

IndyCar Media Conference

Sunday April 7, 2019

Scott Dixon

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: We'll get started with our NTT IndyCar Series post-race press conference. Joined by our second-place finisher Scott Dixon, driving the No. 9 PNC Bank Honda for Chip Ganassi Racing Team. Scott, I know another runner-up finish, obviously a big story line here for you this weekend, but take us through your race and how it played out for you and the team.

SCOTT DIXON: Yeah, all in all, we've got to be happy with that. It's always tough competition. We come here to win, but second place, great for points. I think we're only 27 back now in the championship or something.

You know, it's one of those days we were kind of just really in defense mode. We had really good early speed, but if we pushed too hard, the tires were just killed after about 15, 20 laps. A lot of the time was just trying to take care of the tires. On that first pit stop exchange we made some really good gains. I made a small mistake on the second pit stop with selecting second gear instead of first, which kind of bobbed us, and then obviously the 18 got in front of us, which kind of -- we couldn't get around him. We were stuck there. He was on a slightly alternate strategy. They did a hell of a job, but with that caution coming out on the third one there, it was nice that actually race control left it green and let the field pit. It's the first time I'd seen that. It's quite similar to what we see in IMSA and some other series. Obviously it has to be the right circumstances for that to happen, and I think Kyle and everybody up there did a hell of a job to call it that way, otherwise it would have flipped the field and we would have looking a lot worse off.

But yeah, on that last pit stop there I think Bourdais had put in some more fuel so we were able to jump him, and away we went, and from that point on it was just trying to keep the tires underneath the car.

But big credit to the PNC Bank guys. On pit road they did a hell of a job, helped us today. But definitely as a team I think we've got to work on the deg. We had pretty big deg at COTA, as well. I think we have some pretty quick cars for the first 10 to 15 laps, but it hurts a bit later.

THE MODERATOR: We heard you say on TV yesterday that this is one of the most mindboggling weekends that you've been through. Is it because of

that deg? Is that what you're referring to there?

SCOTT DIXON: No, I think we tested here in November, and even that November test when we only run on blacks, we were over a half a second faster. Last year we were in the 67s every session, and this year we only just broke the 69s at a couple of points. The car drove very different from what we're used to.

The conditions were fairly ideal. There was not too much UV on the track. The track temp was quite low. We didn't have any hot conditions, but whatever Firestone maybe brought here, or maybe it was the other cars that ran this weekend. It just made every session a bit of a lottery of trying to figure it out and the window was quite small to get a lap or two and get the ultimate lap time out of it. I think you saw that in qualifying; it was a very mixed field, and I think you saw that today, too, with cars just coming and going.

THE MODERATOR: And finally towards the end of the race, we saw Takuma Sato go off track a little bit. What was running through your brain when you saw that happen?

SCOTT DIXON: Yeah, I saw it, and I was hoping he went a little further off.

But it was his race today. He deserved it. That was the only thing he did wrong, and he caught it. We tried to put pressure on him. It was actually quite tough to get close this year, and I think that's, again, because the grip level was quite low, so it was really hard to get close. And in that situation when I pressured him, my tires went off, and started to back in, Bourdais really charged with about 10 to go and then he made another run with a couple to go. He had a lot of OT and he nearly had us. It was definitely a nail-biting situation for the 9 car there. I was obviously hoping to get to that checkered flag and salvaged second place, but yeah, it was interesting.

THE MODERATOR: Last weekend we saw Colton Herta become the youngest driver in IndyCar history to win a race. This weekend we see three veterans at the top showing a lot of grit and experience. What does that say about the diversity of the series?

SCOTT DIXON: Yeah, I was just joking it was a geriatric podium. It's good. The field is extremely tough. It's great to see the young talent coming through. It's very important for the sport. There's such

diversity, which is really important, especially in the growing times of the series. It was so cool to see Herta win at COTA. He's been driving fantastically, so has Pato, and even Felix for that matter.

There's been a lot of new guys this here and guys stepping up, as much as Wickens did last year, too. It's great to see, and it definitely keeps us all on our toes, and you know, and I need to hold out for a couple more years at least.

Q. The development of Takuma since he joined the series, there was a couple of years there early in his career where nobody really wanted to get near the guy because they were afraid he might take them out in a wreck, but he's really seemed to kind of slow down enough to go fast. How do you see the development of him because the last couple of years he's been pretty impressive?

SCOTT DIXON: Yeah, I actually thought he was driving Graham's car on the first two laps because Graham was driving pretty crazy. As soon as we got to Sato, he was running us off the track. I think we had some pretty good runs there and runs that actually would have got the pass done but there had to be an avoidance. But yeah, Sato, I think it's when you find the right situation, the right place, the group that you're happy with, and he's done a good job, and I know he's got a lot of good people around him, and when you feel comfortable, you excel, and he's done that. I think sometimes when everybody is under pressure, you make mistakes, but today he drove flawlessly and they came away with the win.

Q. Scott, you mentioned about the situation when the yellow came out and how IndyCar left the pits open so people had a chance to come in and pit. It would seem that one, there's nobody really in danger when the yellow comes out if every driver slows down and then they work their way to pit lane, that would prevent a fuel-saving race, which can be kind of boring if that's what's going on, and maybe the fans don't always understand that if you have to constantly make your fuel number, but it would seem it could be done safely based on what happened here. What would you like to see in the future?

SCOTT DIXON: You know, if I was at the back of the field, I would have liked to have seen it go yellow. But where we were today, it was convenient.

I think all we really ask for is consistency, and I think Kyle has kind of been heading towards this direction. It's always very hard to call that. I'd hate to have that job, and I'm sure somebody is going to be complaining about it.

So it's -- for me, I think that's how we prefer to race. I think if you asked probably most of the guys that are normally racing at the front, that's how they would like it, but also that flip of the field is what IndyCar is known

for, and it creates some crazy racing, some late-race charges and winners that maybe didn't have that possibility.

You know, there's many different ways to look at it, but today I think that situation was the right call.

Q. You said that the track, the grip levels affected the quality of the racing. Will the resurfacing that's taking place for next year have an effect on that?

SCOTT DIXON: I'm not even sure it was the surface. As I said, we tested here in November, and it wasn't that long ago. Maybe it was last year's tire. But then what we had this weekend was significantly slower. At that test in November I was in the 67s, and you come here and you just break 69 on reds. We only get to test blacks. I can't imagine the track changed that much just over one winter, and other cars actually tested here not long ago and were faster than I think what we saw on the pole on blacks.

So I'm sure everybody will dig into that a little bit to see where that goes. I'm sure Firestone will maybe make some adjustments for next year if it was a tire thing, and something they tried, but yeah, I think the first few years we raced here were pretty epic. There was a lot of overtaking, a lot of passing. This is one of the best facilities we go to all season, and I was kind of shocked that hear that they were going to repave it. Kudos to Mr. Barber, and hopefully it's the right seal, I guess, hopefully.

Q. You may have already answered this, but with Leist, were you surprised, were you angry when he didn't give you the position and that finally IndyCar had to give him the blue flag?

SCOTT DIXON: Yeah, you know, I understand what they were trying to do. He actually went at it pretty hard for the first lap and then realized that Sato was still pulling away and he didn't have chance to unlap himself. In that situation he's just trying to make a quick pass, pray for a yellow and he's back in the race. But he let me by after a lap, and we were asking for a favor there for the restart, but I don't think it would have changed the outcome.