

NTT IndyCar Series News Conference

Friday May 10, 2019

Felix Rosenqvist

Chip Ganassi Racing

Scott Dixon

Chip Ganassi Racing

Jack Harvey

Meyer Shank Racing

Colton Herta

Harding Steinbrenner Racing

Ed Jones

Ed Carpenter Racing

Will Power

Team Penske

Fast Six Press Conference

THE MODERATOR: We'll get started with our NTT IndyCar Series post-qualifying press conference. Joined now by two drivers from our Firestone Fast Six session, Scott Dixon, who qualified second in the No. 9 PNC Bank Honda for Chip Ganassi Racing, and Colton Herta, driving the No. 88 GESS International Honda for Harding Steinbrenner Racing.

Colton, starting fourth in tomorrow's INDYCAR Grand Prix. Certainly not pole position, but if you believe in numerology, you started fourth at the INDYCAR Classic in Austin. Hoping for a repeat win tomorrow perhaps?

COLTON HERTA: Yeah, that would be nice. But yeah, I think we just need that little bit more in the last bit of qualifying. It was just under a tenth for the top four, so extremely close. That tends to be the case here, but tremendous job by Felix (Rosenqvist). I know it was a kind of battle between me and him to get who was going to be the first rookie to get on the pole, and he beat me to that, so congrats to him. He drove a great lap. Yeah, but we've got a quick car. Hopefully the numbers do play out like COTA and we can end up winning tomorrow.

THE MODERATOR: Joined also by Scott Dixon. Scott, this time last year there was a little bit of frustration heading out of qualifying with the starting result, I believe it was 18th. How much of a relief is it knowing that you're going into tomorrow's race from the front row?

SCOTT DIXON: Yeah, I don't know. It worked out pretty



well last year. We ended up second. But yeah, last year was I think definitely more dependent on the red tire, and if you had a second use, it made a pretty big difference in the race.

But yeah, all weekend, I think both of our cars have been really quick, which is fun. Felix, huge congrats to him. It was a great job there, piecing the lap together. We tried to do one and one. We did a bit of a cool off in between, stayed out. You know, definitely the two laps I think in segment together would have been quite good, but obviously I didn't piece that together. But congrats to him. Huge congrats to Chip and the team and good to lock out with a front row.

THE MODERATOR: Joined also by Jack Harvey, driving the No. 60 Auto Nation/Sirius XM Honda for Meyer Shank Racing. You've been showing a lot of speed in practice recently, in the top 10 in the combined results. Did you feel like you had a Firestone Fast Six performance in the car?

JACK HARVEY: I mean, yeah, I think we hoped that we would have that. The baseline car has been very good. We tested well last week. We came into the weekend fairly optimistic. I think good results like this really are massive for our program still only doing the 10 races, so still fairly part-time. It's nice in moments like this that maybe we can apply a little bit of pressure to a few of the people to say, why don't we do this full-time.

I don't know if we expected to be third today, but I certainly will take it, and everybody I'm around, I know how good all the guys are. Felix, when we raced in Europe, five-time champion, and seeing this guy race for what seems like a long time, as well.

It's nice to be up here. Great result for our whole team.

Q. Scott, as the veteran of the group up there right now, you see all these new names that are in the Fast Six, including the pole winner. How important is this for the series to start seeing all these new names battling all the great experienced drivers like yourself?

SCOTT DIXON: Yeah, I think it's very important. It's great to see the influx. I think we've seen it in the past couple of years. But yeah, I think in building this series and making sure that it continues strong, it's definitely what you need. It's definitely keeping a lot of the veterans pretty honest, and you know, new names,

new people from a lot of different places, but obviously they're all very quick, so it's great to see.

Q. Scott, question for you. You're a little bit slower than Felix. How identical is your setup?

SCOTT DIXON: I think pretty close. I think all weekend it's just been kind of who pieced a lap together a little bit better. In that scenario I think the start of my first lap was really good and didn't do well in the second half, and then on the second lap I kind of messed up Turn 2.

I think it's just one of those things. Both cars were very close, and we've been pretty close throughout the weekend, but I'd say they're almost identical, which is nice. It's nice to work with someone that has very similar feels and likes, too.

Q. Jack, you've won here on the oval and on the road course. What is it about the Indianapolis Motor Speedway that suits your driving style?

