

NTT IndyCar Series News Conference

Saturday July 13, 2019

Press Conference

Scott Dixon

Chip Ganassi Racing

JAMES HINCHCLIFFE: The Arrow car made some strides in Practice 3, we closed the gap to guys like (Alexander) Rossi and (Scott) Dixon in a big way. A couple hundredths (of a second) puts us in.

I definitely think we lost the group lottery on that one; I think Group 1 was a little bit less stacked than Group 2, but at the end of the day you have to be faster than everybody.

We've got a long race tomorrow, and we'll do what we can to make our way to the front. This series, it's tough to move forward at all, we have such a talented field. With such a short lap, there's not a lot of corners to make a gain on other guys. We've had really good Sundays, really good car on race days so far this year, so I'm confident we can pick off some of these guys.

Our Arrow guys have been great in the pits, fastest in the pits at Road America. We just need to do what we've been doing on Sundays, execute well, make smart decisions on the racetrack, call strategy well, and I think we'll be fighting for a top five."

Q: Strategy has worked for you, too?

JAMES HINCHCLIFFE: Yeah, for sure. I think being where we are, we can be a little more aggressive on strategy. I'm all for it. If we have a yellow that breaks our way, I wouldn't be mad at it, but that's not the way our season has gone. It wouldn't be a bad time for our luck to turn around.

Q: Yellows have to fall your way, but that's not anything new for you at this place.

JAMES HINCHCLIFFE: It's not something you can bank on. This track is a treacherous one seeing traditionally quite a few yellows. We'll see how it plays out. Attrition is part of it and you have to be there at the end. But we'll see how that plays out. But like I said, from where we're starting, we're going to have to be a little bit creative and that's what it comes down to.

Q: Talk about the support from the grandstands, knowing 99 percent of the seats out there will be pulling for you win or lose.

JAMES HINCHCLIFFE: That's what great about this event and the Canadian fans. They support you



through thick and thin and that's why I love coming home. I want to give them something to cheer for coming from 14th place. So we'll try to get a fair way up the grid tomorrow.

THE MODERATOR: We have now in the press room Scott Dixon, the No. 2 qualifier, driver of the No. 9 PNC Bank Honda. Scott, an interesting final lap for you. It looks like you were pushing pretty strong and kind of got away from you.

SCOTT DIXON: Yeah, that was the pole lap right there, man.

THE MODERATOR: It always is.

SCOTT DIXON: I'd only done two corners, so I have no idea.

It's been an interesting day. The last two practice sessions, P2 and P3, have been really tough just to get track space, and even this morning we didn't get one single run with a clear lap, and it's really hard to feel what the car needs when you can't get these rolling laps together.

But qualifying is a lot easier with half the field. Still had to work on the car. Q1 was a little difficult, and then we need to -- we found some gains for Q2 and Q3, which definitely helped. But yeah, still just leaving a bit on the table, not piecing the laps together as much as I should be able to.

I think the lap that got us second where I was up about a tenth and a half into the last corner and just hit the curb a little hard and slid the rear a lot. So congrats to (Simon) Pagenaud. He's been quick all weekend, and it's good to see, and going to the race. The starting spot last year as good for us. We were able to go on for the win, but as we can see the competition is extremely tight this weekend.

THE MODERATOR: You've won three races here, so obviously you have pretty high confidence and you must feel like you have a car to win.

SCOTT DIXON: Yeah, I think both the PNC car and also the NTT (car) with Felix (Rosenqvist) has been really strong. It's nice to have actually I think the cars were identical going into qualifying, so it's been really nice to have a lot of similarities. It's definitely helped throughout the weekend when we haven't been able to

run as much as possible or get clear laps. We've still been able to go off of his pace and some of the things that he's really liked. That's been helpful.

Q. Do you feel a little lucky to have that spin happen, that you could be last in line there because otherwise you would have lost your quick lap.

SCOTT DIXON: Yeah, it's all about timing, right? We were lucky to be the last car. That's kind of how we had spaced it out and timed it. We knew we had about a four-second, five-second window before we started that run, including the out lap.

Luckily we were in some pretty clear air there behind, as well, that the next car was actually going to have to pit. So yeah, super lucky. It could have been second instead of sixth.

THE MODERATOR: Had Scott caused a caution, he would have lost his fastest lap.

Q. I'm wondering, there's been a lot of talk this weekend and pretty much every weekend in Toronto that (Turns) 9, 10 and 11 are kind of the trouble spots; are there any other areas, and maybe we saw a little bit in Turn 1, that are of concern for you?

SCOTT DIXON: I think it always used to be Turn 1, but once they resurfaced the approach there, it's been a little bit better. I have seen a fair few cars go straight ahead in Turn 1. It seems like Turn 11 has been pretty tricky, especially the first session yesterday. We've seen some cars, especially in the races, too, that have had some -- a couple have spun in (Turn) 10, as well, where I spun. (Turn) 8 is always tricky, as well. It's a lot of surface change there, and that tire wall sticks out quite far, so as soon as you get it wrong, it can catch you pretty good. So yeah, I'd say (Turns) 1 (and) 3 in the race with traffic, (Turn) 5, you hit that curb wrong, you can go straight ahead there. (Turns) 8, 9, 11, there's a lot of corners, and each lap you know you can slightly just get wrong and you'll be in the fence.

Q. Paul Tracy said the other day that usually this race, the strategy gets determined early by either a caution or how the pit stops fall. What do you see as kind of that magic moment where you've got to decide on how many stops you go on fuel?

SCOTT DIXON: It's hard. The fuel window is a lot bigger than what it used to be. It used to be quite tough to do it in two, but I think with the manufacturers making such large improvements in the efficiency of the engines, it's pretty easy. You have fairly big windows now to be able to do it in two.

The hard part is how long you run on the reds. We've seen previous races this year, and this is the same tire as what we had at Detroit. You know, I think it was lap 4 or 5 we saw a caution in Detroit and the whole field pit except for us and maybe one other.

I think it's more not so much about fuel racing now, it's about tire longevity. Plus it makes it pretty interesting, too, because if you get cars off strategy, the speed difference is pretty big. But I think the tire that Firestone brought here and Detroit is much more suited to here.

Q. So the Road America qualifying melee there, kind of help today being last out in the Fast Six with your pit assignment? Could it be a problem tomorrow with how weird this pit lane is?

SCOTT DIXON: Yeah, it's definitely not ideal, especially on the curvature that we are in that pit because it's hard to actually get into the pit and stop and then also to leave. If you're on a left-turning one, which is kind of like the first six or eight, it makes it a lot better. Unfortunately with what happened in Road America we couldn't do anything about it, right. We couldn't have bounced on the Q2 because we didn't turn -- we didn't have any power.

You can't do anything about it. So I think you just hope that we stay ahead of maybe the car that's in the box behind us; maybe hopefully they can give us space. I think if you have a green flag race it's not too much of an issue because you can kind of pit in your own time, whereas if it's a full-course yellow, that's when it's going to get really tricky, especially with how tight they are here. But yeah, this pit road is probably one of the worst that we come to all season as far as spacing and the curvature of it.

Q. We haven't seen you since the ESPYs. Any big moments for you, star-struck moments?

SCOTT DIXON: No, I think it was just -- it's always impressive to go to that show and just see the intro, and Tracy Morgan did a very good job on the start of it, and there's giant people there, man, so everybody stands out. They're all wearing diamonds and sparkly stuff and they're all about seven feet tall. It's pretty interesting to go and people watch.