

NTT IndyCar Series News Conference

Sunday July 14, 2019

Press Conference

James Hinchcliffe

Arrow Schmidt Peterson Motorsports

THE MODERATOR: James, a lot of questions surely for you. But we will start with your teammate, Robert (Wickens). Drove a pretty good race.

JAMES HINCHCLIFFE: Yeah, he led every lap he was a part of.

That was obviously really cool. I was already strapped in the car. We didn't get to see the TV. I was just kind of watching everybody's reaction. I could tell when he was getting close to a wall, (fiancée) Karli's face was lighting up based on how everybody was reacting. You could hear the cheers every corner of the racetrack even from inside the car.

Awesome to see him back on track, home crowd, awesome to see the support he's had.

THE MODERATOR: You had to race a very exciting weekend for you, cap a strong performance.

JAMES HINCHCLIFFE: Yeah, with the race playing out the way it did, there wasn't a lot of strategy to be had with tires, with fuel. There were really no notable cautions to bunch the field back up. We didn't really have any help today. We had to kind of do it on the racetrack.

The Arrow car was solid, which has been the story of our year. We had problems on Saturdays, whether it was self-inflicted or bad luck. But Sunday this team really shows up.

Qualifying was unfortunate. We had the eighth fastest time in qualifying but started 14th because of the nature of the way the groups worked out. If we started a little higher up, we could have kept that top five streak alive.

The effort the guys put forward, with no help from yellows or strategy, we had to push our way to the front and capitalize on other guys' mistakes. All in all, not the end result you want. But the effort I put forth was pretty impressive.

THE MODERATOR: Questions.

Q. Take us through your mindset of switching off. You're in the car, ready to go, do you see Robert? You have to flip a switch, go racing. How do you do



that?

JAMES HINCHCLIFFE: It's sort of the nature of our sport. Obviously it's not every day that something quite that cool happens right before you get in the race car. We're shaking hands with sponsors, taking pictures with fans up to the minute you put your helmet on. I don't think there's another sport where we're interacting with people outside our program so close to game time.

We're really seasoned at being able to flip that switch almost instantly. So this is kind of a good example of that.

Like I said, the particular thing was a little more emotional, a little cooler than what you normally have distracting you before a race.

I think, if anything, it certainly lifted me up and I think it lifted every driver on the grid up because we were all so happy to see it happen.

Q. Were you surprised at how fast the track was, the fact there weren't any crashes, everybody was able to handle themselves? Where is this party of yours at?

JAMES HINCHCLIFFE: Well, I think the quality of driver in the (NTT) IndyCar Series has gotten so high the last few seasons, we've seen a lot of races go essentially caution-free. I know this technically wasn't a caution-free race, but for all intents and purposes it was. We had the lap one deal, then the last lap. I don't think either of those affected the race too much.

It shows the quality of driver, even the guys that had mistakes were able to recover from them. (Sebastien) Bourdais got himself out of the tires, Spencer made it back to the pits. Fans want to see racing. They don't want to see caution periods.

For a track that is notorious for having a lot of incidents, I'm impressed with the field. One or two may have helped us getting a spot or two. Race control made an active effort to keep it green as much as possible. I think all the drivers are just doing a better job.

Q. The party?

JAMES HINCHCLIFFE: I don't know yet. We're still working on it (laughter).

Q. Looking ahead to next weekend at Iowa, the race

being moved back to nighttime conditions, how do you expect that to change the racing conditions, more downforce?

JAMES HINCHCLIFFE: I mean, of course the race we were pretty good at last year had to go and change. I think honestly the night racing there is a lot of fun. We've done it in the past. I've loved it, to be honest, when we raced at night there.

The track is a little bit more forgiving in those conditions certainly. I think that helps open up both lanes, which is great. Good for racing. The tire deg will probably be a little less dramatic than last year. It's a 6:15 start. To call it a night race may be a little bit generous. I think it's going to be a dusk race. I think there's going to be a point in the race where the sun is in a very dangerous position based on what we've heard from people who tested there recently. I'm a little disappointed with the start time.

But no, I think the Arrow car was obviously very strong last year. Everyone has had a year to get better. They changed it from a daytime to a nighttime race. I don't think we can just expect to roll off the truck and dominate or anything. I think we can be strong. Just have a good, clean weekend and keep chipping away at the points.

Q. Busy weekend. Tired?

JAMES HINCHCLIFFE: Honestly, I've had enough experience doing this race to know what is too much. I have a great team of people around me that kind of help manage, know when to say no to stuff because I'm really bad at that so other people have to do it for me.

It was a bit different this year because we didn't have a race the weekend before. I was up here the middle of last week doing a lot more stuff in the buildup to this race. Relieved we survived, got through it, moving on to the next one, certainly.

At the same time it's always such a privilege to come home. The support is incredible. People want to talk to you, it's a good problem to have. It's always fun coming back. I think we managed it pretty well.

Q. This year did it seem to be more difficult to pass here than in previous years? Scott Dixon was saying you can't pass. The other thing, as bumpy as it is, is it like an off-road race?

JAMES HINCHCLIFFE: Hands are a little bit blistered. You're sore in places you aren't normally sore. Kind of the nature of this place.

As far as the passing goes, I think passing everywhere is difficult just because the level of competition is so high and the gap between drivers is so small. I don't know if it's any harder or easier to pass a car.

That would be the same lap time delta as a year ago. I

just think the lap time delta car to car is smaller. Everybody is getting better, the teams are getting better. Second year with this body kit, everybody is figuring things out a little more. I think it speaks to the level of the competitiveness in the series.

THE MODERATOR: James, thank you. We'll see you in Iowa.

JAMES HINCHCLIFFE: Thank you.