JACK HARVEY: I don't know, but I wish I could do it more often than just this place. I don't know. I guess I've always -- I've done well here from the first time I came here. I think the big brakes and then speed into one corner and then straight into another, I've always seemed to go well in corners that link with another almost immediately following. I think we had decent pace today through (Turn) 7 and Turn 10. I don't know, I think, again, I know I've been good here, and you come in with a just a little bit of extra confidence.

I think we're working hard to try and figure out is why we can't replicate the performances that we're having here, looking back towards like a historical moment, more frequently, more often. That's the goal because certainly this place seems to be fairly kind to me, and hopefully it's kind to me tomorrow and on race day on the 26th.

Q. Colton, this certainly doesn't have the elevation changes of COTA. But it has the wide areas, long straights, smooth track. Are those characteristics that you see COTA and this track have in common that can work to your benefit?

COLTON HERTA: Yeah, I think big braking into very slow corners is something that they have in common. The change of direction, too, I was good in the esses and COTA and kind of a similar thing of balancing the speed through 1 and not overdoing it in the others. Maybe that's similar.

Q. Scott, you mentioned the tires being a question mark yesterday going into this weekend. Did the cold maybe even accentuate that?

SCOTT DIXON: Well, the primary is definitely a totally different tire. It's closer to the black, which I think last year I commented earlier on, I think the reds were pretty much just like gold. If you had more of them and ones that went flat, so definitely what you wanted. I think it definitely helped our race last year coming from the back. There seems to be definitely a smaller gap,

but it's still pretty large. It's over -- probably right around a second.

The hard part here, too, is that the red is very durable. So I think you're just going to see everybody run reds as long as possible and minimize the time on blacks, which last year I think provided very good racing. Even between the leaders with Will and Robbie (Wickens), they were switching back and forth on their strategy, so I think you'll see that tomorrow, as well.

THE MODERATOR: Gentlemen, thank you very much. Joined by Ed Jones, driver of the No. 20 Ed Carpenter Racing Scuderia Corsa Chevrolet starting fifth in tomorrow's INDYCAR Grand Prix. Ed, again showing some speed in practice, the team working really well together to get the best performance possible out of qualifying. What are some things that you noticed from your qualifying run that give you some hope and optimism heading into tomorrow's race?

ED JONES: Yeah, exactly. It's nice to start off the weekend on the front foot and have a good base setup. But even the practice sessions didn't run so smoothly. We had quite a few issues there, and fortunately qualifying was the session that went smoothly. So we had a good result there. Again, all the Hondas tested here obviously last week (of April), so we thought that was going to be a bit tough, and even in qualifying it showed that the case was they had a bit of an edge, but it's nice to be top Chevy, and the team are looking good. Hopefully tomorrow we can have a good race and move forward again.

THE MODERATOR: And of course next to our polesitter Felix Rosenqvist, driving the No. 10 NTT DATA Honda for Chip Ganassi Racing. His first career pole in his rookie debut here at Indianapolis Motor Speedway on the road course. Felix, your team, Chip Ganassi Racing, swept the front row heading into tomorrow's race. Can you tell us about the strength of your team and your chances for a win tomorrow knowing that you have such strong starting position?

FELIX ROSENQVIST: Yeah, it was -- it's been a really smooth day for both the 10 car and the 9 car. I think we've been top 5 basically every session. I mean, you still have to pull it off, and if you're one-tenth off you can fall down like six spots very easily. Yeah, it's been -- it's tough mentally to go through a session like that where the lap that you do might be P1, but then the next time you come around you're like P5. So yeah, it really puts the pressure that you need to deliver every lap.

But I felt really good with the car. I felt like I could drive calmly probably for the first time this year without putting like 120 percent effort in, and I think that was the key today. In such a long qualifying session where you need to be on it all the time, that was definitely the key, so big thanks to Chip Ganassi Racing and NTT

DATA and Honda for a perfect package, perfect day, and double front row for our team. Amazing.

THE MODERATOR: And in perfect timing, we welcome in Will Power, the driver of the No. 12 Verizon Chevrolet for Team Penske, starting sixth in tomorrow's INDYCAR Grand Prix. Will, a three-time race winner here at the INDYCAR Grand Prix, all three of those wins coming from pole, but do you feel like you can still mix it up and get to the front in tomorrow's race?

