

NTT IndyCar Series News Conference

Friday May 17, 2019

Press Conference

Chip Ganassi

Owner, Chip Ganassi Racing

Mike Hull

Managing Director, Chip Ganassi Racing

Scott Dixon

Chip Ganassi Racing

Felix Rosenqvist

Chip Ganassi Racing

THE MODERATOR: Chip, I just was thinking when you enter the racetrack for the month of May, is there still the same buzz and thrill there always has been?

CHIP GANASSI: I don't know it's the same buzz and thrill, but it's certainly a buzz and a thrill.

They say baseball is the harbinger of spring. I think it's probably more for me obviously coming to Indy. It's springtime. Yes, we've had some races, but this really kicks off the summer season. Everybody is here. Everybody understands the enormity and what's at stake here. It's really just a lot of fun.

Each year you look forward to coming back and being a part of it. It's a time to focus on what you've been working on over the winter, everything from working hard, going racing, to being with your friends and colleagues and team.

I like it, too, because it gives me an opportunity, with the team based here in Indianapolis, me being in Pittsburgh, some time to spend time with the people on the team a little more, interact a bit.

I look forward to it every year. I don't know that it's a goosebump kind of thing for me, but it's certainly something I look forward to every year.

THE MODERATOR: I asked this question often of people who have raced here. I get a wide range of answers. When you come here, do you still think, I'd like to still get in a racecar?

CHIP GANASSI: Yeah, I mean, I guess over the years I'm sure I've said, I've been here for so many years, I've said a lot of things. You know what Clint Eastwood said: A man has to know his limits. I'm probably a little bit past that.

But I still have the need for speed. I can still feel that



and be a part of that through the team, our two great drivers, what have you. So I'm OK.

THE MODERATOR: Mike Hull, managing director. We talk a lot about great teams, the notion of having great consistency over the years. Obviously your partnership with Chip, but you got the guy right next to you, Scott Dixon. How much comfort is it to go in for you with the anchor like Scott Dixon leading your squad?

MIKE HULL: Wow, I think it seems like we're asked that question more and more. The reality is, all of us, if we're still on the face of the earth, will look back on what's happened with Scott, with his tenure at Chip Ganassi Racing, and be in awe of that.

What you try really hard to do today is not think about that. You just think about today. What I like about Scott is the fact that's what he does well. He erases, it's almost like a tear-off with him. Yesterday was yesterday, and today is the most important day of his life. I think that reflects who we are as a team of people.

We work really, really hard on today. Some days are more gravitational than others. You have to win the battle on a daily basis. With Scott, that's really, really important. Really proud to have been lucky enough to be with him for the length of time that I've been, that we've been as a team because he exceeds expectation on a daily basis.

THE MODERATOR: Felix Rosenqvist, this to rookies looks simple, it's not. What is it like to have Scott Dixon and Dario Franchitti to provide some guidance for you?

FELIX ROSENQVIST: Yeah, for me I wouldn't see how you could do it without having some kind of help. I seem to have the best two guys, actually the best group of guys to help me out in getting up to speed here.

It is a very tricky place, as we saw two days ago with me. It can just bite you really hard, no matter how slowly you go through it, the limit is the limit. It's a tricky place. Almost like the length of the whole thing makes it even harder because if you feel comfortable, maybe you tend to just stop there and not continue to work. If you don't feel good, you know there's a panic to get quicker.

It's a very mental week. I can see that now being part

of it, for sure. It's probably more mental than anything else I've done or any other race I've done.

Yeah, very different challenge.

THE MODERATOR: Scott, being nosy, you got a bang about your boss' answer about getting in a racecar.

SCOTT DIXON: Chip having another go? Start with a two-seater, right? Kick Mario out of the seat there.

CHIP GANASSI: That's me, baby.

SCOTT DIXON: I don't know anything about that. He hasn't let me know anything coming up.

