

IndyCar Media Conference

Sunday September 16, 2018

Ryan Hunter-Reay Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: Congratulations.

RYAN HUNTER-REAY: Felt like the race just didn't want to end. I guess that's what happens when you spend the whole day out front. Any time I needed the pace to put it down, we leapt out to a lead, I was able to maintain that.

Hats off to this team, DHL, Auto Nation, Honda. Honda really gave me great drivability, reliability. The Firestone tires were great. Shout out to Kerry Doughty, CO of Butterball, fighting cancer at home right now. His name was on the side of our car today. Special win for him. Also a big shout out to Robby Wickens, wanted to dedicate that win to him and his fight. Hopefully back with us as soon as possible.

THE MODERATOR: You had an Andretti day that didn't end right for Alex, but strong for the whole team. Marco, you, Rossi came battling back. Just a team effort.

RYAN HUNTER-REAY: Yeah, we really made the cars stronger on the weekend. We tested here on Thursday. We tested some things that were conservative, aggressive. We miss-stepped here and there. We were P1. P2 we went to P10. We figured what we didn't need. That really helped us for the race.

I'm going to miss this place. It's unbelievable. All these years I've been trying to win here, now we win, we're not coming back. We seem to have the secret, the setup now, and we can't use it. I hope we're back not in 2019, but in 2020. Hopefully we can get this resolved and get two northern California races on the schedule.

THE MODERATOR: Questions.

Q. You said last night you had one focus only, winning the race. Give us the feeling of going wire to wire.

RYAN HUNTER-REAY: Great feeling. You control the race from there. I think clean air was a big deal today. Just having that extra little bit of downforce on the car. Like we said yesterday, we were about 1500 pounds shy in downforce from where we were last year, which is massive. Just having that clear air allowed me to do what I needed to do when I needed to do it, maintaining the pace, controlling the pace, even going

faster when I needed to.

It was nice. Seems like the day is a lot longer when you're out there because you just want to end the race. Can it please end now? Can it please end now? All in all, a good day, enjoyable. Pretty late. The sun was going down there in turn two. Right on the horizon. It was starting to blind me going through two. I was glad it ended for that reason if anything else.

Q. At the restart, Scott was .67 points behind you. Did you expect he's get you?

RYAN HUNTER-REAY: I know Scott. He wants to win every weekend. He knows I can race him clean. He races me clean. I thought we were going to have a little tussle. He was on the Firestone reds, they come up quicker in temp. As soon as we settled into a pace, I was able to pull away and open it up.

Q. Did you have any tense moments?

RYAN HUNTER-REAY: My only tense moment of the race was catching the lap traffic at the end. I had burned up the rears a little bit. Maintaining the gap to Scott and Will. When I started catching those guys, that was at the time my tires were at their worst. With the dirty air, sliding around a little bit, it started becoming a little interesting at the end.

I was able to maintain the gap and finish up front. I think that was one of the most tense moments. I had a big moment in turn two during the race where I lost the rear and had a huge correction. It was one of those that almost could have went around. From there, it was mistake-free. Just put my head down.

Q. As his teammate, how do you feel about Alex's season, his future?

RYAN HUNTER-REAY: Alex did a great job this season. Absolutely opened a lot of eyes. I know he has a bright future here, a lot more race wins ahead of him. I'm certain he's a future champion.

But congratulations to Scott. Five-time champion. To do that in this era of racing with reliability the way it is, the evenness and competitiveness of teams, is unbelievable. It's unthinkable what he's accomplished.

It's amazing to think of what he's accomplished. It's great to share the track with him. Even better to beat him at times.

Q. We saw a couple little issues. Did you have any

scares on the pit cycles a couple of times?

RYAN HUNTER-REAY: Yeah, couple times had lap traffic right there. Alex was fighting to get back on the lead lap. That was a little tense. He passed me, I passed him back, knowing I was coming in that lap. But he got back on the lead lap, then charged through, had a good run.

But nothing was overly strenuous, stressful. When you have a good car like that, you can just maintain. I just knew I had to keep myself from making any little errors. When Scott was behind me pressuring me, I had a couple lockups that were close, but that was about it.

Q. Cale Yarborough used to say get out front, stay out front. Was that the strategy all along or did you capitalize on a good situation?

RYAN HUNTER-REAY: No, that's a great strategy. I like that strategy. I'd like to partake in that strategy more often.

Any time on a road course, especially on a road course, qualifying on pole is a big deal. It can be a game changer for you. It can be a race changer. You want to take advantage of that from there, control the pace of the race, control and dictate when the stops are. Everybody kind of goes off the leader when he stops. That's what we did.

It was nice to go from pole, win, lead the most laps, the whole thing. That's an ideal race. May not be the most exciting thing for the fans at times, but from a racecar driver's point of view, team owner, race team, it's the ideal race.

Q. Next year, don't know what your team owner is going to do, expand to more cars, but in the situation being already four different drivers, do you feel that affects your ability to win races and perform if the team keeps expanding?

RYAN HUNTER-REAY: We have strength in numbers, for sure. There's positives and negatives to anything, right? The positives are that we all work as a group. We have four times the data to go through. When you have four drivers like we do that know what they're talking about, know what they want from a racecar, we can make quicker work of a test day, get to that ultimate setup that we're looking for like we did this weekend. There's the upside.

The downside is you have to beat the same setup four or five times over. That can be very frustrating from a driver's perspective. From Michael's perspective, it's absolutely a winner, so...

I don't know where it's going. Usually I find out when you guys write about it, then I call the team, What does this mean?

Q. How do you feel about going to Laguna Seca?

RYAN HUNTER-REAY: Definitely going to miss this

place. A lot of great memories here. Everybody loves to come here. This is our Indy 500 outside the Indy 500. Auto Nation alone has 80 people here right now, Andretti Autosport 500 hospitality. Absolutely everybody loves coming here.

I think there's room in the schedule for both of them. I hope there is. I want to see that. I'm really disappointed that it's not. But look forward to going to Laguna Seca from a driving perspective. Great track, fun track. Just like Road America, Sonoma, any of them. I raced there a lot in Skip Barber. I have a lot of good memories there.

We do our Race to Beat Cancer event there, where we have a couple days of formula cars and James Hinchcliffe and I teach people that come in and donate the money, we teach them how to racecars for a few days, we're the instructors, then we go play a couple days the Pebble Beach golf. It's pretty much an awesome four or five days.

Q. You're already in the middle of a great career, won an Indy 500, a championship. Two more wins you'll be in the 20 category, how important is it for you to get into that 20 win category?

RYAN HUNTER-REAY: I'd love to get into the 20s. No doubt about it. I start thinking about numbers and race wins, I can't help but think about all the ones that slipped away. Every racecar driver is like that. You think of the ones that should have been.

I guess it comes with it when you concentrate on winning races like we did this weekend. That's what we're going to do. Every year I think about six races that got away from us and why. Had they not, we would be right there fighting in the championship. Should have, could have, would have.

THE MODERATOR: Thanks a lot.