

NTT IndyCar Series News Conference

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Press Conference

Scott Dixon

Chip Ganassi Racing



THE MODERATOR: We'll begin with race winner Scott Dixon, now six wins at this racetrack. That's a record for this INDYCAR event. 108 wins now for Chip Ganassi's team, which breaks the tie for second place all time previously with Newman-Haas Racing. No. 46, you have a lot of races. This is probably one of the more memorable last few laps you've had. Defensive driving, too.

SCOTT DIXON: Yeah, not just the last lap. I think it was honestly with about 15 to go, I started moaning to the team, I'm like, 'Man, I think we're going to have to pit again.' A lot of it, I think, was just bad choices from my front. I think after the race, Chip (Ganassi) said that he had decided that we should have gone to blacks. And I said, well, how did you and the team -- how did we not go to blacks? But I said, it looks like the reds are holding on pretty well, but we made adjustments to the first set of sticker reds, had quite a bit of understeer. We made those changes for the used second set that already had four laps on it from qualifying, and they just couldn't take it. It was too aggressive.

Luckily I used them early to try and get past some of those lap traffic cars that did help us later on, I think at least delay Felix getting to us. But ultimately had we gone to the black tires, we would have maintained our eight- or 10-second gap, but it definitely made it exciting for me and I'm sure everybody else.

And huge respect for Felix (Rosenqvist). He drove clean, and ultimately, I don't know, it was going to be hard for any car to come past, even though we were about three seconds slower a lap than anyone else.

THE MODERATOR: That's the third-closest finish on a non-oval aside from two that happened in Portland. Felix said when he got to Turn 2, he thought you were leaving him an opening and then it disappeared. Is that what happened?

SCOTT DIXON: Well, you know, I haven't really reviewed it, but I'm not going to leave the door wide open by all means. That corner is quite tricky because the approach can be done so many different ways and also how you go to apex or where you use the apex and then the curve actually adds about another two, three foot if you want to use that, as well, and then even a bit of grass.

I knew he was going to come in deep there. I thought he was actually going to just wait to get a good exit off of 2, and ultimately I think had he just been a little bit more patient there, I think he would have got me probably going into 4, but because that kind of messed up his momentum and kind of got him into dirty stuff a little bit, it took him a little time to react after that one.

It worked out perfectly for us. Again, I think it was just bad choices on my front that put us in that situation, though.

Q. One of the decisive moments of the race was the fantastic side-by-side battles you had with Will Power. That was really a man's race right there. How difficult was it and how cool was it to be involved in a fight like that and both of you not give an inch?

SCOTT DIXON: Yeah, honestly, from where I sat, he didn't really give me any room, which I was kind of disappointed, especially on the approach. When you're coming in there at 185 miles an hour and he was giving me kind of a half a car width into (Turn) 4, I expected a little bit more from him on that. And then obviously when I got around him in 5 and then he just drove me off, obviously it's good for a spectator, but for me it was not so good. I knew we were going to get him, it's just -- it added like another five- or six-second delay to what I had.

But Will is going to drive tough. He's racing for wins right now, and he's a hell of a competitor, and as we've seen, the guy is super fast. But I probably would have expected a little bit more from him on those situations.

Q. What's it like to be the king?

SCOTT DIXON: I wouldn't know.

Q. Of Mid-Ohio. You understand that.

SCOTT DIXON: I'm the king of my own lunchtime maybe.

But no, these days are huge. I think I understand and know what it takes to get something -- I think the ones like this coming from eighth and being able to pass cars and make the strategy work and as a team effort and have a one-two finish for Chip I think is huge. It could have been a one-two either way there the last lap with Felix.

But just super proud of the team, and it's -- almost

unheard of to have cars that were sixth and eighth on the grid come through and drive through the field like we did today to finish first and second.

Q. Is there a comfort level when you know that the guy who's chasing you the last three laps is your teammate, meaning y'all know what kind of the rules are, don't hit each other, so to speak? Did that give you a little bit of a comfort that you could kind of do your thing and not have to pay a big penalty?

SCOTT DIXON: Probably pretty sure that next time he's not going to let that slide. I think there's a big understanding in any team that the last thing you want to do is take each other out. And Felix is a rookie here in IndyCar but has raced in many different series and has much broader knowledge of racing than I even do because he's touched so many different kind of formulas.