THE MODERATOR: I appreciated Mike Hull's answer about you. Your legacy is secure. You're clearly one of the greatest ever to participate in this sport. I know you don't think about that. Sitting here today, if you were given this incredible choice, sixth championship, another Indianapolis 500, where would you fall?

SCOTT DIXON: My answer is the same: why not both? That's why we're here, right, is to get both. Chip sets those goals every year.

For me, what drives me every day is the team. I've been very lucky to be working with Chip and Mike and everybody involved. Their persistence and push, pursuit of excellence has always been the same. I think the sport drives everybody in the team. It keeps that same mindset of trying to win these races.

We've had some close ones this year. We've come up a little bit short. Now is definitely the time to strike. Winning an Indianapolis 500 definitely helps the championship. They go hand-in-hand. So, yeah, that's all we're thinking about right now, is today.

We're getting ready for qualifying, turning up the boost, trying to get the most out of it. I think our process this week has changed a little bit from previous years. We've really concentrated on trying to make the car comfortable, better in race running. Qualifying is going to be tough this year I think just with conditions, it's going to be pretty grueling for a lot of teams and ourselves.

As normal, trying to cover all the bases, but also trying to be the fastest.

THE MODERATOR: Questions.

Q. Scott, Will Power and Josef Newgarden pretty of think that the car in the race will be about the same as last year. Does it make more emphasis about starting up front? Car have any changes or differences over last year's model?

SCOTT DIXON: They've made some changes with the increased downforce levels, which you'll see a lot of

teams utilize that. I think Firestone did a good job with the tire. With the darker appearance of the track, definitely the UV is making a bigger difference once it does get hot. I think we're starting to see some of the characteristics of the push off of the corners.

From race running, you've seen some teams that have worked it out. There definitely seems to be more cars that are good, I think. That's going to make it difficult.

I don't know about the qualifying up front. We've seen many times throughout the years, if you have a good car, we've seen Dario get spun in pit lane, go to the back, drive to the front. That's probably a little bit more difficult now, but if you're mid pack or further back, you have 500 miles to get to the front. If you have a good car, it's definitely going to happen.

Q. Felix, you mentioned the mental aspects of this week. After your accident, is there any difficulty or pause or thought trying to get back up to speed the next day?

FELIX ROSENQVIST: I mean, I think it goes for the same thing. As I said, you need to take every step. There's no way you can take two steps at a time. You need to take one step every time. We're on the spare car, which is a different car. Obviously it feels a bit different.

Yesterday, it's not exactly as you felt before the accident happened. You just need to work on the car, getting it into the sweet spot again where it feels comfortable. No matter how long that takes, that's what you got to do.

I think we went a long way yesterday. We're just going to continue where we were, keep working on that. But yeah, mentally it's not easy, for sure. We'll go through it and we'll forget it and just focus step by step.

Q. Glad to have checked off that box of guys who have hit the wall?

FELIX ROSENQVIST: I'm not particularly glad about it. Yeah, I mean, it's probably a question of time. It's nothing fun, for sure.

Q. Chip, guaranteed positions in the field, truly the fastest 33. Can you explain your position in more than 140 characters.

CHIP GANASSI: My position is it should be the fastest 33. I'm not saying it's not going to be that. There is a scenario where it won't be the fastest 33. I just think that's not right. I think it should be the fastest 33.

Q. Guaranteed spots?

CHIP GANASSI: I think it's one or the other. If you don't have the fastest 33, then I think you should have guaranteed spots. If you do the fastest 33, you don't need that.

I never said 25 and 8 or anything like that. It's just the

way I feel. If it's not the fastest 33, then the full-season participants should have some guarantee. If it's the fastest 33, then I'm fine with that.

Does that answer your question clearly?

Q. Scott, you mentioned the new sealer on the track being darker. Are you noticing the temperature of the track coming up faster than it has in the past? If so, what are you doing about it?

SCOTT DIXON: Well, the good thing is it's the same for everybody. Yeah, there's not a whole lot you can do really. I think it just makes everything worse as far as the sunlight affecting it. I think it's good that the Speedway is definitely trying to help. I think the grip is maybe up a little bit from what we've seen previous years because of that. I think it's the longevity they're looking for to look after the surface.