WILL POWER: Yeah, someone was saying that the weather is going to be pretty mixed up, so that always makes for a mixed-up race. Don't seem to have the ultimate pace of the guys in front of us, so yeah, maybe we'll have a think about it overnight. But you know how these races can go. You never know. You just keep working hard and doing our absolute best, see if we can move a few spots up.

Q. Felix, I just have a question concerning your management partner Stefan Johansson. Is he also involved in the team as your mental coach?

FELIX ROSENQVIST: No, he's just a manager for me, Felix Rosenqvist, the driver, when it comes to contracts for positions and things like that. Not really on the sporting side. He stays out of that.

Q. Felix, with the way this track is so wide going into Turn 1 where it funnels across, for you starting your first Grand Prix here, how important is that to be ahead of potential mayhem?

FELIX ROSENQVIST: Yeah, I think the best place to be is probably in the front. At least you don't have anyone in front of you to worry about. Yeah, that's a good benefit for tomorrow definitely. I mean, I've seen some videos from this corner and definitely there's some history there. Yeah, also having Scott next to me. Whoever comes out first, there's probably not going to be any big contact or anything. So yeah, I feel as good as I could for that.

Q. And with this being the Indianapolis Motor Speedway and you on pole and Marcus starting ninth, do you expect this to be a pretty big TV number this week?

FELIX ROSENQVIST: I think so. It's also building up for the 500, and I think there's a lot of buzz back home there in Sweden. Yeah, they are rooting for us. It was good to see Marcus having a strong day, as well. He looked really strong there for a while for a top six position, as well, and then I think he fell just short in the end by a few hundredths. So yeah, glad for him to have a good day, as well.

Q. Felix, how special is it to you to get your first pole, period, ever here at Indianapolis? That's got to feel pretty special.

FELIX ROSENQVIST: Yeah, it's a cool feeling that it happened here. My team is based here. Obviously the track has a history, not being the 500 obviously, but

yeah, it's cool. I think it's always a special feeling when you get your first pole in any series, and especially this series where it's so tight. Yeah, I'm -- personally I really love qualifying, and it's especially satisfying when you manage to beat everyone.

Q. Your teammate Scott Dixon, obviously been around Indianapolis for many years, Chip Ganassi been around many years. What have you been able to learn from them as far as tips and tricks on how to approach Indianapolis, the road course and the oval course obviously two different types of race courses, two different types of setups, but what have you learned from your teammates?

FELIX ROSENQVIST: Well, I think if you put together all the guys in our team, there's a bunch of experience, ranging from Dario (Franchitti) to Chip to Scott and all, yeah. There's plenty of guys you can name that have been around here for much longer than I have. So just being around, obviously you pick up a lot of small things that you maybe didn't think about. But at the end of the day, you have to do it yourself still. No one is going to do the job for you. But I feel sure that I have the best people around me possible, so that's always a good boost.

Q. Ed, your teammate Spencer (Pigot) and yourself have both been showing marked improvement with Ed Carpenter Racing's cars on street and road courses. How important -- how much momentum do you see the team getting on the street and road courses?

ED JONES: Yeah, I feel like in kind of a way that we kind of went the wrong direction over the winter, and Long Beach was like the last time where we realized we got to revert back to some older stuff. Last year they were pretty competitive here, so we did that, and straightaway we got a lot better. So I think that's kind of been the case. We've just got to maybe look at bit more what we need to do for the next few road and street course races, but fortunately we have the oval coming up next, and we know how strong they are there. Really looking forward to that, and yeah, seeing how we can do.

Q. And Will, you pretty much have owned this race and you've won all these poles. How odd of a feeling is it to be sixth in the Firestone Fast Six?

WILL POWER: I know, I'll tell you, that was like a serious lap I did to be sixth, and not just sixth but like four tenths off the next guy or something. Yeah, we're just a little bit lost, unfortunately. We can't really put our finger on where we're slow. We know we're slow actually on the straights, so that's one area. I'm not sure why. But yeah, we'll have a good look at it tonight and see. It's kind of confusing for us because the cars don't feel that bad. Actually they feel pretty reasonable. We don't quite understand why we're slow.

Q. (No microphone.)

WILL POWER: Maybe a little bit. We've been through a

few different setups in one day, so there's nothing that really sticks out that says this is the area that we're lacking. So it makes it very tough to understand what we need to find.

Q. Will, did you kind of like regret doing two one-lap attempts? Do you think more heat in the tires, in the first cycle -- I think Scott was kind of beating himself up about that, as well.

