

NTT IndyCar Series News Conference

Saturday May 11, 2019
Postrace Press Conference
Scott Dixon



THE MODERATOR: We'll get started with our INDYCAR Grand Prix post-race press conference. Joined now by Scott Dixon, driver of the No. 9 PNC Bank Honda for Chip Ganassi Racing, finishing second in today's race. I know ultimately you led a lot of laps and were hoping for that top spot on the podium, but a great effort for the team overall. Take us through your race.

SCOTT DIXON: Yeah, it was generally a pretty good day. We had some good pace. The start was a little tricky, kind of misjudged it with Felix, and actually the 60 car had a great start. So kind of just fought in line there and was seeing how it was going to play out. The restart we got that really good jump, got both the 60 and the 10, kind of set us out. Conditions were really tricky all day, but a lot of fun actually. I think it's always hard to tell with a circuit like this, especially after the kind of sealant they put on some of the portions of the oval, how tough it's going to be once you start to get some moisture on there. But all in all, the Firestone red tires, I never got to the blacks, had a ton of grip and it was a lot of fun. The second or third stint there I think, where we ran our double set of run reds, kind of fell off a bit of a cliff with those, and then once we got to our sticker set we kind of set sail again.

Yeah, then the rain with about 10 laps to go, I'm like, we're going to get hosed here. The front tires we just didn't have -- I don't know if we changed the front wing or whatever we did in that pit stop, but we just had no front grip and had to stop the car too much to really keep time, and we were hoping -- we were talking a lot about whether it was going to be a time race or it was going to run the full distance, and obviously it went the full distance. A lap or two shorter would have helped.

But congrats to Pagenaud. It's great to see him back in victory circle, and they did a great job today and had great speed at the end of the race. Yeah, bummed leading that many laps and coming up second.

THE MODERATOR: With the changing weather conditions and also the changing track surfaces between most of the road course but then also the sealant on the oval, how tricky was this race compared to some of the other INDYCAR Grand Prixes we've seen so far?

SCOTT DIXON: Yeah, I think we had kind of right around the right amount of moisture to be honest. I think at the end of the last stint there, we were probably

hoping that it rained a lot harder just for being selfish for ourselves to help the front tires.

But yeah, I think this track actually doesn't puddle, which is fantastic, and a lot of the street circuits that we go to, that's kind of one of our biggest concerns, to get aquaplaning and have that be a factor. I think today definitely the people that came out saw the conditions that we can race in and how fun it can be to watch if you stick through it. But yeah, it's always hard. I think Bourdais when we tested here with the Honda manufacturer day had mentioned how slick the new portion of the track was, but to be honest, the grip was very high even with a lot of rain that we had in running the slick tires. I was kind of surprised how quick the cars still were. It was tough to judge, but all in all, it was a lot of fun.

Q. Scott, you said you had no front grip. Was this the main reason you couldn't hold off Simon?

SCOTT DIXON: Yeah, I just couldn't turn. Even in the first gear corners I was almost having to stop the car to get it to rotate. I think it felt like I needed probably another four or five tenths of front wing. Sometimes it kind of goes like that, depending on how your mechanical balance is, and a lot of the cars I think are very different. Some may have switched to a semi-wet setup I think for predictions going later on into the race. But yeah, whatever the balance was, man, we just couldn't get the car to turn. Had fantastic traction, but as you saw in all the slow speed corners, I just couldn't turn the car.

Q. Talking to Chris Simmons, he was confident that the gap was big enough that you might be able to hold him off. Did you feel that way in the cockpit or did you just feel it was a matter of time?

SCOTT DIXON: You know, I think you always doubt it, so I think from -- as I said, with 10 laps to go, I kind of knew I was in trouble. And then the gap actually started to get a bit bigger. I think Harvey was having a similar issue with his balance and struggling, and that was kind of holding Pagenaud back. But they were giving me lap times, and you could see that the 22 just had some pretty immense pace. Once I knew he got some clear track and once he got past Harvey, I think it only took two laps before he was on top of us.

In a situation like that, we had it in the second stint or third stint on reds, too, where you start to fall off and it falls off really fast here. It's a momentum track, and it comes far. So I knew pretty early that we were going to

be struggling.

Q. Scott, you had quite a lead, number-of-seconds lead, maybe as much as six or so with Simon after he passed Harvey. You had a lot more Push-to-Pass than he did. Even though you had that, I think Simon was out with maybe three, four laps to go at least, and yet he was catching you. Is it that you couldn't really use your Push-to-Pass to your advantage because of the front wing grip issue?