But, yeah, you can't do anything about the sun heating the surface up. You're constantly trying to make the car better. That adds kind of a different element to it, added difficulty. But there's not a whole lot you can do.

Q. Depending on sponsorship, is there any possibility or plan you would expect more than two cars?

CHIP GANASSI: I think yeah, you could probably say we're certainly looking in that direction.

Q. Felix, so far from your country, Kenny Brack was the most successful driver from Sweden at the Indy 500. Did you reach out to him before you came to America?

FELIX ROSENQVIST: No, actually I never met him, to be fair. He lived in the UK for all his life. He's never been around where I've been. Yeah, kind of weird, but we actually never met at all. He's been more in contact with Marcus actually in his young days.

I think I'll meet him this week probably. I heard he's going to be here. Look forward to that.

Q. Chip, you obviously participated in a lot of the conversation about bumping. A lot of passionate responses. Do you think you'll see a lot more fans in the stands for qualifying the next two days as a result of that?

CHIP GANASSI: Yeah, well, I mean, I think the bumping is just a matter of how many cars you have. I don't think it has to do with the rules, per se. It's a matter of the entries.

Yeah, I would hope that brings out more fans.

Q. Do you recall any memorable bump days?

CHIP GANASSI: I remember in 1982, my rookie year here, there were 62 car-driver combinations, 62. Bumping was serious then. It wasn't a fait accompli you were in the race.

I think that's what brought out the people. Having said that, I don't think with the current formula, not that there's anything wrong with it, I just think the days of guys spending a million dollars, a million plus dollars to come here and have a chance on not making it, are probably gone. I think that's just too much money to spend to not be in the race.

I think that's just the growth of the world really. It doesn't have anything to do with the sport or the rules or the cars. I think it's just a fact.

I also think people are accessing the sport in many different ways than they used to. I think young people -- more people are accessing motorsports than ever before. They just don't access it like showing up like in my generation they did.

Young people are know are very connected. The partners and sponsors we're involved with, they know more about the sport from not being here almost than me being here, if they read a lot and follow it online, on their computer, their mobile device.

Again, I think that's just part of the growth of sports in general.

Q. Fast Friday you get to turn up the boost, in qualifying the boost is turned off. Do you see there's a need to do that? Would you like to have it full-time? Is it a good thing or a bad thing?

MIKE HULL: I don't want to give a political answer here. With notification to Chevrolet and Honda, that's possible. It would also require in this case at least one additional engine added to the rotation, which will cost more money.

Chip referenced the 62 people here in 1982. I remember coming to the Speedway from the very first time I came, the reason people came on qualifying day here was to see somebody break 190, 195, first one to go 200. I remember when Sneva and Mears were going for that 200 number. That morning, it was pouring rain. They were in the grandstands all the way around a racetrack and sat there till 3:30 in the afternoon when USAC decided we were going to practice, not qualify.

They came to watch somebody go fast. So in reference to your question, absolutely, absolutely. People want to come here to watch people go fast. When you turn the boost up, you go faster. It's really simple.

So I think for this race, they ought to give us an extra engine and we should go faster.

Q. You're saying they should build qualifying engines to break records?

MIKE HULL: I'm saying they should come up with a formula for the engine. I don't know what the boost level is. I'm not an engine guy. They should come up

with a way for us to be fast enough to give people an opportunity to see that speed.

SCOTT DIXON: I think it's a very valid point. That definitely does create a lot of noise for the fans. I think it's something different. When was Arie's lap. A very long time. Maybe next year. That's not going to happen this year, I don't think. Well, maybe it will. I don't know.

MIKE HULL: The only way the speed is going come back is for the engine power to go up because we're not going to get the apron back. Let's face it. I don't want to get into that can of worms.

The reality is that they have to enhance the engine, probably then also enhance the tires, for us to have that speed.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you.