus after what took place on lap seven?

ALEXANDER ROSSI: No. I mean, is part of our jobs, right? You got to be able to compartmentalize, do the best job you can for your team, execute the best that you can. You just got to kind of accept it and deal with that emotion after the race.

No, it was just trying to get the job done.

Q. Did you make any adjustments at all throughout the day?

ALEXANDER ROSSI: Yeah, the standard kind of adjustments you make during pit stops, trying to chase track conditions. As 500 miles goes by with 20 odd cars, the rubber goes down, the balance changes a little bit. But the car was great from lap one out of the box. You saw the lead we were able to open up really

in the first three or four laps on Will, the pace we had throughout the whole race, it was strong. Like I said, that's a testament to the team.

Q. You mentioned how good the car was early on. A lot of people didn't realize you took the lead on the restart, that's the lap the crash happened. Describe the restart, how you were able to get the lead.

ALEXANDER ROSSI: The polesitter here is a sitting duck because it's such a long run down to turn one. When I restarted from the lead, man, the Honda power is what made the difference. It was that massive. It's a huge advantage for us. I think we saw at Indy the restarts we were capable of. Huge hats off to Honda.

Q. Talk about the last two green flag pit stops. Will was able to get out in front of you, then you had to pass him. On the last one he said that was his only chance to get you, he made a couple of errors.

ALEXANDER ROSSI: The first one we were out of fuel, came out in a gaggle of four or five cars, it took me a while on the out lap to get up to speed. That allowed Will to jump me because he stayed out a lap longer.

As much as I was struggling in traffic, I think he was struggling as well. I was able to get turn one right one lap, had a run on him into two, which was obviously the deciding move of the race. When we pitted, Rob Edwards did an awesome job of making sure for the last pit stop I came out in clean air. I don't think he did. So that allowed me to really stretch my legs in clean air.

Scott and Sebastien were the cars in front of me, so they weren't exactly slow. I was able to run good lap times being behind them.

Q. One of the noticeable things was the difference between you and Will in traffic. Considering you had to guess at a setup, was there anything from last year's car that you could take for this, remembering how well you ran here last year?

ALEXANDER ROSSI: Yes and no. I think there's some underlying characteristics that are the same. You if you look at Andretti Autosport over the years, they've been strong on superspeedways regardless of the aero kit. The mechanical package they have works for this type of track. For sure there are some things that translate.

At the end of the day it was really the finds that Zach found in the test that were big. Those are things we don't usually necessarily run on superspeedways, so we didn't have the ability on during the month of May. I can't express the job he did enough to give the four of us a car that was as good as it was, as strong as the Penske cars in my mind. As a rookie first time being here, can't be stressed enough.

Huge hats off to him. He'll be on pole and winning

racers pretty soon.

THE MODERATOR: Alexander, congratulations. We'll see you in a few days at Gateway.

ALEXANDER ROSSI: Thank you.