

# IndyCar Media Conference

Sunday September 16, 2018

## Scott Dixon

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: Last thing I said to you before the race was, Don't mess it up. It was pretty smooth, looked smooth from the outside, methodical, typical Scott Dixon afternoon.

SCOTT DIXON: Yeah, I don't know. Coming into these races, you're full of emotions. Hopefully not just myself, but I think the whole field. I think coming into the last race with the points lead, you just try to obviously not mess it up, have a good shot.

I think for us, thought we had a lot weighed against us in the fact we hadn't done really too well in qualifying, especially for these road courses throughout the season. That was the main focus.

Got to give huge credit to the team. They kind of just went on a wholesale change, everything worked out perfectly, the car had some great speed.

But today, yeah, I don't know, it's so weird. You kind of always doubt the situation that you're in, at least I have, maybe from the past years where we've lost championships over sometimes silly things, or sometimes where we just haven't executed well. The whole race I was thinking about things that were out of our control, cautions that were going to flip the field. None of that happened.

It was a very smooth race, as you said, but mentally it was tough and draining. Yeah, it's amazing to be in this situation, fifth championship. I can't thank my family enough, Emma, support, what she's done every year, but this year, with no exception to everything, down to trying to get everything done in the house, meals, whatever it was, just positive thinking. Today being the anniversary of her dad's passing, it's extremely emotional for her and her family.

So cool have this Poppy and Tilly here, too. It's their first championship. Been to a couple race wins, but it was really cool to have them today.

THE MODERATOR: Where were you on the racetrack that you got the word that Rossi had problems in the first corner? What kind of moment was that?

SCOTT DIXON: I don't know. With IndyCar racing, you think somebody that has a problem in the first corner, they tend to go on and win the race. I'm like, Oh, no. I've been in that situation. I'm like, Please, let that not

be today.

I didn't obviously see that part of the start. The team came on as I exited the carousel in turn six and said, There's going to be some cars coming back in seven that have taken a shortcut, damaged car. I could see it was Rossi. That was the first thing that clicked in, Man, he's going to have a good day, return, fix the car, have a strong strategy and come through.

I followed it on the pylon. I could see how he was moving up. He's a fierce competitor. So is Michael and everybody at that team. We saw that those cars had tremendous speed, from Hunter-Reay that was controlling the pace today. Yeah, there was no point that I wasn't worried about that situation.

THE MODERATOR: Questions.

**Q. With the emergence of Josef Newgarden winning the championship last year as a young driver, Alexander Rossi being a legitimate championship contender this year as a young driver, a lot of people thought this might be the year where the pendulum swings where the young drivers take over, the older drivers fade off into the sunset. Apparently you didn't get that memo.**

SCOTT DIXON: Man, you're just full of good news, aren't you (laughter)?

I don't know. It is a sport of evolution, right? We're in the mix of that. I'm 38. I'm not the young buck I was when I came into the sport. I'm very thankful to have the opportunities that I've had. IndyCar racing alone, it's a sport that I've loved for many years. I enjoy it. It's the best racing in the world. I've met some of the best people throughout my life at tracks, some of my closest friends.

But it is fierce. The competition is the best in the world. It's the toughest. The cars are very close to each other. The teams are all very good. There's no small teams any more. All of them are very well-accomplished and have great drivers. It's extremely tough to win.

Yeah, the evolution is happening. There are these young people coming through. I think we saw that in full force this weekend with O'Ward. To come off his Indy Lights championship, to smack it right into the Firestone Fast Six, where all of us have been competing in a car all year, know well, shows the youth

and talent coming through. It's important for the sport. It makes me work harder, which is great, but it's really important for the sport, how it continues. He's a great kid, got a great personality, is going to have a bright future, along with Josef and Rossi. Those guys being Americans, too, I think is important for the sport.

**Q. Do you ever think, I am the standard? If you want to win the championship, you have to go through me?**

SCOTT DIXON: No, I don't. It's weird, I love the sport. It drives me in many ways, continues to. I've never lost the fire. Each year that I've been beat or even bad races, you get this kind of fire and this anger inside of you. These young people that are coming through, not just the drivers, but you see it on the team front, too, with engineers, that side of things.

No, for me, I feel privileged to be here. I love doing what I do. I hope that I can, for the team's sake, compete on the highest level to get there. At no point do I think that anybody has to come through me to get to a championship.

**Q. Compared to America, you come from a relatively small country, with a very big motorsport history. You are by far the most successful. What does it mean for you? When you go back to New Zealand, do you expect to get a couple awards from the motorsport organization in New Zealand?**

SCOTT DIXON: Absolutely not. That's part of what got me into racing, with Denny Hulme, as well, Kenny Smith. Kenny Smith was a huge part of my career. We were just talking about Kenny recently. He was here in America, as well, doing Formula 5000. He's still racing at the age of 77.

I remember at Manfield, a track in the south of the north island, a rainy day, first time I raced in the rain in a Formula V. Woke up in my tent. My dad said, Someone is here to see you. It was Kenny Smith. He talked to me over an hour about what you should do in the rain, how to approach it.

I think that's how New Zealand was, with the sport. They were so supportive. There was a huge history there. 60, 70, 80s, they were at the top of their game. Bruce was lost, before the great things he could have achieved in his career. What he did as an engineer, building the team.

Yeah, I don't know. I have so many fond memories of growing up back home, the rawness of racing down there to where we are today. I'm very thankful for what they did and what they paved the way for a country so small, to be so prominent in motor racing around the world, not just in IndyCar, sports car racing, Brendon Hartley, Mitch Evans. There's a lot of young talent which is great to see.