Again, I keep saying it, but he's a big talent. He's going to win a lot of races. He was super fast all weekend. I'm not sure why they switched to the three strategy unless he just wasn't getting the fuel mileage. But they were darned fast in the race.

Q. Let's go to the physical aspects of this race today. It started at peak heat of the day, and then I noticed there were a couple other drivers, they're handing food to people. This one ended pretty late.

SCOTT DIXON: Yeah, it's -- I think you condition yourself. Well, listen, and normally by this point of the season, everybody should be pretty race fit, and today I think definitely on the two-stop wasn't too bad. The hard part for me typically is when the car gets really difficult to drive. Like that last 15 laps was like on ice, and just the amount of corrections you were having to make constantly through one corner is what takes it out of you. Your arms kind of get tired of just kind of having to catch, and this car specifically, the wheel weight and the kickback that it has on the wheel is quite demanding.

Q. Felix said here earlier it was exciting banging wheels. Was it exciting for you, as well? And question number two, with a sixth win here, is there something magic or special, any explanation why you're successful here at Mid-Ohio?

SCOTT DIXON: You know, I probably would have preferred just winning the race by eight or 10 seconds as opposed to banging wheels for a few laps. But that's what IndyCar produces. We have the best racing in the world. To have what typically is a circuit that you can't pass, and to have the action that we had today is unbelievable, with what Firestone do, what IndyCar do, the split in strategies, for me even being in the car, it was full on. Even with lap traffic and you're trying to pass them.

Today was actually one of those days that we haven't had for a little while as far as that much passing going

on. Even with the first six, eight, ten cars on the grid you had a lot of falloff in different places and people that weren't maybe going the right direction. But even as the race started, I think you saw 10 cars on the alternate tire and 13 or more on the primary, which we haven't seen a split like that. That produced very good racing today.

And then the sixth win, it feels really good, just for the sheer fact that we hadn't won here since 2014. We've won a lot here as a team, but it's been a while since we've won. We've had some strategy -- I think last year -- well, last year we obviously kind of set sail, but I think we had a good podium situation there. There's always races that you can analyze and maybe work out a little bit different. But today was a good hard race, and man, we really worked for it.

Q. Was your car different from yesterday or in particular something (indiscernible)?

SCOTT DIXON: Yeah, I think our pace -- it's just that last little bit that I haven't been able to get. And qualifying, to be honest, I think we made a pretty big mistake with gears. We were very different to the 10 and probably most of the field, which we'd started with on Friday, and it seemed quite handy. But once the corner speed came up a ton with the reds, the gears were way too short. I think that was maybe a bit of a downfall in qualifying.

And then every session we changed the car a lot. To adapt to it that quickly and trying to get the most out of it, I just didn't do a good job. Felix found some really good pace. It's been fun working with him and having a lot of similarities and things that we like. It's been a little bit of time since I've had teammates like that. That definitely helps, I think, not just right now but also for the future of the team and development.

Q. One of the more important developments of the race happened I think maybe after you crossed the finish line or pretty close, when Josef banged wheels with Ryan there and I think he finished pretty far back. That really, I think, helps your championship chances.

SCOTT DIXON: Yeah, I think going in, what were we, 98 points back and now 62 or low 60s right there, so that's a big shift. Those are the weekends you need. We always go on about that 100-point mark, but when you come to the last race if you're that far back it's going to be impossible.

Yeah, you've got to take it. You don't wish that on anybody. Talking to Ryan, who I guess that altercation was with, he really didn't know what Josef was trying to do. Kind of a bit surprised to be honest, especially in the situation that he's had, but it happens. It happens to the best of us. We make these mistakes, and the unfortunate part with Josef, I think that's going to wind him up even more and he's going to be super strong come Pocono. Either way, I think he's going to be the

person to beat. That team is super strong right now, and we're going to have our work cut out.

Q. The 60-some points, is that doable in four races?

SCOTT DIXON: Yeah, it's double points for the last one. I don't know what it was with Montoya in '15, but it was similar --

Q. 40 something.

SCOTT DIXON: Maybe high 40s, somewhere around there. Anything is possible, man. I don't know, we've just got to keep our head down. We can't start thinking about that right now, and if you win races, that will take care of it.