SCOTT DIXON: No, it was, but again, the slow speed corners is where all the speed is, right. When you're doing a 40-mile-an-hour corner and if he's rolling five miles an hour faster, the time gets chewed up really fast. It's five miles an hour when you're doing 160 on the straights, nowhere near the same amount. I was trying to use it sporadically in spots to try and lessen the pain, but you knew it was coming.

It was one of those scenarios where you're either hoping for a yellow or it was going to be a timed race and come up short by a couple laps.

Q. It was certainly exciting and with Simon, were you surprised how racy he was? You were both on the black tires. Do you think there was a difference in the engine performance that came into effect? Even if you used the Push-to-Pass he seemed to be right there.

SCOTT DIXON: The wet setup, I think we had a pretty big advantage on the slick tires, over the 22 for sure. The stint we got caught was when we ran the double run reds. We started with nine laps on those. Once we got to those sticker reds and that portion right before it rained, we kind of stretched out pretty easily and didn't really have to push.

When it comes to the rain, you know, you're kind of in the window or you're not, and they were. It can be a multitude of different setup options that make that possible. Ultimately it just didn't play out.

Q. Other than the momentum that is involved, this race doesn't translate to the next race much at all, other than the fact that it's the same facility. How much does this race translate into the next road course race in Detroit? Oftentimes that's a rain race, too.

SCOTT DIXON: Yeah, not so much really. It's totally different. It's very low grip. It's a street course. You know, your ride heights are probably double what you run here.

I think in the IndyCar Series right now, you need to be good in all areas and try and maximize on it, which I think we've done a pretty good job this year. I think we're the only car actually to be in the Firestone Fast Six every race. But days like this are the days you need to try to capitalize and get the win, and we didn't. So it's nice to have the performance and nice to run fast, but we're here to win, and with our team, if we

don't win, then it sucks. But we'll use this as motivation and hopefully performance wise we're strong the next couple weeks and then can have a good shot into the 500.

Q. This is your third straight runner-up in this race. The last two was kind of one of those typical Penske-dominant performances. This one Simon only led five laps. Is this one tough to chew on, the one that kind of got away?

SCOTT DIXON: I've been part of many of these, so you've got to take them. There's days where you get a win and you never really knew it was coming. So you've got to take the highs with the lows, but I think still finishing second and having a fairly dominant day is something to be proud of. But yeah, again, these wins are harder and harder to get, so you can see even the expression with Simon after getting that victory, it's hard to get them here right now, and it's good to see him back in Victory Lane.

But yeah, it's -- I don't know, you just roll with it, man. You kind of roll on both sides, and if you keep knocking on the door, eventually it's going to open.

Q. You mentioned how what the fans saw today, they should have had some fun with what they witnessed. The last four races prior to today, the driver in pole position has come away with the win. Can you just comment on -- just going into more detail on how what the fans saw today was something special?

SCOTT DIXON: Yeah, it was definitely a mix. I think you got every condition possible. I think you got cars on many different strategies. I think you -- this track always plays well, I think, to great overtaking just with the long straights, big braking zones, but also I think you've got to give a lot of credit to Firestone, too, with the tire that they bring, the different performance levels between the primary and the alternate. They kind of cover all the bases.

With an INDYCAR race, you really never know who's going to win. That's fun for the fans, it's fun for the drivers. Obviously you would like a season where you could dominate and run away with it, but that's just not possible. The competition is so tight right now and with the strategy and the way they play it over here, some days are a bit frustrating, but many others it's a lot of fun, too. I think that's why our fan base is getting bigger and the numbers are going the right direction, and we should be proud of what we've done here in the sport.

Q. You were talking about how great it is to see a veteran like Simon get back into Victory Lane, but how great is it for the series to see a new driver like Jack Harvey and other young drivers like that who went out there and put on a hell of a show?

SCOTT DIXON: Yes, it's important. I think it's very important for the future of the sport. Jack has done a fantastic job, I think, bringing different sponsors to the

series, as well, and even his owner with Shank. He's a great person, very successful in many other forms of racing, and it's good to see them come over here. But it shows you the ability of any team with the parts and pieces that everybody has, you can come here and run strong, and if you've got a good driver, you can make it happen. I think that's why we're seeing such a big influx from Europe and great drivers that have come through the ranks here in America, too. But yeah, it's definitely a bright future.

THE MODERATOR: Scott, congratulations. We'll see you in a few days.