**Q. You haven't a lot of time to reflect on the whole**

**season, but would you say one of your turning points was Toronto? Would you say that was the turning point for you?**

SCOTT DIXON: Yeah, I'm not going to lie. Sometimes it's good to see. But I've been in those situations where you lose a chunk of points. That's kind of the midway point or just after midway, right? You know there's still plenty of time to rebound with the points. How it reflects here at Sonoma with double points, you can have such a big shift anyway.

But, no, I think there's key races throughout the season. Portland I think was huge for us as far as luck and being able to sort of come out of that pile-up, have the luck of the caution, when it fell, to make the most of that. Texas, Toronto, the places we won this year, they all make the difference, right? That's what makes a championship.

But I don't know. I think Portland for me is definitely a standout. When that dust cleared, I could see I still had four wheels on the car, the engine was running, had the clutch in, try and drive away here. At that point I knew that day was going to be good.

**Q. Days like this, you're only behind A.J. Foyt, do they make you especially pleased you have resigned with Chip, you didn't take the McLaren option?**

SCOTT DIXON: Actually, yeah, I'm happy to be back with Chip. I think when I look back at the first meeting when I ever met Chip, to where it is today, what we've achieved, what his team has achieved, I'm a very small piece in that whole wheelhouse of what's going on at Chip Ganassi Racing. I feel very lucky to work with the people that I do.

Chip goes out there and gets the people that get the job done. There's been years where we've struggled and haven't had the results that we've had. But Chip has a big heart. He can come across harsh, brash, but he's always been a good friend of mine.

There was definitely a period throughout this year where we were talking to other people, but it just felt right. It felt right. Felt like this was home, somewhere that I should stick out for the time being.

**Q. Talk about what an amazing year it's been from drivers from Down Under, a lot of Aussies and Kiwis around the track.**

SCOTT DIXON: Yeah, it's cool. I was so happy for Will at the 500. I know Will, man, he's super fast. We always see the pure competition that that guy has built in. He's a fun competitor. We've had our ups and downs throughout the years. I don't know, for me personally it was just so cool for him and Liz. I know that was one thing that was hanging over him, that he really wanted to win. Being with Penske, too. Such a powerhouse at Indianapolis. I think it was something that is going to complete his career and something that

he's going to feel extremely happy about.

Yeah, again, I think there's a lot of talent in Australia and New Zealand. It doesn't always get a shot. I think in modern day racing, it's a little tougher. There's a lot of rich kids out there. Sometimes the opportunities don't get around.

Yeah, I think right now there's a lot of talent from Aussie and New Zealand that do have a fair shot right now and are competing well on the world stage.

**Q. You are now third in the all-time win list, moving into second behind A.J. Foyt. Talk about that, how you are clearly one of the greats in this sport.**

SCOTT DIXON: Yeah, I don't know. I don't see myself that way at all. Again, I feel lucky. I'm very, very blessed in many ways. Racing career, to meet the love of my life with Emma. Have a great family. Two beautiful girls.

I don't know. I feel lucky I get to do what I love to do. I enjoy racing. I get to work with the best in the business. I don't know. I just don't see it that way. I hope that I continue for more years to come and enjoy the sport for what it is.

When you get into these situations where there's a lot on the line, sometimes this even weekend, you don't really enjoy it as much. I think over the past couple years, I think we've really tried to enjoy the atmosphere that we're in, the people that we get to work with, the friends and everybody in the business.

Yeah, I don't know. I respect greatly A.J., Mario, Michael, the Unsers, everybody in the sport, what they've achieved. I don't know. I just feel lucky to be here.

**Q. You switched to reds earlier than others. What was the reason for it? You pitted one lap after Rossi at the end. What made you pit that lap?**

SCOTT DIXON: With the red tires, I don't really know why the team went that way. I think you have to run a new set of reds. We hadn't at that point run them. I think at that point I actually preferred to run the black tires. The first set at least we had really good pace for the first 10 laps, and it tapered off quite quickly compared to our competition. I think they just kind of wanted to get them used up, we'd finish on blacks.

At the end we were just covering ourselves. Had a caution come out, he would have vaulted to the lead. That was the decision. We would have probably tried to pit before then just to cover ourselves to make sure there were no shenanigans going on.

**Q. I've heard you have a lot of contact with folks who have their hands on your car. What about this association with those who are hands on with your car that help you on race day?**

SCOTT DIXON: I think you're referring to the team?

I don't know, they're family almost. I think this is my 17th year. Next year is the 18th. Been with these people a long time, longer than my wife. As a team, too, we've had our ups and downs. We have a fantastic group. The 9 car, the 10 car, everybody at Ganassi, the Indianapolis-based shop.

But, yeah, I think Emma and I do put in a lot of effort to spend a lot of time with these people. We do it because they're great people, the best in the business. We're lucky that we get to work with them, one, but also enjoy their friendship.

I think it goes a long way in the fact to get to work with people that you really enjoy is not always easy to achieve. We're lucky to have that situation at Ganassi where it's basically family.

**Q. Messages from home for you? The country wants to see to you they're very proud of you. You're headlining the news like no tomorrow. We look forward to seeing you when you come home. The quote from the rugby All Black commentator said, You are the All Black of motorsport.**

SCOTT DIXON: I'm glad the All Blacks weren't playing today (laughter).

I love New Zealand. I wish I was able to get back home more often. The people down there, I don't know, I think a lot of who I am now and forever, you're molded slightly different down there. We had lots of support. I don't know if anybody noticed on the banks with all the sheep that were around here. That's always a good omen I think when it comes to Sonoma. I actually visited with a few of them last night, just gave them a hello. That was all.

Yeah, I don't know, I love New Zealand. It's a special place. Actually I'm down there I think in about four weeks. Can't wait to get back home.

THE MODERATOR: Congratulations, Scott. Thank you.

SCOTT DIXON: Thank you.