

IndyCar Media Conference

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Mike Hull

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: Mike Hull joins us. You seem to have collected a lot of these championship hats, now five of them with Scott.

MIKE HULL: I didn't stay over there to get a hat. I didn't realize they were passing them out. A little disappointed in that actually (laughter).

It's great to win. I think I said this earlier to somebody in your peer group, I can't remember who it was. When you win a race, it validates who you are. When you win a championship, it defines the culture of not only the people that all of you saw today at the racetrack, both for the 9 and 10 car team, they fully support each other, but all the people in the building, then all the partners.

That culture continues to grow. It never gets old. It just feeds on itself. As you go through time, we've gone through 12 of these championships now, there's very few of us left that were here in 1996 at Laguna Seca when we won our first championship. But some of us still are. Now the millennial group that's coming in to work for us are well-mentored. We had a few of them working for us today on the 9 car. That's really gratifying.

THE MODERATOR: Another smart, solid drive from Scott. We've seen this movie about 700 times, it seems.

MIKE HULL: It's nice to be an extra in that movie, for sure. I'm working on my SAG card for permanent status.

Scott sees the race globally. He always watching the race from the cockpit. It's never on the plane that you think it is. He understands what's going on on the entire racetrack. He truly understands what he has to do. He understands the art of recovery extremely well. He doesn't give up. We don't give up. There have been times when we left the racetrack knowing we could have done better than we did, but we accept the reality of what happened.

Today it's really hard to race the kind of race we raced today because I think we probably had something for Hunter-Reay. In fact, he came over and said that to me after he was on the podium. He said he was glad he didn't have to race the Scott Dixon he knew he might have to race at St. Petersburg next year.

It's so hard to rein it back in when you're trying to race Rossi and not race to win. So that's what we did today. I thought we did a really good job of that.

THE MODERATOR: There are hundreds of laps here, but I would like you to find a couple, three points that become this moment. Obviously the Portland situation is one. Where else would you point to and say, Those were a couple key moments for us?

MIKE HULL: I'd have to think about that because I never think about what just happened.

Long Beach, I did a terrible job with the strategy there actually. I left Scott out too long. That really put us in a hole before Indianapolis. I think that was kind of a defining moment in a way because it made us realize that we are not invincible, and you have to sometimes pinch yourself extremely hard to become normal, not let greed be your friend. In racing that never works out.

For me, that was a turning point in how I thought about the way we should go racing this year. Not that we were chasing points this year early in the year, but we just tried to make sure we got the most out of every day, not try to get the impossible out of every day.

You mentioned last weekend at Portland. It was certainly a relief after the dust cleared there to see the fact that Scott -- would really like to thank the safety guys for getting out of his way so we didn't lose a lap. Not losing a lap there was a really big deal.

I think winning Toronto the way we did there proved to us that we had a chance to win a championship. Maybe to that point, we knew we could, but I think that told us that we were on our way to being able to do it if we just stepped out of our own way.

THE MODERATOR: Questions.

Q. For every championship you win, Chris Simmons, championship number five, there's a Kate Gundlach who gets her first championship as an engineer. What is it like when you give someone like that a chance to win a championship with Scott Dixon?

MIKE HULL: I remember starting out in IndyCar racing, having a great degree of admiration for people that were doing that. I think you have to remember where you came from. I think you have to give opportunity to

people that need to rise in their vocational position on a race team, provide them the resource to do what those two people that you mentioned, as well as all the others today, provide them that opportunity.

You don't know if this is your last chance to do it. In my case, I get the most out of today because I might not get another chance. When you're young, you don't realize that.

We'll work on St. Pete next.

Q. You said Scott knows from the cockpit what he has to do and not to do. After the restart, when Rahal had his trouble, he was close behind Ryan Hunter-Reay, did you expect he would attack him or hold second position?

MIKE HULL: With a scanner we could hear what they told Ryan. They told Ryan under no uncertain terms that Scott Dixon wasn't going to get around him. If it would have been a normal race for us, we probably would have worked him over. We chose to be content and just race where we were.

What was interesting about the strategy of the race, everybody thought red tires were going to gain you a speed advantage. If you could hold off the people on reds for 10 laps, the blacks held their own and, in fact, were faster.

Ryan at that point was on reds. We were on blacks. We figured after 10 laps we'd see what happened with Ryan anyway. I just said to Scott on the radio, Be careful with him, he's been told to make sure you don't get around him.

Scott understood that, also understood the speed of the people on red tires behind him. We let him burn his tires and everything was okay.

Q. Now only one driver in IndyCar history has won more championships than Scott. Not asking you to compare eras, but this is big.

MIKE HULL: I've kind of been asked that question before. Unfortunately I'm a bit of a dinosaur right now, been around a long time. Growing up, I was a big IndyCar fan. I watched IndyCar races. I watched A.J. and Mario try to knock each other into the fence pretty regularly when they were both 135-pound guys. They did it generationally. The ability that they had carried them over a generation or two. They still stayed after it maybe longer than they should have, but they stayed after it.

I think Scott now is doing the same thing generationally. The young kid from Mexico, Patricio, stopped me outside and told me from the time he could remember motor racing, he admired Scott Dixon. When he was on the racetrack on Friday, they were running around with each other on the racetrack, he appreciated the fact that he wasn't treated like a rookie.

I think that's the mark of a race driver like Scott Dixon. He remembers where he came from. He has a high degree of appreciation for the people that are on the racetrack around him, most of them.

I think that's a fair question. I don't know how to compare race drivers from generation to generation. I've been really lucky to be able to see quite a few.

Q. With you now claiming your 12th championship, Scott having five many them, your former champions include legends like Jimmy Vasser, Alex Zanardi, Dario. What makes Scott different?

MIKE HULL: He's been with us for 16 years. A lot of those other drivers, for whatever reasons, weren't lucky enough to do that. Had any one of the people that you named, or Montoya for that matter, I would include him in that group, if they would have stayed with us for 15 years, they would have won more championships. They are of that caliber.

I think we're really fortunate. In a way I'd trade five championships for five Indy 500 wins. That's a personal thing. But he comes to work every day like it's the first day that he's ever come to work. He never has grown tired of driving the car. There's probably some days he grows tired of talking to your group, but in terms of driving the car, he's all in every day.

When it's not good for him on a given day, he wants to make it better. When it's better, he wants to make it even better. He spends a lot of time in the building between races. He spends a lot of time with the people who have their hands on his car and their minds on the car.

That's hard to find. Then he backs it up. He can drive a racecar. He understands fully what the car is capable of doing on that day for him. He doesn't push it past that very often. That's hard to beat.

Q. You mentioned the guys that came and went. Scott stayed the whole time, didn't try to go to Formula 1. What will it take for Scott to get the recognition he actually deserves?

MIKE HULL: I don't think people appreciate racecar drivers when they're driving as much as they do after they retire. Then they begin to compare them fully to the people that they at the time they were racing raced against. Then they see how special that race driver in that particular time actually was.

People today talk about Michael Andretti like that. At the time he was driving, we knew he was really good, he was Michael, everybody knew him by his first name, right? But now people look back and they realize how special he was in a racecar. I think they'll do the same with Scott. They'll look back and they'll realize how special he was at the time he was driving.

Right now, we can go several more years with this special guy, so let's wait a few years before we look back on it.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you.