WILL POWER: Yeah, doing two runs was a bit -- yeah, obviously it's easy to sit back now and know that it was a -- I didn't even need to go out. I could have just saved my tires and been sixth. But you don't know that, right? Like we were P4, and usually I can pick up one or two in the Fast Six, but today it went the other way. So you can't win them all.

Q. This is for Felix and for Will. Are you guys ready to send out a missing persons report on the Andretti Autosport drivers because they're deep in the pack? Are you really surprised that they were not part of today's game?

FELIX ROSENQVIST: I mean, Colton, I don't know what we call him, but he's sort of Andretti, and he has been like the man to beat all day. I was surprised he wasn't -- yeah, I was surprised he wasn't up there. Yeah, that's odd. I think it's been Colton leading the pack, and there's been a big gap. As I said, like it's so tight, and if you lose your way a little bit, like you tumble down pretty quick. It doesn't need to be like a second, it needs to be like 16 hundredths and you're back there. So yeah, it's tough for sure.

WILL POWER: Yeah, I mean, those guys must be scratching their heads when they see Colton Herta up there. They're getting the data and they're looking at it, so those boys must be wondering what's going on when a rookie can come in like that. Yeah, obviously Colton is doing a great job, and like Felix said, you're just a little bit out, it's tough. Even a tenth and a half, two tenths you're really out of the window, and then you're kind of getting a bit confused. So I could see that. It could quite easily happen. If you look at how close it was to getting in in each group, how tight the times were, you just had to be on the wrong side of the tenths and you're out. You know those guys are probably just on the wrong side of a tenth or something and they would have been in the Fast Six or progressing to the next round.

Q. (No microphone.)

WILL POWER: Yeah, yeah. I mean, I'm sure he's going to be getting after it, as he always does. He's well capable of working his way to the front. Weather is going to play a part. I have a feeling it's going to be a pretty messy race in a way. Sometimes you think that, and it's just all green and nothing exciting. But from my perspective I hope it plays out for me. No one else, just for me.

Q. Will, based on what you just said there, this

race, you've won from the pole three times, and the last two drivers to win races in IndyCar have won from the pole. How big of an advantage does Felix have going into tomorrow?

WILL POWER: Yeah, if it's a full green race, he has a great chance of winning the race. Obviously he's going to have ol' Dixon sitting behind him saving a bit of fuel trying to go a lap longer. But yeah, if you start at the front, man, and it's an all-green race, these days in IndyCar, you're in a great spot because no one makes mistakes anymore. Like everyone is super quick, and teams know the strategies, the pit stops are good. It's tough if you qualify back a little bit. It's so hard to gain positions.

It used to be there was a lot of yellows and restarts and crashes, and it just doesn't happen anymore. The quality of the field is so good, and the quality of the teams that it's really hard if you don't qualify well to make hay, make your way up the grid.

Q. You're looking at guys like Alex and Josef starting in the back of the field, those guys leading the championship right now. Are you kind of licking your lips to say this is a chance for me to start making up points here?

WILL POWER: Yes, it is. It's about time that we had just a good clean race and a good result and made some points back. Yep, definitely look at that. I hope it plays out that way.

Q. Will, you just said earlier that the team or you don't understand why you're relatively slow or just sixth. How was the car behavior from free practice to qualifying? Was there a big difference?

WILL POWER: No, actually the cars felt pretty good all the time. I can't say I've had a huge imbalance any session, so that's what makes it tough. Like the engineer was asking, what do you need. I said, well, I need a little bit of this and that, like not a huge chunk of something. Yeah, don't know. We're going to have to look into it. We're losing a little bit on the straights, so maybe we're doing something wrong there.

Q. Will, there's only been two drivers to win the IndyCar Grand Prix, you and Simon Pagenaud, who's going to be starting right on your rear wing tomorrow. How big of a threat is he going to be?

WILL POWER: Pagenaud? Yeah, he'll be strong for sure. I just think it's tough for both of us starting back a bit to -- if it's a normal race, it'll be hard to win from there, honestly. It will. It will be hard to make your way up. But if it's a mixed-up race, we can get something done for sure. Or not. You can do something with strategy. Last year was different because there was a bigger difference between the tires. Now there's not as big a difference between the red and black tires. Last year you could make some time on people who were on blacks while you were on reds. So we'll see what happens.

THE MODERATOR: Gentlemen, thank you very much.
Appreciate your time. Good luck tomorrow.